

Sunday, March 16, 2008

Japan is silly; four cuts by the A's

Four more cuts by the A's: Jerry Blevins, Kirk Saarloos, Matt LeCroy, and Henry Rodriguez. Rodriguez is the guy with a future, the name everyone's buzzing about, as his fastball apparently touches triple figures at times. But let's not get crazy: the guy is 21, he's got two professional American seasons under his belt, and he walked 58 hitters in basically 100 innings last year. He also hit four and threw 13 wild pitches, so I think it's safe to say he hasn't really harnessed his stuff yet. Of course, maybe we can get a tiny bit crazy about 106 strikeouts in those 100 innings and just two homers allowed. It is the low minors, so guys tend to not have a ton of power yet, but a homer every fifty innings is something either way.

LeCroy wasn't going to make the team once it became clear that Mike Sweeney was going to have a hell of a spring. LeCroy brings that nice 3rd catcher vibe, but that's not really necessary, is it? Better to have an actual hitter, and I think Sweeney can more closely approximate one of those than LeCroy at this point.

Saarloos was a long shot to make the team, what with Joe Blanton, Rich Harden, Justin Duchscherer, and Chad Gaudin ahead of him in the rotation. And then there's Dana Eveland and Lenny DiNardo, and even ol' Dallas Braden. I guess his best shot was probably as a long man, but you have to figure that spot belongs to either Eveland or DiNardo, probably the latter. This is not even to mention the fact Saarloos had an ERA over seven last year.

Jerry Blevins I'm a little more surprised about. He had an excellent minor league season last year, making four stops across three levels while racking up these numbers: 77 1/3 innings, three homers, 18 walks, and 102 whiffs. There's a lot to like in that line. That said, he's 24 and he's got a total of 2 2/3 innings in his career at AAA, so I guess it won't really hurt to let him sit down in Sacramento this year and be the A's eighth or ninth bullpen guy, called up if they need him. But I'm not sure I see seven or eight guys ahead of him: Huston Street, Alan Embree, Andrew Brown, Sandy Casilla, and Joey Devine are, I suppose, locks. Keith Foulke? Sure. So that's six, which explains why Blevins is out. I guess I'm just surprised he didn't last 'til the very end, at least to push Foulke. Then again, as I keep forgetting, we're basically at the very end already because of this silly Japan trip. The Red Sox games aren't until the 25th and 26th, but there are a couple of exhibitions lined up for the 22nd, and there are travel days, all of which add up to just three days of regular Arizona spring training left for the A's.

Have I mentioned already how silly this Japan thing is? The A's are going to go over there and play two regular season games, and then come back and have another exhibition series? (The Bay Bridge series that closes the exhibition season every year against the Giants.) And then play two more at home against Boston? For what? To try to drum up interest in baseball in Japan? Hey, Bud Selig! The Japanese already like baseball! And look, this is just me as an A's fan complaining. At least the A's have nothing to really play for this year (or at least that's what everyone says). What if you're the Red Sox? Doesn't this suck, this throwing off of your entire schedule? Aren't you in contention for another championship? Why do you get shafted? I guess it wouldn't have been right to have an A's-Royals series in Japan to start the season, but in some ways, that makes a hell of a lot more sense than sending the champs off on a glorified barnstorming tour. (Which baseball outlawed decades ago!)

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Oakland A's at 16:28