

A's News Clips, Sunday, February 26, 2012

A's third baseman Scott Sizemore suffers knee injury during first workout

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's were dealt some potentially damaging news during their first full-squad workout of the season Saturday.

Starting third baseman Scott Sizemore suffered a left knee injury during a fielding drill early in the workout and was walking on crutches later in the afternoon. The team is calling it a sprain, but those nearby reported they heard a popping sound when Sizemore went down.

He underwent an MRI, and the A's didn't have results Saturday. Sizemore couldn't put any weight on his left leg immediately afterward, and he declined to talk with reporters through a team spokesman.

"You don't want something like that to happen on the first day," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "On top of that, he's an integral player. You feel bad for him."

The injury put a damper on a day that's usually filled with optimism for major league teams as position players join pitchers and catchers for the first time.

The A's don't have a true third baseman who is major league ready behind Sizemore.

Melvin said that if Sizemore misses extended time, Adam Rosales, a utility infielder who played in just 24 games last season because of an ankle injury, and Eric Sogard, a natural middle infielder, would get time at third along with catcher Josh Donaldson.

Donaldson played some third last season and has taken grounders there this spring even as he's trying to win the backup catcher's job. Melvin said nonroster invitee Wes Timmons also will get a look, "but Donaldson probably is more of a bat."

"I believe in my ability to play third and to produce at the major league level," Donaldson said.

Sizemore took over as the regular third baseman last season after being acquired from the Detroit Tigers for reliever David Purcey in May. He hit just .249 after the trade but had 11 homers and 52 RBIs in 93 games. Melvin credited Sizemore for his play at third after primarily playing second base for Detroit.

Melvin invited A's managing partner Lew Wolff to speak in a team meeting before Saturday's workout. The gesture pleasantly surprised Wolff, who kept his comments brief because his voice was hoarse.

"I said I like winning," Wolff said. "I think half the guys are like, 'Who the hell is that old guy?'"

Wolff said during the winter he thinks the A's can surprise people this season.

"I just like the trades we made even though I miss some of those players," he said. "I think (G.M.) Billy (Beane) and his guys have put together a pretty solid team and that we've added a couple people that surprised people."

Melvin said he also kept his comments brief.

"There are a lot of firsts over the course of a season, and none are bigger than (the first full-squad workout), once everybody gets together and hears your message and gets out on the field," he said. "Especially with as many new guys and younger guys as we have, first impressions I think go a long way."

Right-hander Tyson Ross looked sharp throwing batting practice. Among the hitters he faced was Manny Ramirez, who took only a few swings and made solid contact once.

"I've pitched against him in video games before, but this was the first time live," Ross said.

He is competing for a rotation spot, and Melvin is getting his first real look at him. Ross didn't make it back to the majors last season after an oblique injury sidelined him in May, and Melvin didn't take over the club from the fired Bob Geren until June 9.

"His ball can disappear with a lot of velocity," Melvin said of Ross.

Oakland A's stress importance of 'first impressions' during spring training

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A's managing partner Lew Wolff addressed the team along with manager Bob Melvin before the first full-squad workout Saturday.

Melvin did not share specifics of Wolff's message, but Melvin said he himself was eager to see his full team on the field for the first time.

"There are a lot of firsts over the course of a season and none bigger than this one, once everybody gets together and hears your message and gets out on the field," he said. "Especially with as many new guys and younger guys as we have, first impressions I think go a long way."

Pitchers threw live batting practice -- from the mound full-bore, as opposed to coaches throwing behind a screen -- on Friday and were set to do so again Saturday.

On a different topic, Melvin said he would be rooting hard for "Moneyball" during Sunday's Academy Awards. The movie, adapted from the 2003 book that was written largely about general manager Billy Beane, is nominated for six Oscars.

"It was a good movie and I think it relates not only to baseball, but life in general," Melvin said.

Poole: Oakland A's are getting a changed Manny Ramirez

By Monte Poole, Bay Area News Group

He walks into camp on time, introduces himself while in the company of his family, his wife and their two boys, before speaking about the significance of his faith.

He says he now goes to church, and that he prays. And he adds that he signed with the A's because God sent him to Oakland.

He also says his name is Manny Ramirez.

He would like you to know he is not that Manny Ramirez, the one with whom we have become familiar. He is not the proud Dominican who unapologetically marched to the beat of his own bongo. Not the guy who twice was suspended for violating Major League Baseball drug policies and faced domestic abuse allegation only five months ago. Not the slugger who is infamous for his idiosyncrasies, including occasional lethargic jogs down the first-base line.

No, this is the new Ramirez. An enlightened, evolved Manny.

A God-fearing Manny.

If he's a Manny of his word, the A's could be onto something.

Unlike the baffling \$36 million signing of unproven Cuban outfielder Yoenis Cespedes, a massive investment for a franchise constantly deprecating its squalid life below the MLB poverty line, the signing of Ramirez follows tremendous logic, no matter what planet you might be on.

That he agreed to a minor-league contract at \$500,000 for one year -- prorated to about \$345K when you deduct the 50-game suspension he must serve -- makes Ramirez an excellent buy for Oakland's baseball division and an outright steal for its business side.

If Ramirez truly is committed to redemption he could be an all-around bargain.

It wouldn't matter that he's not going to hit 40 bombs, or that he's not going to drive in 140 runs or bat .350 or get on base 40 percent of the time. Ramirez is, after all, coming up hard and fast on his 40th birthday.

Ramirez is a once-fearsome presence A's general manager Billy Beane dug out of a distant corner of baseball's junkyard. Why not wipe the dust off Manny's bat to find out if it has any residual thunder?

If Ramirez is serious about his desire to create a more favorable final impression than the one currently in the mind's eye -- getting caught cheating, responding by weaseling out baseball's side door, crying retirement -- this is his first and last chance. And he absolutely realizes it.

Ramirez is thankful he has a job, and that baseball still is there for him. Maybe that's why he accepted jersey No. 1. It represents his fresh start, his new birth.

Whereas the old Manny, a star in Cleveland and a cultural icon in Boston, clearly took for granted his prodigious gifts, the new Manny speaks of learning from the error of his ways, seeking the spiritual over the material.

Whereas the old Manny was insouciant and cavalier, even as a grizzled veteran in Los Angeles and Tampa, the Oakland Manny is vowing sober dedication.

And, yes, he even concedes that some of us probably won't fall for the time-tested though often hollow "I'm a new man" trick.

Why should we believe him? Because shortly after his first batting-practice session, during which he sprayed baseballs all across the yard and over the fence, Ramirez uttered the most profoundly mature public statement of his 19-year career:

"I made some mistakes and I want to show my children I can correct them."

He says this with his sons, Manny Jr. and Lucas, as witnesses. And with his wife, Juliana, who persuaded him to turn to church and prayer, standing nearby.

This is a Manny we've never, ever seen. A Manny the folks in Cleveland and Boston and Los Angeles wish they could have experienced.

When a man offers himself up for scrutiny without batting an eye, it doesn't and shouldn't matter who is listening. He's not trying to score image points. He's speaking less to the audience than to those closest to him.

It sounds as if Ramirez, whose childlike behavior in the past has simultaneously charmed and incensed, is ready to grow up and become a responsible adult who, by the way, can hit a baseball like few others in the history of the game.

Maybe it's the gray invading his hairline, or the conviction with which he expresses his rebirth, but I believe he sincerely intends to be a better Manny. I hope he succeeds.

And if he also brings a semi-productive bat, the A's will have at least one significant victory in 2012. After so many lean years, that's worth embracing.

Giants will be 'respectful' over territorial rights issue

By Alex Pavlovic, San Jose Mercury News

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Giants president and CEO Larry Baer said the club will continue to be "respectful of the process" when asked about the A's desire to move to San Jose, but hinted that a resolution is not coming anytime soon.

Asked if the process includes negotiations over a settlement with the A's, Baer took a long pause. "Not necessarily," he said, finally.

"This is something that ain't new," Baer said. "This was discussed when Steve Schott owned the team 12 years ago. We know it's been studied and being studied. We're cooperating."

The Giants are once again on the verge of selling out every home game, and Baer said merchandise and sponsorship numbers are tracking at nearly the same levels they were a year ago, when the Giants were coming off a World Series title.

Baer said he thinks any talk of the Giants and A's negotiating over territorial rights in San Jose, which the Giants own, is a bad thing for baseball.

"The game is bigger than the internal machinations," Baer said. "We want to be respectful and see the game flourish in our market, in all the markets."

San Jose moves ahead with roadwork to accommodate A's ballpark

By John Woolfolk, San Jose Mercury News

While San Jose awaits word from Major League Baseball on whether the Oakland A's can pursue a ballpark near downtown, the city is preparing the first phase of road improvements expected to accommodate a new stadium.

The City Council this month approved \$500,000 toward final design work on a \$5 million project that would connect Coleman Avenue with the proposed ballpark area near the HP Pavilion. City transportation officials plan to recommend funding in the upcoming budget to get the project out to bid this summer and completed late next year.

San Jose had planned to improve traffic around the city-owned HP Pavilion regardless of a new ballpark. But a green light for an A's San Jose move would add urgency to completing it. It is part of \$22 million in road improvements cited in the environmental review for the proposed ballpark in 2010.

"It makes sense to get it done," said city Transportation Director Hans Larsen. "It's a compelling project as it is, and if there's an announcement that a ballpark goes in, it certainly boosts the need for the project."

The A's have been seeking Major League Baseball approval for a San Jose move since 2009 over objections from the San Francisco Giants that it would violate territorial rights to Santa Clara County on which they based financing for the privately built AT&T Park, which opened in 2000. Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig has indicated this year that resolving the A's stadium dilemma is a priority, leading many to believe a decision is pending.

A Giants-backed group, Stand for San Jose, which sued the city last year alleging the environmental review on the proposed ballpark was insufficient, called the roadwork premature before baseball blesses the A's move.

"They're putting the cart way before the horse," said Dan Newman, a spokesman for Stand for San Jose. "This is all recklessly premature speculation because they have not conducted the legally required environmental impact study and public vote, and have not received permission to move the team. The politicians and developers simply need to slow down, respect the process and following the laws that first require a real study, a public vote, and permission to move the A's."

But city officials say that even before there was talk of a ballpark, they wanted to improve the traffic flow along Autumn Street in the area of the San Jose Diridon train station to handle crowds expected to come with a future BART transit station and possibly high-speed rail.

Larsen said the roadwork isn't required mitigation for the proposed ballpark. But because environmental studies on the project assume the improvements will be done, getting them under way bolsters the city's case against critics who might seek to stall the project with litigation.

"It's a little nuanced," Larsen said. "It's not technically a mitigation, but an assumed condition, so from that perspective, it's cleanest to have it done that way."

A bigger question is how to fund the \$22 million in roadwork now that the state effective this month killed off redevelopment agencies to solve its own budget woes. San Jose had planned on using its redevelopment agency's tax-increment financing capability to pay for much of the roadwork and related property acquisition.

With the agency now gone, Larsen said the city will have to use its own capital funds for road improvements. He's recommending the city dedicate some of its transportation funds in the upcoming budget for the initial \$5 million phase. That money, he notes, doesn't come out of the general revenue pot that pays for basic services such as police and fire protection.

For the first phase of roadwork, the city through its redevelopment agency had already bought the seven properties needed to complete the Autumn Street connection to Coleman Avenue for \$2.6 million, eliminating one hurdle. The city also has received permission from the California Public Utilities Commission for the grade-level railroad crossing, where trains may cross up to three times a day. That permission expires in a year, adding urgency to complete the project soon.

Larsen said the first phase is the most important because it connects Autumn Street to Coleman Avenue, providing an additional route for drivers to get to and from the HP Pavilion and perhaps a ballpark from Interstate 880.

The second phase of roadwork is the most costly, at an estimated \$13 million. It would provide a continuous Autumn Street link between Julian and Santa Clara streets. That project would cut through nine residential and industrial properties, only two of which are city owned. The city estimates the remaining properties would cost \$7 million to acquire, with road construction costing about \$6 million. The city is seeking state and federal grant funding for that part of the project.

The final piece is a \$4 million project to convert Autumn Street between Santa Clara Street and Park Avenue from one-way to two-way traffic as it passes in front of the proposed ballpark.

While the loss of the redevelopment agency has forced the city to make other plans for financing the roadwork, city officials and A's owner Lew Wolff insist it's not a problem.

"San Jose will find a way to get Autumn Parkway funded and completed," Larsen said. And Wolff on a San Jose visit this month said "we were never really counting on redevelopment to build a ballpark."

Additional work to provide more parking with a potential 900-space, four-story garage north of the HP Pavilion is expected to be pursued by the private arena management affiliated with the San Jose Sharks hockey team, which operates the arena under contract with the city.

A's third baseman Scott Sizemore injures knee

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

An hour into the A's first full-squad workout of the spring, they'd already lost a player to an injury.

Starting third baseman Scott Sizemore hurt his left knee during a fielding drill at the Papago Park minor-league complex, and players who were there said there was a popping noise and Sizemore went down hard.

The A's were still waiting to get Sizemore in for an MRI late Saturday afternoon, and Sizemore's wife, Brooke, later tweeted that the test won't take place until today. For now, the team is calling it a sprained left knee. Sizemore broke his left fibula during the Arizona Fall League in 2009, an injury that resulted in left ankle surgery.

Sizemore was on crutches in the clubhouse and did not speak to reporters because he does not have a diagnosis.

"You hate to see that happen on the first day," manager Bob Melvin said, "and on top of that, he's an integral player. You feel bad for him."

Should Sizemore miss any time, the top candidate for the spot might be a catcher: Josh Donaldson said he was told to put away his catcher's gear and that he will get a shot at third.

Donaldson, who played third base the final month at Triple-A Sacramento last year and during winter ball in the Dominican Republic, reiterated that he is determined to win a job this spring and that he'll play anywhere to do so. He also can play first, second, in the outfield, and, he said, he nearly played shortstop once at Sacramento last year.

"I believe in my ability to play third and contribute at the major-league level," he said. "I'm hungry to win a job. I'm here to win a job."

Donaldson was quick to say that he is hoping the best for Sizemore.

"I honestly hope he's not hurt, but that's one of those things that are part of baseball," he said. "I'm looking for any opportunity right now to make this team."

There are some in the organization who believe Donaldson will be a better hitter if he is out from behind the plate, and he's generally performed better when playing every day rather than a part-time role.

The A's also will take a longer look at non-roster infielder Wes Timmons, who impressed the minor-league staff last year with his steady play and his attitude, particularly after being sent down to Double-A Midland from Sacramento in the middle of the season. Timmons, 33, is in his 11th season of pro ball and has yet to crack the majors, so he has many people rooting for him to get at least a shot at some point this season. He's the only non-roster infielder in camp.

The A's like Adam Rosales and Eric Sogard best in utility infield roles, but both are likely to be in the mix at third, too.

There aren't many free-agent third baseman available, although one is well known to A's fans: Former Oakland shortstop Miguel Tejada remains unsigned, as are Wes Helms and Felipe Lopez.

Were the A's to pursue a trade, they're likely to have interest in Angels infielder Alberto Callaspo, who is believed to be available, though Oakland probably would not be willing to part with any significant prospect for him.

Lew Wolff, A's owner, addresses his troops

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Oakland's first full-squad workout had an unusual preamble.

Owner **Lew Wolff**, for the first time, addressed the team during spring training, at the invitation of manager **Bob Melvin**.

"That shows me he's excited about our team and the future of our young guys," catcher-third baseman **Josh Donaldson** said. "I like it."

Wolff said he did not say much but did tell the team, "I like winning."

"Half the guys were probably wondering, 'Who the hell is that old guy?' " Wolff said with a smile. "It was fun."

Melvin said he discussed his rules with the group and talked about continuing to work efficiently in camp, but he said much of the time was taken up with introductions because so much of the coaching staff is new.

Melvin also stressed that with so many new players and 19 non-roster invitees, first impressions will "go a long way," and all will be evaluated carefully.

"Everyone from Manny to whoever is equally important," Melvin said. "You want the non-roster guys to feel they'll be seen as much as anyone else."

Manny Ramirez certainly got plenty of notice Saturday when he took batting practice off A's pitchers **Jarrold Parker** and **Tyson Ross**.

"That was cool - really cool," Parker said of facing Ramirez, **Coco Crisp** and **Jonny Gomes**. "They've all got a lot of experience, and now I can ask them for feedback."

Donaldson, who caught Parker, said it was awesome to have Ramirez step into the box, and he said Ramirez hit one nasty two-seamer from Parker hard on the ground.

"I was like, 'You're already hitting that pitch?' A two-seamer on the hands, that's hard to hit," Donaldson said. "He's a great hitter, one of my favorite hitters to watch. Seeing how he goes about his business is awesome for me."

Oscar time: The movie "Moneyball" is up for six Academy Awards this evening, and general manager **Billy Beane**, depicted by best actor nominee **Brad Pitt**, will be attending the ceremony.

"We all went to the movie premiere and the party afterward and got to know some of the people involved with it," Melvin said. "It's a good movie; it not only relates to baseball but to life in general. I think it appeals to a more wide audience. So we're all pulling for 'Moneyball.' "

A's players know that Beane is at the glamorous Hollywood event, but no one was sure if he'll be walking the red carpet. Pitcher **Dallas Braden** hopes that Beane will be right by Pitt's side.

"I can see Billy looking like the awkward significant other that nobody knows who he is," Braden said. "People will be like, 'Did Brad and Angelina bring their male nanny?'"

Drumbeat: A's third baseman Scott Sizemore injures knee – updated

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser, 2/25/2012, 1:08pm

UPDATE: It was Sizemore's left knee that was injured, and the A's still do not know the extent of the injury. He is still waiting in the training room to be taken for an MRI; apparently it's tough to get in on a Saturday afternoon. That has got to be agonizing, worrying about your knee and your career for more than four hours while waiting for the test that will determine the damage. Sizemore broke that same leg in the Arizona Fall League in 2009.

We are unlikely to get any updates today, but the players who were on that field when it happened said Sizemore went down hard, and there was a definite popping sound. Everyone is hoping for the best, and the A's are calling it a knee sprain for now.

Scott Sizemore hurt his right knee (I'm told it was the right knee but haven't had it verified – *corrected above, it's the left*) during fielding drills during the first hour of the A's first full-squad workout.

He's getting an MRI today, but the A's don't know the extent of the damage, if any. I'm told by one onlooker that there was an audible "pop" when Sizemore planted his foot.

Third base is not an area of a lot a depth for Oakland or most other teams; I asked one team official if the A's might look outside the organization for a third baseman if Sizemore were to miss any significant amount of time, and I was told they've spent much of the past few years trying to fill that position as it is.

I'm told the team is likely to look hard at Wes Timmons and Josh Donaldson for the third-base spot; Adam Rosales and Eric Sogard are both more all-around utility men, though they'd likely get a chance to play there more this spring, too.

UPDATE: Donaldson, who played third during winter ball, reiterated today what he'd told me earlier in camp: He is here to win a job by any means necessary. He can catch, play third, outfield, first base, and he said today he played second twice at Triple-A Sacramento last year and nearly played shortstop once.

"I believe in my ability to play third and contribute at the major-league level, prove myself to Bob (Melvin) and Billy (Beane) and those guys," Donaldson said. "I'm hungry to win a job. I'm here to win a job."

Sizemore's injury muddies A's picture at third

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- The A's entered Saturday's first full-squad workouts with plenty of roster questions in tow. And by the end of the day, manager Bob Melvin was forced to think about another.

Melvin, already facing decisions at first base and in the designated-hitter and outfield slots, may be looking for a third baseman after Scott Sizemore suffered a left-knee injury during a series of infield drills. The A's called it a sprain, but further information is expected following an MRI on Sunday.

Without those results, it's too early to analyze the extent of the injury and how it will affect the team. But several players who witnessed the incident mentioned hearing a "pop" sound, which normally doesn't equate to good news.

Sizemore was helped off the field by trainers and did not apply any weight to his left leg, which is no stranger to injury. In 2009, Sizemore broke the leg while participating in the Arizona Fall League.

"You don't want something like that to happen on the first day," Melvin said. "That's an integral player for us on top of that. But we hope for the best. I feel bad for him."

The 29-year-old Sizemore has made impressive progress at third base since coming over from the Tigers midseason last year. Should he miss a significant amount of time, the A's are expected to examine several replacement candidates, including Eric Sogard, Adam Rosales, Josh Donaldson and non-roster invitee Wes Timmons.

All four of them are options, definitely," Melvin said.

The A's skipper said he will give "an extensive look" to Donaldson, who is also in the mix for the backup catcher job. Donaldson, 26 and a five-year Minor League veteran, has a .268 batting mark and .360 on-base percentage during that time. He most recently hit .261 with 17 home runs and 70 RBIs in 115 games for Triple-A Sacramento.

Donaldson has just 53 appearances at third base under his belt, and none at the Major League level. But he's essentially willing to do whatever it takes to make the team.

"I'm coming in here looking for a job, whether [Sizemore] is hurt or not," Donaldson said. "Honestly, I hope he's not hurt. But it's one of those things, it's part of baseball. And with any injury, there is opportunity. I'm looking for any opportunity right now to make this team and contribute.

"I believe in my abilities to play third, to be able to produce at the Major League level in the lineup. I just want to hopefully, if I'm fortunate enough, prove myself to Bob and those guys that I deserve a shot. I'm hungry to play. I'm hungry to win a job, whether it's third, catcher outfield, I don't care."

Wolff addresses A's full squad off the bat

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- It's not uncommon for A's managing partner Lew Wolff to make his way around spring camp every so often each year. But Saturday marked the first time he chose to speak to the players using such a backdrop.

Wolff was invited by manager Bob Melvin to take part in the morning's introductory meetings, as the club prepared to embark on its first full-squad workouts of the spring.

"I don't have a voice, so I didn't say much," Wolff said. "I said, 'I like winning.'"

Though the A's downplayed his presence, several players noted its significance.

"It was different," catcher Josh Donaldson said. "I've been here [four] camps, and I've never seen him come in here and talk to the team. I think, to me, that shows he's excited about our team and the future our guys have."

Wolff has stood at the center of much criticism in recent years, as the team awaits a decision from Major League baseball on a potential move to San Jose. The very possibility of such a move influenced the club to utilize this offseason as a time to restructure, which led to the departures of three All-Stars -- Gio Gonzalez, Trevor Cahill and Andrew Bailey -- in exchange for 10 prospects.

"I like the trades we made, even though I miss some of the players," Wolff said. "I think [general manager] Billy [Beane] and his guys have put together a pretty solid team, and we've had a couple people surprise people. Every year, I say the same thing. But I think this team has a good probability of surprising people."

"I think half the guys in there were thinking, 'Who is that old guy?' But it was nice to do it. I enjoyed it. There was a whole lot of discussion going on that I appreciated listening to. It was hugely professional."

"I don't think he was really shedding light on anything we weren't aware of, in terms of where people have picked us to finish and what people expect, or the lack of expectations," said pitcher Dallas Braden. "He just reiterated to us that what we do have here in-house is obviously a product of himself and the front office's effort to put us in a positive position."

Meanwhile, Melvin kept his message rather brief, too, reminding his players -- a total of 59 are in camp -- how important first impressions can be.

"There are a lot of firsts over the course of a season -- and none bigger than this one," said Melvin. "Once everybody gets together and hears your message and gets out on the field -- especially with as many new guys and younger guys as we have -- first impressions, I think, go a long way."

Worth noting

- Several A's players and coaches said they will "absolutely" be rooting for "Moneyball" during Sunday's 84th annual Academy Awards. The film, which stars Brad Pitt playing the role of general manager Billy Beane in the tale of a small-market team using statistical analysis to find undervalued players, was nominated for six Oscars.

"We're certainly all pulling for Billy," Melvin said. "It was a good movie, and it relates to not just baseball but life in general. So there's a wide audience that I think it appeals to."

Beane is slated to attend the Oscars with his wife and daughter in Los Angeles.

Major League: Sizemore suffers knee injury

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 2/25/2012, 1:10pm

Less than an hour into their first full-squad workouts of the spring, the A's suffered what could potentially be a big blow to their infield, as Scott Sizemore went down during an infield drill with an apparent left knee injury and exited the field while applying no weight on it at all. It's obviously too early to speculate how serious the injury is, but I heard several players mentioning they heard Sizemore's knee "pop" — which, you can imagine, is never a good thing. We're waiting to hear more details from manager Bob Melvin shortly.

Oakland doesn't have nearly as much depth at third base as it does at some other positions, namely first base and outfield, but the names that obviously come to mind when thinking of immediate replacements include Eric Sogard, Adam Rosales, Wes Timmons and Josh Donaldson. Daric Barton has also played third.

Sizemore's wife, Brooke, recently tweeted that her husband is waiting on MRI results. Hopefully they're good ones — Sizemore has put in a lot of work at third base since coming over from the Tigers, and just the other day Melvin commented on how good of shape he appeared to be in.

A's, Giants wait to hear about territorial rights

Janie McCauley, AP Baseball Writer

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- San Francisco Giants president and CEO Larry Baer hinted Saturday there might not be a swift resolution regarding his club's territorial rights in the South Bay and whether the Oakland Athletics will be allowed to relocate to San Jose.

It appears as if negotiations on a possible contract extension with Giants ace Matt Cain also could take a while. While the Giants have said they are committed to keeping their top two pitchers for the long haul - including two-time NL Cy Young Award winner Tim Lincecum - Cain said for the first time Saturday he's seeking a "fair value."

"We're listening to anything that's of fair value. That's the way we're taking it," Cain said.

At the owners' meetings last month, Commissioner Bud Selig said the situation facing the A's and Giants was on the "front burner." He appointed a committee in March 2009 to evaluate the issue facing the Bay Area's two baseball teams, but has not indicated when an announcement on the findings might come.

"We continue to be respectful of the process, and there is a process," Baer said his team's Scottsdale Stadium spring training site. "The game is bigger than any internal machinations. I think it's not good for the game to have whatever internal back and forth between teams. That's not good for the game. We want to be respectful and see the game flourish in our market, in all the markets."

In regards to negotiating with Cain, Baer said "it's to be determined" whether the sides will reach any common ground on what would be considered fair market value. Giants general manager Brian Sabean has long identified keeping his top pitchers around for the long haul as one of his top priorities. Lincecum received a \$40.5 million, two-year contract late last month to avoid an arbitration hearing.

"I don't want to comment on status but any time you're talking, it's a good thing, and we'll talk," Baer said of dealings with Cain. "It's been a lot of back and forth conversations. All I will say is that if there are conversations, that's a good thing. We care about all of our players and the homegrown players, obviously, carry some special qualities. Matt or any of our guys are people that we're going to put big energy into."

The 27-year-old Cain, a two-time All-Star, went 12-11 last season with a 2.88 ERA and reached 200 innings for the fifth straight season - a span in which he also has made at least 32 starts each year. He also didn't allow an earned run during the entire 2010 postseason, when the Giants pulled off an improbable World Series championship.

San Francisco might have to pull out its pocketbook for this one.

Cain hasn't said what price tag or the number of years he would like, though it's believed the right-hander's desired range would be for five years and the upwards of \$100 million considering several other top pitchers around the majors have five-year contracts - Phillies ace Cliff Lee (\$120 million), the Angels' C.J. Wilson (\$77.5 million) and Jered Weaver of the Angels (\$85 million). And Weaver's deal was considered a hometown discount.

Cain, who now has a few new faces in his CAA Sports representative team that includes agent Jeff Berry, said he hopes there will be a decision one way or the other before the start of the season and doesn't plan to think about his contract status once games begin.

"I believe both sides would like to have something resolved, whether it's signing back or whether it's not," Cain said.

While the A's have said since the season ended last fall they expected to hear before the start of the 2012 season whether they would be allowed to move to technology-rich Silicon Valley, nothing appears imminent.

"Think whatever. This was discussed when Steve Schott owned the (A's) 12 years ago," Baer said. "We know it's been studied and being studied. We're cooperating."

A's managing partner Lew Wolff said in an email Saturday he is "simply following the process" and has nothing new to report regarding a decision. Wolff has said his low-budget franchise needs to build a new ballpark in order to survive.

In December 2009, the City of Oakland unveiled three potential spots to build a new ballpark for the A's. Wolff has his sights on San Jose and has repeatedly said his franchise has exhausted its options in Oakland after years of trying.

When asked if the process includes negotiations over a possible settlement to allow the A's to move, Baer paused before saying, "Not necessarily."

"Again, there's a lot of things being studied and I'm going to go back to being respectful of the process. There's a presumption that there needs to be an answer to a question and I'm not sure that that's the question," Baer said of it being a simple yes or no regarding letting the A's move. "I know that some folks would like to see an answer to that question but that's not necessarily the question - maybe it is, maybe it isn't the question that's on the table. I'll just leave it at that."

Notes: All-Star RHP Ryan Vogelsong, nursing a back strain sustained Feb. 7 while lifting weights, said he is set to play catch Sunday. Manager Bruce Bochy said he should be back on the mound for a bullpen in about a week. "He's eager, anxious to get going," Bochy said. "It looks like he's at the tail end of this situation." ... Lincecum pitched a bullpen session with no problems after he was held back earlier in the week because of a stiff back. "He threw great," Bochy said. "He feels good. We're going to still be a little cautious with him."

Baseclogging: Delusions of Grandeur

Jeremy Barfield, OaklandClubhouse.com

Feb 23, 2012

Jeremy Barfield is one of several Oakland A's minor leaguers who have already made their way to Papago Park to get work in ahead of minor league spring training. Barfield reports from Papago and talks about the dreams of every player at the complex, the change between being a rookie and a veteran, some adjustments he is making to his swing and why he hates the term 'prospect.'

It's that time again. Spring Training is upon us. Time to meet all the new faces in the organization. Time to coat myself liberally with sunblock. Time to stretch for half an hour everyday. Time to be herded like sheep under the control of a foghorn. It's organized chaos around Papago Park, and I absolutely love it. All of the hard work I put in during the offseason starts to pay off.

It's beginning to be a role reversal for me. My place in the organization has changed over the past four years. I was once a wide eyed 19 year old. The new kid in town. Now I'm a grizzled 23 year old fresh off the rugged landscape called the Texas League. I was the one asking all the questions, but now I'm the one answering them. The older guys would often pull pranks on me. A few noteworthy ones were stacking 36 stools in front of my locker and completely taping it shut. Another one was the eye black on the inside of the hat. All in good fun though. It's not my style to pay things like that forward so the new guys caught a break there.

It's fun to see how optimistic all the new guys are. Everybody is just happy to be here and sees themselves in the big leagues in the very near future. The harsh reality is only a chosen few get the opportunity to play in The Show. Even having the slimmest chance of ever making it is more than enough for us to continue pursuing our dream.

Like I've said before, it's this uncertainty that drives us. This comes into effect more now than ever after the eventful offseason the team has had. I took a lap around the locker room and I don't even recognize most of the names. It just shows you how small of a window there is for a player to prove his worth. This is a make or break season for me. Only production on the field will provide job security.

I've had the same issue since I signed with the club. From day one some of the coaches wanted to completely change my swing. I am by all means coachable, so I tried all the ideas they threw my way. Unfortunately over the years I had

so many things I was working on that I forgot how to hit the way I did. I forgot how to hit the way the A's liked enough to draft me in the 8th round. I lost my identity as a hitter. I lost my base. That's the worst case scenario. There was no square one for me to go back to.

I had a major breakthrough at the end of last season and carried it on to the offseason work I put in. Now instead of focusing on all of my flaws that apparently need to be fixed we are focusing on improving my strengths. That doesn't mean I'm not trying to minimize my flaws, but in the past we've put so much time and effort into fixing them that my strengths were ignored and those became flaws. No more.

I cringe whenever somebody calls me a 'prospect'. That term is used too loosely. People say players should ignore what's said about them in the media. I believe that's complete nonsense. Public perception is a huge to me. Image isn't everything, but on-field performance alone doesn't make the player. I see everything. I know I'm not the highest touted player in the system. Heck, I didn't even make the cut for this site's top 50 A's prospects. Just knowing that makes me work that much harder. Sometimes you just gotta kick the door down and let the big dog eat.