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## SPRING TRAINING FROM EXTRANEOUS TO 'GOOD FIT'

### Tigers had no need for Hannahan, but he's sparkling for A's

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If third baseman Jack Hannahan were still in the Tigers' organization, he'd be buried. The Tigers need no help at his position after trading for four-time All-Star Miguel Cabrera and deciding to keep incumbent Brandon Inge.

The good news for Hannahan is, he's no longer affiliated with the Tigers. Better yet, he remains on course to be the Opening Day third baseman for the A's, considering Eric Chavez hasn't fielded a groundball since receiving an epidural 11 days ago.

"No, I wasn't going to sign back there," said Hannahan, who would have departed the Tigers as a six-year minor-league free agent had he not been traded to Oakland last summer. "I was more of an emergency guy, an insurance player for them. That's never the spot you want to be in. I was fortunate to be traded to an organization that wanted me and is behind me and likes the things I do."

After his Aug. 14 acquisition, Hannahan hit .278 with three homers, 21 RBIs and a .369 on-base percentage in 41 games. In an early September series against his pals from Detroit, he went 4-for-10 - with a homer in the opener and game-ending bloop single over Inge in the 10th inning of the finale.

In Tuesday's 6-4 exhibition victory over the Cubs, he made a diving stop to his left, robbing Derrek Lee of a hit and starting an inning-ending double play. He also went 1-for-3 to keep his average at .333 through 10 games.

"A very good fit for us," manager Bob Geren said.

Particularly with Chavez shelved. The six-time Gold Glover took another step forward Tuesday when he got three plate appearances in a simulated game - a walk, a fly to right that was dropped for an error and a single off the wall in left, 350 feet from the plate.

Chavez wasn't supposed to run the bases, according to Steve Sayles, head athletic trainer, but he

couldn't help himself when he smacked the ball to the opposite field - "normal reaction," he said - so he jogged to first and rounded the bag before being replaced by a pinch-runner.

He saw 10 pitches and took three swings, and now he's pushing the A's to get in a game this week as a designated hitter, though he'll be in Los Angeles today for an appointment with Dr. Robert Watkins, who performed Chavez's back surgery in October.

"I want to move this along," said Chavez, who's still not expected to be available for the season-opening series against the Red Sox in Japan. "Do I want to play? Yeah, I do. I don't know what'll happen or should or shouldn't happen.

"I'm really here to play, but that's my problem. I could easily say I'm a month out and ease into it, but that's not my style. If someone says four months, I want to do it in three. That's why I'm where I am right now."

That's why the A's are exercising caution, so Chavez doesn't push himself and aggravate the back again.

Until Chavez is ready to play third, Hannahan is the man. A third-round pick in the 2001 draft, Hannahan played in the Tigers' farm system, a roommate of Curtis Granderson, when the big club lost 300 games from 2003 through 2005, thinking he'd get a chance to break into the majors.

"Early, in Double-A, I had some chances to put a couple of good years together to get to the big leagues, and the opportunity slipped away," Hannahan said. "It was my fault. They didn't have a third baseman that was ready. It was my chance to really do it."

The Tigers settled on Inge at third and had Hannahan play other infield positions at Triple-A, grooming him as a utilityman. He watched from afar when the Tigers became a power in 2006 and swept the A's in the American League Championship Series.

In April, Hannahan was invited to Comerica Park for the Tigers' ring ceremony. He also received a partial share, thanks to his nine hitless at-bats in three games.

"It's \$1,500 more than I thought I'd get," he said.

In 2007, the lefty swinger led the International League in on-base percentage, making the A's take notice. Seven months after the trade, it's clear it benefited both sides. Once Chavez returns, Hannahan would be more of a utilityman. He has played second and short in spring training, and the A's want to try him at first as well.

**A's notebook:** Beckett, Matsuzaka might not appear for Boston against A's in Japan.

**Giants:** Righetti says Zito "looked good" Monday despite results. **D5**

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