

THE COMMISH'S EXCELLENT SPRING TRAINING ADVENTURE

The Commish is spending the first three weeks of March in Vero Beach, FL attending the last Dodger spring training at storied Dodgertown. The Commish's wife gave him two season tickets and rental of a condo as a Christmas present. Great wife, huh?

Friday, February 29: Irma and I arrived this PM, got settled in the condo with our two dalmations, Maddie and Daffy. No game today, so we just relaxed and went to dinner at the Ocean Grill, one of Vero's best restaurants. While checking in with the hostess, looked around to find Russell Martin and some buddies behind me. Guess what, he had to wait for a table just like we did.

Saturday, March 1: No game today, spent the day waiting while Irma shopped.

Sunday, March 2: Mets came to town today. At least I think it was the Mets, as Gotay, Pagan and Castro were the only position players even close to starters. Would have been great for a Mets fan looking at their future talent. Oliver Perez and Heilman pitched, so it really was the Mets.

Dodgers led 5-3 going to the 9th, then John Ford Griffin dropped a routine fly in RF (scored as a hit???) and RP Koplove dropped a dribbler toward 1B, (also inexplicably ruled a hit by the drunk or blind official scorer), and a single by Pagan drove in two for a 6-5 Mets win. Perez was his usual inconsistent self, gave up 3 runs on 5 hits in 2 innings, although his defense allowed a Kent pop up to fall as a double as the SS, 2B and CF debated on what language they should use to yell "I got it!"

Lowe worked two good innings for LA, and a host of scrub Met RP's shut down the Dodgers for the last 4 innings. Pagan had 3 singles and a SB... Anderson Hernandez and Gotay had two each... Nomar, Loney and Kemp each had two for LA.

Irma left for Jax right after the game, and Boxscore team owner Don Bennett showed up about 6 PM. Don is a Pittsburgh area native who has been a college professor in Dublin, Ireland for 20 + years. He currently has teams in the Chance, Stengel, Anderson and Williams American Divisions. Don won the Howser award as Boxscore's outstanding owner a couple of years ago. We went for some barbeque and then sipped some Irish whiskey and talked baseball.

Monday, March 3: Don and I attended the Oriole / Dodger matchup. Baltimore led 2-1 going to the 8th as Billingsley and a host of unknowns pitched effectively for both teams. In the 8th, Mike Costanzo homered and Ben Davis drove home a run with a double off Ramon Troncoso. Trailing 4-1 in the 9th the Dodgers tied it on a two run homer by Xavier Paul and an RBI single by Andre Eithier. After a scoreless 10th, both sides were out of pitchers, so the game ended as a tie.

Brandon Jones struck out twice and then homered... Nick Markakis had two hits... Scott Moore had two hits and scored twice... Juan Pierre had two hits and two SB... James Loney doubled twice and was robbed on a shot thru the box...

Tuesday, March 4: Night game, so I spent the day finishing and posting a couple of re-entry drafts. Washington came back to beat the Dodgers 4-3. Story of the game was the debut of Clayton Kershaw, the Dodgers 19 year old #1 rated prospect. He pitched one inning, giving up a lead off HR to Luis Jimenez

(more on him later). Welcome to the bigs, rookie! It looked even worse when he gave up a single, double and hit a batter to load the bases. He redeemed himself with three strikeouts, two of them on off speed curveballs. It looked like the were hitting his 90+ fastball, but when he started mixing it up, he was quite effective.

Kuroda started for LA, two scoreless innings, although two walks leading off the second got him in trouble. A double play got him out unscathed. Andy LaRoche and George Lombard (back from the dead) homered for LA. Felipe Lopez homered for the Nats, and the aforementioned Jimenez won the game with a two run shot.

Don't get too excited, the book on Jimenez is a career minor leaguer with his third organization in three years.

Broxton and Brazoban pitched good innings for LA, while Brian Sanches got the save with two effective innings against the LA subs.

Official scorer proved that he does know that errors exist, as he called a boot of a routine grounder an error (finally!).

Wednesday, March 5: Scored a ticket to the Dodgers / Mets game @ Port St. Lucie. Story here was Penney versus Santana. Both gave up a run in three innings...Penny was not sharp, gave up three hits and walked two, but was bailed out by two double plays. Santana gave up two hits, one walk and struck out four, mostly with his changeup. Game was tied 1-1 into the 7th, when LA scored, aided by a two base drop of a routine fly by Met #1 prospect Fernando Martinez, after he waived off the secondbaseman. Mets tied it in the 8th on a double by Anderson Hernandez and a single by Pagan, and won it in the 9th on an RBI single by Hernandez off Tom Martin.

Jason Repko and George Lombard had two hits each for LA, while Hernandez had three to go with his GWRBI...Martinez had two hits, a walk and a run scored....Jose Reyes was 0 for 4...Mets RP was outstanding, four hits and one unearned run over 7 innings.

Thursday, March 6: No home game today, spent all day working on re-entry drafts.

Friday, March 7: My college roommate, retired US Navy Captain F. Shriver Hering came up from his Juno Beach winter home to watch the Cardinal game. Cards got off to a fast start off Billingsley with back to back homers by rookie hot shot Colby Rasmus and Albert Pujols. Nomar homered in the 3rd, answered by noted slugger D'Angelo Jimenez in the Cards 3rd. Ankiel and Either traded HR's in the 6th. Cards won 6-4. Rasmus didn't look so good after his homer, 3 K's and a pop up...Loney had two hits... Andru Jones had a homer and single... Dodgers lost two #B in less than an inning.... Nomar was hit on the hand by a pitch and Andy LaRoche was hit on the thumb by a wild pick off throw and is out for 8-10 weeks with a torn ligament.

Saturday, March 8: No game today. Irma and I attended a great art show, and then celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary with a fantastic dinner at Vero's best restaurant.

Sunday, March 9: A perfect baseball day! Red Sox in town, clear, sunny, cool (70 degree) day, all time record crowd (9,293) at classic Holman stadium, Dice-K vs Esteban Loaiza (well, Penny or Lowe would have been perfect, Loaiza not so much). Game was essentially over in the first inning. In the Sox first, an error and double by Alex Cora left runners at second and third with Ortiz, Ramirez and Lowell due up. Strikeout, infield pop and strikeout later Loaiza escapes unscored upon. In the Dodger half, Martin doubled and Loney walked, followed by a Jones K. With two down, Matt Kemp blasted a *long* homer. From there on the pitching dominated, as the Sox finished with five hits and the Dodgers only three. Rookie phenom Clayton Kershaw worked a ten pitch inning, threw seven strikes including a knee buckling curve ball K of Sean Casey...Dodger rookie James McDonald had a 1-2-3 inning, despite giving up two hits – Mirabelli was caught trying for 3rd on the second hit, then Thurston was picked off 1st....Sox prospect Jed Lowrie was 0 for 4...when Irma first saw the sloppy Manny Ramirez, her question was “Who is that homeless man?”....Larry King was one section over...he looks like a walking cadaver, his wife, about 50 years younger, a babe.

Monday, March 10: No game today, worked all day on Boxscore re-entry drafts. Based on his performance yesterday, Clayton Kershaw was promoted from minor league camp to major league camp. What this means is that he now dresses in the major league clubhouse and has his name on the back of his jersey instead of just a number. This exposes him to hordes of autograph seekers since they can now identify him.

Tuesday, March 11: My friend Dee Hargett arrived today in time for the game with the Marlins. Dee has coached and umpired baseball and softball for over 30 years, and got me into umpiring seven years ago. He also was my trusty assistant back in the pre-internet dark ages of Boxscore when we had to copy, fold, and mail a ten page report weekly to every Boxscore owner. Florida won a slugfest 7-6, with a four run 7th off Brazoban and Biemel. Willingham and Jose Castillo each had two hits and Ugglia a HR for the Fish...Furcal three hits and two RBI's...rookie 3B Blake DeWitt had a double and homer....starters Andrew Miller and Derek Lowe were both ineffective, giving up three runs on four hits in four innings...Kuo and Broxton each had a great inning for thr Dodgers, Taylor Tankersley and Joe Nelson each had a strong inning for Florida....Larry King and Pat Sajak led the list of “B list” celebs at the game...Tommy Lasorda is back in the managers slot as Torre has left with half the squad for China...Jones and Kemp are the only regulars going to China.

Wednesday, March 12: Dee still in town for a game vs Washington. Dodgers lost again (I must be a jinx), this time getting clobbered 10-4 with only two hits. Nats SP Mike O'Connor had a rough start, walking Pierre and Furcal. Three stolen bases, a passed ball and a weak ground out later the Dodgers led 2-0 without a hit. Either and an unknown named Hoffman homered for the Dodgers only hits.... O'Conner finished with five hitless innings, striking out four and retiring the last 9 he faced...Austin Kearns turned the game around with a three run HR...Christian Guzman had four RBI with his two hits...C Humberto Cota had two hits and is now at .667 for the spring...old timer Mike Myers gave up four runs in 2/3 of an inning to make it a runaway...RP Cory Wade, in single A last year, was the only effective Dodger pitcher with two good innings....caught Saito testing his sore calf with about 30 pitches to Sweeney and Kent...Sweeney and Kent came out with Japanese headbands with the rising sun tied around their helmets...Saito cracked up.

Thursday, March 13: Another off day, so I spent the time finishing all the Boxscore re-entry drafts and other assorted housekeeping and prepared for the onslaught of family expected this weekend.

Friday, March 14: An old friend from my mortgage business days, Tom Losco, lifelong Dodger fan, arrived this AM for the Cardinal game. Tom was our ace collector 20 years ago when I was running our mortgage banking company. If Tom was still collecting today, we could solve the mortgage foreclosure problem in short order! It Was Rick Ankiel day at Holman Stadium, as he homered in the first and added a three run shot in the 8th off Brazoban to power the Cards to a 6-4 win. Martin homered and Del Young had two hits for LA....Jess Merrick's favorite new Card RP Jamie Garcia gave up a run in the 8th to blow the save, but became the winning pitcher when the Cards scored two in the 9th off Mike Myers on a two run passed ball.

Saturday, March 15: Tommy and I decided to motor up to Viera to see the Dodgers play the Nationals. My son Doug and his wife Lillie were coming down from Charlotte and met us at the game. Dodgers finally won an easy one, 6 – 1. Brad Penney was almost perfect, giving up only one hit in five....Saito made his first spring appearance with a 1-2-3 6th....Nats finished with only four hits...Andre Eithier was the big stick for LA, driving in four with a homer and two singles...Furcal had the other two RBI. After the game, daughter Lara, son-in-law Brett and grandkids Chase and Karsen arrived for the weekend.

Sunday, March 16: Grandson Chase is quite the autograph hound....before the game he got Loney, Eithier, Nomar, Kershaw and Saito...during the game, coach Jose Vizcaino tossed him a game ball...at age 8, he is in awe of the big leaguers. The game itself was another Dodger home loss, 7-6 to the Marlins...Derrick Lowe was the somewhat ineffective loser, giving up a 3 run HR to Dan Uggla and a solo HR to Jorge Cantu in 5 innings, although he did strikeout 7...Andrew Miller got the win, giving up 6 hits and 3 runs in 4...Marlins lead 7-3 going to the bottom of the 9th...Jason Repko hit a two run HR and the Dodgers loaded the bases with no out...after a K, sub C Gary Bennett brought the crowd to it's feet with a drive to deep center, but it died at the warning track for a SF, making it 7-6...then the ever popular Nook Logan grounded out to end it...Ramirez and Uggla had two hits each for FLA...Pierre, DeWitt and Repko two each for LA.

Monday, March 17: A sad day for Dodger fans as the Dodgers ended a 61 year tradition with their last game in Vero Beach. Prior to the game, Carl Erskine played the National Anthem on his harmonica, and Tommy Lasorda gave a emotion filled speech. The wind was blowing out at Holman Stadium and so were the baseballs, with the Astros hitting five homers and the Dodgers three. Starters Billingsley and Woody Williams were both roughed up, with Billingsley giving up 5 runs in 5 innings on homers by Bourn, Pence and Newhan. Williams was even worse, with 6 runs and 9 hits in 4. Joe Biemel and some scrub named Sierra lost the game for LA, giving up 5 runs in the 6th, topped by JR House's homer. The Dodgers fought back to within a run in the 8th on homers by Preston Mattingly (Don's son) and Andre Eithier. The Astros extended their lead to 12-9 in the 9th on a homer by Gorneault. In the Dodger 9th, the crowd was excited as the Dodgers scored a run and loaded the bases for Furcal, who had two triples and a homer. This time though, he grounded to second, ending the game, the Dodger tenure in Vero, and my spring training adventure.