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# Dodgers outfielder Andre Ethier feels stuck in 'Groundhog Day' after latest injury



Dodgers outfielder Andre Ethier is still working with team doctors and trainers to develop a treatment plan for his back injury. (Gary Coronado / Los Angeles Times)



By **Andy McCullough**

MARCH 23, 2017, 7:45 PM | REPORTING FROM PHOENIX

**T**he realization struck **Dodgers** outfielder **Andre Ethier** as he sat at his home Wednesday. For the second spring in a row, an injury has sidelined him near the end of **spring training**.

A herniated disk in his lower back could cause him to miss opening day. He can only hope to avoid the frustration of 2016, when his fractured leg kept him out of action until September.

“It’s Groundhog Day all over,” Ethier said. “I’ve been stuck in spring training for 18 months now.”

Ethier, who is a few weeks away from his 35th birthday, received a pain-killing epidural injection Monday. He relayed the relief brought by the shot, but he indicated he was not cleared to perform baseball activities. He can ride a stationary bike and lift weights, but he cannot run or swing a bat.

Ethier expects to meet with **Dr. Robert Watkins**, the team’s back specialist, this weekend to put together a treatment plan. Ethier underwent an X-ray examination and a bone scan Tuesday, but he said he had not received the results yet.

“I guess no news is good news,” Ethier said.

But Ethier did not come to Camelback Ranch in a chipper mood. He felt wounded by the combination of a freak injury last spring, which occurred when he fouled a ball off his leg, with an ailment this spring caused by wear and tear on his body.

“That’s probably what’s the tough thing to deal with right now,” Ethier said. “Because last year I felt the whole off-season, the whole year, that a lot of the season was stolen from me because of an injury like that. It just gets you and there’s nothing you can do.

“This one, I know everyone likes to point out how old I am. ... Maybe this is one that catches up to you. But I did everything that I’ve done in the past. I prepared in the same way. I didn’t let my leg play a role. I wasn’t trying to compensate, is what I’m trying to say.”

## **Kershaw fans 11**

In his final extended outing of the spring, **Clayton Kershaw** struck out 11 batters and limited the **Texas Rangers** to a pair of singles in six innings. He required 92 pitches to collect 18 outs, a reasonable ratio that fell short of his standard.

“It was probably more than I would want to throw in six innings in a real game,” Kershaw said inside the visitors clubhouse at Surprise Stadium. “But definitely OK for this one, for sure.”

Kershaw struck out the side in the first inning, including a three-pitch wipeout of former All-Star third baseman **Adrian Beltre**. Kershaw also struck out the final five batters he faced. After his outing, he expressed some discontent with his fastball command, but otherwise was satisfied with the results.

Kershaw will throw an abbreviated outing next week in his final tuneup before April 3, when he will pitching

on opening day for the seventh season in a row. He will tie the franchise record for most opening-day starts. Getting the call for the opener is no surprise, even after he missed 2 1/2 months last season because of a herniated disk.

This spring has offered little evidence of Kershaw's injury last summer. He retired the first 20 batters he faced in the Cactus League. His lone rocky outing occurred last week when he gave up three homers to the [Seattle Mariners](#).

Kershaw's rebound Thursday was dominant.

"Sometimes you just pitch better," Kershaw said. "I think I just pitched a little better today."

### **Seager plays the field**

**Corey Seager** (oblique tightness) played five innings at shortstop during a minor league game against San Diego. At the plate, he went one for four with a single, a sacrifice fly and two strikeouts. He had not played the field since being injured on a throw March 3.

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