

Seattle prospects lead West to Rising Stars win
Royals farmhands also contribute in AFL showcase

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com

SURPRISE, Ariz. -- The game could not been more appropriately named.

It definitely lived up to its billing.

Several of the top prospects in the game shone bright Saturday as the West Division powered past the East Division, 11-2, in the sixth annual Arizona Fall League Rising Stars Game at Surprise Stadium.

It was a night of hits, misses, strikes and surprises.

And stars, of course.

The highly anticipated showdown on the mound between the East's Gerrit Cole (Pittsburgh), the first overall pick in the 2011 First-Year Player Draft, and the West's Danny Hultzen (Seattle), the second overall pick in the 2011 First-Year Player Draft, was overshadowed by the West's offensive onslaught, led by Seattle shortstop prospect Nick Franklin.

Franklin, selected in the first round in 2009 by Seattle, finished 4-for-5 with a home run on a memorable night in Arizona. Franklin's four hits, two doubles, four RBIs and three extra-base hits all set new Rising Stars Game records. His team finished with 16 hits in the game.

"It was really fun," Franklin said. "We had some fans and were enjoying the experience beforehand. We went out there to have a good time and started to put some runs on the board. We started having some fun in the dugout, and it carried over."

Hultzen did his part, and there's no doubt that the front office in Seattle is feeling content right about now. The left-hander struck out the side on 14 pitches in the first inning and did not allow a hit in his two innings pitched. His lone blemish was a one-out walk to Washington's Bryce Harper in the second inning.

"It was a real honor to get selected for this," Hultzen said. "It was exciting. There was a big crowd and a lot of fans. I felt good out there."

How much did Hultzen enjoy the game? Well, he spent several minutes after the game signing autographs and greeting fans.

Thirty minutes later, he was still smiling.

The Royals also had a hand in the resounding victory. Wil Myers played right field and went 3-for-5 with a pair of RBIs, and Christian Colon was 1-for-2 with two runs scored. Jeremy Jeffress struck out all three batters he faced, including Harper.

Cole did not fare as well. He pitched only two-thirds of the first inning before he was replaced by Steve Ames (Dodgers). In all, Cole was charged with five runs on four hits. He threw 29 pitches and only 16 of them were strikes.

Cole was still able to walk away from Surprise Stadium feeling optimistic.

"I'm going to go back and look at it, but they seem to hit us all pretty well," Cole said with a smile. "It was a fun atmosphere. Even though I didn't pitch well, I was still able to enjoy that part of it. I was excited, but it didn't go as planned. You move on."

Including Hultzen and Cole, the game featured 17 first-round picks. The top two outfield prospects in the game, Harper and Mike Trout (Angels) finished 0-for-2 and 1-for-3, respectively, for the East Division.

Overall, Brian Dozer, the eight-round pick for the Twins in 2009, paced the East squad by going 1-for-2 with a home run. Junior Lake, signed by the Cubs as a non-drafted free agent in 2007, and Tim Wheeler, Colorado's first-round pick in 2009, were the only other East players with a hit.

By contrast, the West had four players with at least two hits. After the five-run first inning, the West tacked on another run in the second inning and scored four more runs in the third. The game was out of reach when it scored its final run in the fifth for an 11-2 lead.

The hits kept coming, it seemed, and so did the pitchers. In all, the teams combined to use 19 pitchers, who combined to strike out 18 batters.

"Our starter set the tone and the rest of the guys followed him," said West pitching coach Derrick Lewis, who coaches in the Atlanta system. "He was pounding down in the zone and it became contagious. The same way hitting can become contagious is the same way pitching can be contagious. We were just sending them out there and they were getting the job done."

Lewis is only partly correct in his assessment. In the end, the showdown between Cole and Hultzen was not much of a showdown at all.

"I didn't think of it like that," Hultzen said. "It was a little different being in a game like this where you only pitch a couple of innings. I'm sure people talked about it, but I didn't take it like that. Our offense played really well and that's what I was thinking."

Solis strikes out nine, registers first win

Nationals prospect allows three hits over four scoreless innings

By David Heck / Special to MLB.com

It took a while, but Sammy Solis finally captured the form that made him so dominant during the regular season.

The Nationals prospect struck out nine and allowed three hits over four scoreless innings for his first Arizona Fall League win as the Scottsdale Scorpions cruised to a 9-2 victory over the Phoenix Desert Dogs.

A 2010 second-round Draft pick, Solis (1-0) went 8-3 with a 3.26 ERA in 17 starts between Class A Hagerstown and Class A Advanced Potomac this season. He struck out 93 and walked over 96 2/3 innings.

In five AFL starts prior to Friday's outing, the 23-year-old left-hander posted a 5.21 ERA. He lowered that mark to 4.30 after throwing 40 of 67 pitches for strikes.

Four relievers combined to keep the Desert Dogs off the board until Phillies right-hander Colby Shreve yielded two runs on three hits in the ninth.

Alex Hassan (Red Sox) and Cody Overbeck (Phillies) both collected three hits for the Scorpions, with Hassan scoring three runs and Overbeck knocking in two. Giants shortstop Brandon Crawford launched a solo homer, his second, in the third.

Angels outfielder Mike Trout went 2-for-5 with a pair of runs scored. MLB.com's **top overall prospect** is batting .310 with eight runs scored in his last 10 games.

No. 2 prospect Bryce Harper delivered an RBI single in the seventh to extend his hitting streak to 13 games. But he failed to homer for only the second time in his past seven contests.

Grant Green, the A's **No. 1 prospect**, led Phoenix by going 3-for-4 with a pair of doubles, an RBI and a run scored. He's crossed the plate six times in his past three games. Indians Minor Leaguer Chad Huffman drove in the other run for the Desert Dogs.

A's right-hander Tyson Ross (1-2) was reached for four runs -- two earned -- on six hits over 3 1/3 innings. He struck out three and walked two.

A's Deal Magnuson To Toronto

Staff, OaklandClubhouse.com

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The Oakland A's announced on Friday that they had traded right-handed reliever Trystan Magnuson back to the Toronto Blue Jays for cash considerations. The A's also announced the signings of free agents Edgar Gonzalez and Wes Timmons, who signed minor league deals.

British Columbia native Trystan Magnuson returns to his original organization after only a year with the Oakland A's. The A's

acquired Magnuson last winter along with fellow relief prospect Daniel Farquhar in exchange for outfielder Rajai Davis. Farquhar is also back with the Blue Jays. The A's traded him to Toronto in exchange for left-hander David Purcey early on in the 2011 regular season.

Magnuson had a solid year as part of the A's chain, although he finished the season on the 60-day disabled list with a shoulder injury. He was removed from the A's 40-man roster earlier this week.

The 6'7" reliever split his season between Triple-A Sacramento and the big leagues. In 30 appearances with the River Cats, he had a 2.98 ERA. He struck-out 46 and walked 19 in 45.1 innings. In 14.2 innings with the A's, he had a 6.14 ERA and an 11:5 K:BB ratio.

The A's also announced that they had come to terms with two minor league free agents, pitcher Edgar Gonzalez and infielder Wes Timmons. Both will be invited to big league spring training.

Gonzalez returns to the A's after pitching in the organization during the 2009 season. The veteran right-hander made 26 appearances for the A's in 2009, posting a 5.51 ERA in 65.1 innings. He also made seven starts for the River Cats, posting a 5.22 ERA. Last season, he pitched in the Tampa and Colorado organizations, posting a combined 5.00 ERA with an 87:41 K:BB ratio in 133.1 innings. He also made one big league appearance, allowing two runs in two innings of work. Gonzalez currently has a 5.74 ERA in 15.2 innings for Hermosillo in the Mexican Winter League.

Timmons returns for a second season in the A's organization. He split his 2011 campaign between Triple-A Sacramento and Double-A Midland. In 95 games for both clubs, he hit .341 with an 888 OPS. Before last year, Timmons had spent his entire career in the Atlanta Braves chain.

Burning questions on baseball's hot stove include draft slotting and moving the Oakland A's **Roger Maris not on the Veterans Hall of Fame ballot?**

Bill Madden, NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

The burning questions wafting out of baseball's hot stove:

How serious is the impasse over draft slotting in the labor deal, and how will it impact the free-agent market?

Very and a lot. Amid all the early conciliatory rhetoric from commissioner Bud Selig and Players Association executive director Michael Weiner, apparently neither side realized how deeply committed Selig was to getting a firm slotting system implemented into the amateur draft and, conversely, how deeply opposed the union would be to it.

Even with the owners expressing a willingness to do away with draft-pick compensation to clubs losing free agents as a trade-off for a slotting system, the union is taking the view that such a system, even though it does not affect its member players, is a form of a salary cap. As such, the players are treating it as the same kind of red flag as they did back in 1994 when the owners shut down the game for want of a salary cap.

With both sides seemingly entrenched in their positions, prospects for a new deal by Dec. 11 when the present one expires, are in question. That means the winter meetings in Dallas, Dec. 5-8, are likely to be held hostage, as is the entire free-agent market, at least for the big-ticket players such as Albert Pujols, Prince Fielder, Jose Reyes and C.J. Wilson, as long as the clubs are in the dark as to the new financial parameters SEmD luxury tax, free agent compensation, minimum salaries etc. SEmD going forward with the eventual new deal.

Are the Oakland A's finally about to know the way to San Jose?

According to baseball insiders, the reason A's co-owner Lew Wolff, the L.A.-based real-estate developer and close personal Selig ally, is not going to be a bidder in the Frank McCourt Dodger auction (as had been frequently speculated) is because the commissioner has given him tacit assurance that his effort to move the A's to a new stadium in San Jose is eventually going to be approved.

Once Selig completes his major accomplishment of ridding the game and liberating the Dodgers of McCourt - which hopefully will be before Opening Day - he can turn his attention to the A's, who have been waiting more than two years for his relocation study committee to deliver its report on San Jose and the San Francisco Giants' territorial rights there.

Despite his "vaporizing" comments, is Rays owner Stu Sternberg committed to keeping Tampa Bay competitive?

Sternberg was clearly speaking out of frustration over all the empty seats at Tropicana Field for the Rays' first playoff game last month when he indicated the budget wasn't there for the needed two bats to supplement the AL's deepest starting rotation. He hinted that the team soon will cease to exist, at least in St. Petersburg.

Last week, however, Sternberg gave the go-ahead to GM Andrew Friedman to pick up the \$3.3 million option on closer Kyle Farnsworth.

At the same time there have been recurring rumblings that Friedman is looking to deal from the strength of his rotation, six-deep with frontline young starters, for Marlins outfielder Logan Morrison. Though somewhat defensively challenged and a bit of a free spirit, Morrison, who is engaged in a grievance case against the Marlins for what he maintains was an unjust demotion to the minors last summer, would seem to perfectly fit the Rays' needs SEMD a productive bat with 25-plus homer power who gets on base and will be under club control for four years.

On the other hand with the Rays, there is the status of Joe Maddon, the likely AL manager of the Year, who has one more year on his contract at around \$1.5 million and who is said to be much coveted by new Cubs president of baseball operations, Theo Epstein. Epstein is in a position to triple Maddon's salary.

Thus, if Epstein, who knows from breaking contracts, comes-a-courtin' Maddon, would Sternberg, who won't be able to afford to pay him anywhere near that, stand in his way? Especially with highly regarded bench coach Davey Martinez, a potentially seamless replacement, available?

Is Pete Mackanin this winter's "flavor of the month" managerial candidate?

The 60-year-old Phillies bench coach, who wowed everyone in Cincinnati back in 2007 when he took over a woebegone Reds team with the worst record in the majors and led them to a 41-39 record the rest of the year, has somehow gone overlooked and under-interviewed in the annual manager-go-rounds ever since.

This, despite the fact that all who know him, worked with him or played for him insist there's none better at running a game, maintaining a clubhouse and dealing with the media.

But this winter, it seems Mackanin's abilities are finally being recognized. He was the first candidate interviewed by both the Red Sox and Cubs for their managerial vacancies. As in 2007 when Reds owner Bob Castellini passed him over for Dusty Baker, it has been Mackanin's fate not to be a so-called "name" manager. It looks like that could soon change as two of baseball's marquee franchises have him at the top of their list.

Does anyone want the Orioles' GM job?

It would appear not. Then again, who would want to work for Peter Angelos, who since wresting ownership control of the Orioles in 1993 and subsequently running one of the great baseball franchises into the ground, has gone through seven general managers, including Hall of Famer Pat Gillick?

Since beginning the interview process to replace Andy MacPhail, the O's first choice, Toronto Blue Jays assistant GM Tony LaCava turned the job down, L.A. Dodgers assistant GM DeJon Watson and Red Sox assistant Allerd Baird both withdrew from consideration and Rays GM Friedman and White Sox assistant GM Rick Hahn let it be known they had no interest.

This reminds us of 1995 when George Steinbrenner told Gene Michael he could step down as Yankee GM, but not before he found his own successor. Michael proceeded to call nearly a dozen former GMs, assistant GMs and scouting directors only to get the same answer: Not interested. Nobody wanted any part of working for Steinbrenner. Exasperated, Michael told his

then-assistant, Brian Cashman: "The first guy who says 'yes' has the job." That guy turned out to be Bob Watson, who won a world championship his first year and promptly quit, a broken man reduced at the end to closing himself in his office and watching soap operas on TV.

Further complicating the Orioles' situation is manager Buck Showalter, who wants to have the decision-making control of the GM, especially in regard to trades, signings and player development, without the desk duties. That's why most Oriole insiders thought the job would go to someone like former assistant O's GM Scott Proefrock, now with the Phillies, whose expertise is said to be in the baseball data, waivers and blue book areas. However, there were indications Saturday that former Expos and Red Sox GM Dan Duquette, who has been desperate to get back into baseball since being fired amid a flurry of controversy in Boston when John Henry bought the team in 2002, had moved into the frontrunner position.

What, no Roger Maris on the Veterans Committee Hall of Fame ballot?

Much as Maris' many supporters and former teammates continue to decry his omission from the Hall of Fame, it needs to be reiterated that the basic criteria for a true Hall of Famer is at least 10 Hall-of-Fame caliber seasons - or, if you must, in the case of a Sandy Koufax, 5-6 of the greatest seasons ever.

Maris had two, although even in his record-setting 61-homer season in '61, he hit only .269. The bottom line on Maris is that he hit .263 lifetime, didn't even hit 300 homers (275), much less 400 or 500 like his Hall-of-Fame contemporaries, and in 12 years in the majors led the league only three times in anything (homers in '61 and RBI in '60 and '61).

Instead of wasting their breath on insisting he belongs in the Hall of Fame, Maris' supporters should be lobbying Selig to recognize him as the legitimate one-season home run record-holder. At least he still has the American League record.

City to Decide on Selling Land to A's

Josh Koehn, San Jose Inside

More: Politics, Business, Culture, City Council, Debra Figone, Diridon Development Authority, Oakland A's

The City Council will hold a public hearing Tuesday to decide whether or not it should sell land to owners of the Oakland A's.

Councilmembers and the San Jose Diridon Development Authority will discuss an option agreement with the A's, which would allow the baseball organization to put a deposit down to buy land if given permission to relocate by Major League Baseball. The land would be sold on the condition that it is used to build a ballpark.

The city would sell the property for \$6.975,227, which is 36.5 percent of its current value. The theory, according to ballpark advocates, is the economic benefit of a ballpark would outweigh some combination of corporate, retail offices and housing on the property, which is located next to HP Pavilion. There are three remaining parcels of land privately owned that would need to be bought to complete the ballpark site.

The option agreement is for two years, and the A's would pay \$50,000 as a deposit. The agreement could be extended for another year for \$25,000 if both the A's and the Diridon Development Authority agree. None of this money would be included in the property purchase price, according to the city.

In a memo written by City Manager Debra Figone, here is a rundown of how much the property is worth, what the city is asking for and what would be expected of the A's to acquire the rest of the land needed to build a ballpark:

"The Redevelopment Agency paid approximately \$25,160,000 for acquisition and relocation costs for the entire ballpark site. Colliers International conducted an appraisal for the entire ballpark site in September, 2010. Colliers concluded that the entire ballpark site, vacant, assembled and available for development at its highest and best use would be valued at Thirty Eight Million Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$38,250,000). Using the estimated value for the highest and best use of \$65.75 per sq.ft, the highest and best use value for the Property is approximately \$13,970,000. Colliers also concluded that the market value of the entire site, vacant assembled and restricted for development of a ballpark, would be valued at \$19,100,000. The Property to be optioned to AIG, on a square foot basis, represents approximately 36.5% of the appraised value of the entire ballpark site. The Purchase Price of Six Million Nine Hundred Seventy Five Thousand and Two Hundred Twenty Seven Dollars (\$6.975,227) represents approximately 36.5% of the appraised value of the entire ballpark site restricted for ballpark use. The Purchase Price does not include acquisition of the adjacent City streets. Staff is verifying the ownership of the streets. It is intended that the adjacent streets would be purchased by the developer for site development at a later time."

While A's owner Lew Wolff has said he believes MLB Commissioner Bud Selig is going to make a decision's on the club's fate "very soon," a report on the proposed property sale suggests otherwise. According to the Chronicle, baseball owners are expected to talk about the A's at their winter meetings in January rather than this month, because of the messy Los Angeles Dodgers ownership situation.

Another item expected to be under council consideration Tuesday is an amendment to the city's revolving door policy for employees who were laid off due to continuing budget shortfalls.

Two items that have been deferred to later meetings include janitor services and commission appointments. Apparently, city-wide janitor costs run more than \$6.3 million a year. A decision on approving a new agreement with GCA Services Inc. has been deferred to the Nov. 29 meeting. Appointments to the Civil Service Commission have also been deferred to Nov. 15. The candidates are Roy Truitt, Holden Green, Melinda George, Joan Smith and Randy Martinez.