

Billingsley among three injured

TEMPE, Ariz. -- Dodgers starting pitcher Chad Billingsley and infielders Mark Loretta and Blake DeWitt were removed from Monday's exhibition game against the Angels with what the club described as minor injuries.

Billingsley and Loretta had mild right groin strains. DeWitt took a knee in the right quad muscle on a take-out slide at second base by Chone Figgins.

"It's a little scary this time of year," said manager Joe Torre. "The groin is the most frightening for me for a pitcher because you don't really know until you go out and compete. Throwing on the side, you might feel all right."

Billingsley said he came out after pitching two innings for precautionary reasons and that he's "not too worried" about the injury. He was replaced by Jeff Weaver to start the third.

"It was a little tight at the start of the second inning, and I came in afterward and told pitching coach Rick Honeycutt and he got Stan Conte, trainer," said Billingsley. "It's pretty much precautionary. No sense taking chances."

Billingsley had a similar strain last spring in the same leg and said he didn't miss an exhibition start, but was shifted to a Minor League game. Torre recalled that Billingsley was trying to make an impression on a new manager and speculated that the leg messed up the pitcher's rhythm.

"It shouldn't be too much time, but I'll try not to rush back too soon," Billingsley said. "I have to get ready for April and not my next start."

Conte said a groin injury for a pitcher can be problematic and often the extent is not known until the next day.

"It doesn't look bad and Bills told us and we took him out so he didn't do anything terrible," said Conte. "He said it was just tight, but it's his push-off leg. Sometimes you can't tell right away how bad it is. Sometimes they can't tell until they wake up the next morning. What you worry about is him reinjuring it or changing his mechanics."

Billingsley allowed two runs in each inning on Monday, the first two scoring when right fielder Andre Ethier lost Torii Hunter's gift triple in the sun, the second-inning runs scoring on Erick Aybar's two-run homer.

"I didn't feel like I was finishing; I was cutting my pitches off," Billingsley said. "Balls were missing high. I was not comfortable following all the way through. My arm feels great. I'm not too worried about this. Last year, I had this. It kind of feels how it felt. In a day or two, it will go away."

Billingsley also walked three and struck out two. He had been scheduled to pitch six innings or throw 85-90 pitches. He came into the game with a 3.86 ERA in four earlier "A"-game starts. He is scheduled to start the third game of the regular season in San Diego.

The 37-year-old Loretta, who started the game at third base and went 0-for-2, felt a grab in his right leg while making an awkward lunge and twisting throw to second base after fielding a fifth-inning grounder by Hunter and came out of the game in mid-inning.

"I don't anticipate missing too many days," said Loretta. "This is precautionary. I was in an awkward position, but I didn't hear a pop or anything like that."

Conte said DeWitt's injury was "not major."

In the game, Billingsley's early exit allowed Torre to see more relievers. He said he was impressed with Jeff Weaver, even though he allowed two runs on three consecutive hits, including a homer by Jeff Mathis. Torre said he especially liked Weaver's use of a sidearm delivery against right-handed hitters.

"That's intimidating to right-handed hitters," said Torre. "That's what I remember from him when he was with Detroit."

Lefties Scott Elbert and Brian Mazzone pitched scoreless innings and Erick Threets returned from eight days off with a shoulder twinge and allowed a pair of runs in one inning. Ramon Troncoso continued to struggle, allowing two runs in one inning.

With Venezuelan infielder Luis Maza rejoining workouts after returning from the World Baseball Classic, Torre said he expects closer Jonathan Broxton back in camp on Tuesday after Team USA's elimination.

Torre said Broxton's throwing had been "accelerated" for the Classic schedule and the skipper was confident the right-hander would be able to step right into games. Torre said he did not think it was necessary for Broxton to pitch in back-to-back games, something no Dodgers reliever has done this spring.

Maza has little chance of making the club for Opening Day because of the crowd of extra infielders the Dodgers have.

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