

SPRING TRAINING WRAP-UP

The Fifth Spot Never Got Won — It Got Left Standing

Detroit closes camp 16-12-2, but the two names who actually decided the back of the rotation are on the injury report, not the leaderboard. A trade with the Cubs, a demotion that answers a question from a month ago, and the 28 names who get to call it Opening Day.

By **Marcus Delaney**, Tigers Beat Writer

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Camp broke Tuesday the way most camps do — quietly, with a bus call time and a 52-man group that had spent a month becoming a 28-man one. Detroit finished its Grapefruit slate at 16-12-2, a solid exhibition record that still undersells the spring's real news: the club's actual story didn't come from the won-loss column. It came from an injury report that rewrote a rotation competition nobody expected to get decided that way.

THE COMPETITION THAT WASN'T

The fifth-starter battle that opened camp — Angel Bello against Jackson Jobe against Pat Dellinger, with Bello the name nobody had on the radar back in December — never actually resolved on merit. Bello took a spring injury on March 7 that escalated into a 60-day DL stint, ending his camp after just four innings (4.50 ERA, two strikeouts) right as the org's own development report had him trending up. Cristopher Sanchez, still working back from an Opening Day injury of his own, opened the year on a rehab assignment at Toledo instead of in the rotation. Between the two, the "battle" simply ran out of competitors: Jobe (1.04 ERA over 8.2 relief innings, mostly stretching out) and Dellinger (7.27 ERA over 8.2 innings, a spring line that reads worse than his track record) both made the club by default, not by winning anything outright.

The finished rotation — Alex Philpott, Pat Dellinger, Andrew Weems, Jackson Jobe, Guo-fang Hou — is the same group the front office pieced together over the winter, with Dellinger and Jobe simply occupying the two spots that opened up rather than the one spot that was actually open. Sanchez still counts as one of the 28 active roster spots per Tom's ruling on rehab assignments; treat him as active-but-unavailable rather than a hole in the group.

WHO ACTUALLY HIT THIS SPRING

Three bats stood out enough to matter beyond exhibition noise. Louis Wood, who the org's own scouting memo had flagged mid-camp for a real power-tool jump, backed it up on the field: .379/.486/.724 in 35 plate appearances, the loudest line on the roster by rate. Thayron Liranzo matched him for thump if not average — six home runs and a 1.136 OPS in 50 trips — and Max Clark wasn't far off (six homers, 1.053 OPS, 11 runs in just 60 PA). Michael Arroyo (1.053 OPS, .500 on-base) and Kevin McGonigle (.950 OPS) both hit enough to make the "did the middle of the order show up" question an easy yes. On the other end, Cody Bellinger's spring (.150/.209/.250 in 43 PA) was cold enough to notice, though it changes nothing about his roster spot — he's playing out the string on an expiring deal either way. Ethan Petry also scuffled at the plate (.217, 20 strikeouts in 64 PA) despite the front office softening his winter ratings drop; worth a game or two of patience before reading into it.

One more line worth a mention for the record book, even if it's not a roster decision: Tommy Judd Jr. — the org's Dev Lab conversion project, still down in the minors building toward a 2033-ish MLB look — hit .333/.392/.556 in 51 spring plate appearances on his new center-field profile. Early, non-roster, doesn't move any needle this year. Still a nice camp for it.

WHO ACTUALLY PITCHED WELL

Away from the rotation fight, the bullpen arms who were always going to make the club mostly made their case in the process: Drew Sommers (0.00 ERA, 10.1 IP), Isaac Coffey (0.00 ERA, 7 IP), Alfredo Zarraga (1.04 ERA), and closer Bradgley Rodriguez (1.12 ERA) all had clean camps. Yordy Herrera did not — 6.00 ERA and four walks over

FINAL SPRING RECORD

GRAPEFRUIT SLATE
16-12-2
.571 win pct · Mar 1 – Apr 1, 2032 · exhibition only, not predictive

THE 28-MAN GROUP

Active roster	27
On rehab (Sanchez)	1
On 60-day DL	Bello

ROTATION, FINAL

1. Alex Philpott	2.08 ERA
2. Pat Dellinger	7.27 ERA
3. Andrew Weems	1.93 ERA
4. Jackson Jobe	1.04 ERA
5. Guo-fang Hou	4.74 ERA

ERA shown is spring exhibition only

CAMP'S BEST BATS

Louis Wood	1.210 OPS
Thayron Liranzo	1.136 OPS
Max Clark	1.053 OPS
Michael Arroyo	1.053 OPS
Kevin McGonigle	.950 OPS

OPTIONED / REASSIGNED

Yordy Herrera, RP	AAA
Pablo Tolo, IF (NRI)	AAA
David Becerra, RHP (NRI)	AAA
Rodriguez / Phipps	AAA/AA

THE MARCH 12 TRADE

Tigers send	
Dameury Rhoades, RHP	
Juan Morales, LHP	
Tigers get	
Justin Nelson, 3B	
Pat Frady, OF	
+ IAF pool space	\$168K

nine innings, the same shaky command that's dogged him before, and he's back at Toledo to open the year rather than in the Detroit pen. It answers, for the record, the question of whether a trade was ever on the table for him this spring: it wasn't. This was strictly a performance-based option, not a value-driven move.

"Nobody wins a rotation spot by not pitching. Bello just ran out of camp to pitch in."

— a front-office read on how the fifth-spot competition actually ended

THE REST OF THE CUTS

Non-roster invites Pablo Tolo (.239/.340/.391 at the plate) and David Becerra (11.91 ERA in relief) both got their promised look at big-league arms and both head back to Triple-A as planned — exactly the outcome the org expected when it extended the invites, not a disappointment. Rule 5 protects Omar Rodriguez and Jamie Phipps got their first big-league camp as 45-man players and were reassigned to the farm along with the rest of the non-roster group: Corey Schulte, Brian Zipay, Billy Walden, Jonathan Piersol, Adam Blanco, Omari Banks, Josh Hicks, William Becker, and Cam Dempsey all head back to their affiliates, along with pitchers Alistair Tanner and Steve Kelley, both of whom had strong camps (2.40 and 1.29 ERA, respectively) but were always ticketed for Toledo depth over a 28-man spot.

THE INJURY LEDGER

Beyond Bello's DL stint and Sanchez's rehab assignment, the spring injury list stayed shallow. Keeler Morfe missed about a week in early March but was healthy well ahead of the cutdown and made the Opening Day bullpen. Pat Dellinger battled a minor issue in mid-March that cost him a couple of turns but didn't threaten his rotation spot. Nothing here changes the shape of the 28-man group beyond the two names that already have.

THE SPRING'S ONE TRADE

Detroit's only in-camp deal sent right-hander Dameury Rhoades and left-hander Juan Morales to the Cubs on March 12 for third baseman Justin Nelson and outfielder Pat Frady, plus \$168,000 in additional 2033 international bonus pool space. Both new pieces arrive on minor-league deals, so there's no 45-man crunch to manage. The logic lines up with how the front office has talked about pitching depth all winter: Rhoades had topped out as a Triple-A arm and Morales was organizational filler, while Nelson gives the system a bench-caliber body at third and Frady adds a lottery-ticket outfield bat in rookie ball — replacement-level pieces exactly where Tom said he wanted them, plus a bit more spending room for next January's international class.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The record says 16-12-2, and it's still the least important thing that happened this spring. What actually happened: a rotation competition got settled by health rather than performance, the org's one clean value trade of the spring turned pitching depth it had stopped valuing into organizational infield and outfield pieces plus a bit more January bonus-pool room, and the 28 names walking into Opening Day are close to the group that hoisted the trophy in October — augmented at the margins, not remade. Sanchez counts as one of those 28 even though he's rehabbing at Toledo, which is its own small piece of roster-construction trivia worth remembering the next time an "active roster" number looks a player short. The Tigers Command Center carries live Lineups, Rotation, Bullpen, and Depth Chart sections again as of today; the next checkpoint is whenever the season actually gives Detroit something worth writing about.