



Erik Bishoff Photographer

Forward Eleanor Haring struggled Saturday against the Huskies after going 8 for 12 on Thursday.

## POINT

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injury on Feb. 7 against Oregon State.

"Corrie's our transition point guard," guard Brandi Davis said. "I know if I run the floor like I'm supposed to, she's going to get the ball to me or whoever else runs the floor. I think that not having Corrie hurt us a little bit, but I really feel that Kayla Steen came up and stepped up to the challenge tonight. She did a great job."

### Forwards have roller coaster homestand

Against Washington State on Thursday, starting forwards Eleanor Haring and Kedzie Gunderson shot a combined 65 percent, leading the Ducks with 16 and 13 points, respectively.

Haring, specifically, had talked during the week leading up to Saturday's rematch against Washington about wanting to make sure that the Ducks weren't on the receiving end of another 45-point thumping.

"I think (Haring) just missed some good shots," Smith said. "I think that excitement maybe just caused some overanxiety

on her part."

Haring opened the first half with six-consecutive missed shots before finally hitting her seventh attempt with 2:49 left in the half.

"She missed some shots and it didn't go her way," Smith said. "She was 1 for 8 in the first half and I think had she gotten off to a better start it certainly would have given them some different defensive problems."

The freshman from Australia finished the game 3 for 13 after going 2 for 5 in the second half. Gunderson was 0-for-2 in Saturday's game and fouled out of her first game this season.

### Guards work Mendiola sisters

For the first 29 minutes of Saturday's game, Wagner and Mizusawa played ferocious defense on Washington's top player: Giuliana Mendiola.

"We just stayed in front of her," Smith said. "We really tried to make everything difficult for her. Our whole team did a very good job just coming off screens, making sure they were there, bumping here, just keeping her a little bit off her game. Perhaps near the end she stepped up a bit."

Mendiola had four points in the first 29 minutes and 18 points in the final 11 minutes.

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# Rodriguez deal is official; Yankees part with Soriano

New York acquired the former Texas and Seattle star Monday

By Anthony McCarron  
New York Daily News (KRT)

NEW YORK — When the New York Yankees first started trade discussions for Alex Rodriguez, GM Brian Cashman didn't believe the talks would ever reach the conclusion they did Monday, with commissioner Bud Selig approving the money-laden deal and the Yankees planning a gala press conference for Tuesday to show off their new star.

But there were Cashman and Yankee president Randy Levine announcing the trade, which sent Alfonso Soriano and a minor-leaguer to Texas, over a conference call, proclaiming themselves "ecstatic" over their coup.

"I can't believe we're at the point where it's complete," Cashman gushed. "This is something that's nothing short of spectacular."

Cashman described asking A-Rod to switch from shortstop to third base — the only way the Yankees would trade for him — a "Mount Everest of a request." But the reigning AL MVP, who many in baseball believe is the game's best player, accepted the position change and Cashman called that proof Rodriguez wanted to win.

The A-Rod Era begins Tuesday when the Yankees hold a noon EST press conference at the Stadium, where Rodriguez will put on pinstripes. He is slated to wear jersey No. 13. Manager Joe Torre, who had been at the Yankees' complex in Tampa preparing for the start of spring training, will be there, as will Derek Jeter, the Yanks' captain and shortstop.

Jeter's job seems safe for now, with Cashman saying, "There is no position issue. We have arguably the best left side of the infield in baseball history. ... Derek is our captain and world championship shortstop." But no one promised that Jeter would be shortstop for life, either.

Tuesday ought to be a fun day for the Yanks and A-Rod, but Rodriguez already has had an introduction of sorts to the Yankee Way. Owner George Steinbrenner said Monday at the team's complex in Tampa that he was delighted to have Rodriguez, but he also released a statement reminding his team that winning remains, to quote an old Steinbrenner saw, "second only to breathing."

"In acquiring Alex Rodriguez, we are bringing to New York one of the premier players in the history of the game," Steinbrenner's statement read. "The Yankees are in the toughest division in baseball and now, with the team we have assembled, we have to go out and produce on the field."

Cashman echoed Steinbrenner's sentiment, saying, "The only thing we've won with this is the back and front pages and the lead story on some networks. That's powerful, but the players still have to go out and prove it on the field. That starts with pitchers and catchers and building a special season. We have to stay healthy, injuries, all those things that baseball will throw at you."

"But there is no question we are a better team having done this and it gives us a better chance to compete with everyone else who improved themselves during the offseason."

One of those teams is the Red Sox, who had their own chance to get Rodriguez and failed. The fact that the Yanks succeeded should spice up the best rivalry in baseball and so should some of the verbal sparring done between the two clubs over the deal.

Levine bristled when told of comments made by Red Sox honcho Larry Lucchino, who once described the Yankees as "the Evil Empire." Lucchino congratulated the Yankees for "deploying their resources," obviously referring to Yankee dollars.

"I think Larry Lucchino is probably disappointed, but this day is about the New York Yankees," Levine said. "We do know what we're doing here."

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## Red Sox will be ready for New York onslaught

When I heard Alex Rodriguez would join the Yankees — the Tiffany player on the Tiffany team — I felt as I did in October when Jorge Posada's bloop

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hit shook Yankee Stadium. No matter what the Red Sox do, the Yankees will trump them.

The Rodriguez sweepstakes reprised last year's American League championship series: After Boston seemed en route to clinching the pennant, the Yankees swooped in like a condor and snared the prize.

Red Sox fans continue to serve their sentence of life without a World Series title. The Yankees again have the luck. They got Babe Ruth in 1920 because the Bosox were foolish enough to sell him. They got Rodriguez because two months ago the Red Sox let their tentative trade for him disappear into a financial fog.

But the Yankees' luck against the Bosox cuts even deeper than Ruth and Rodriguez. The Yanks even get the bloop hits when needed.

In November, I came across this quote from Ted Williams:

"Oh, God, that cheap hit, that cheap ... hit," Williams said. "Forty years later, I can close my eyes and still see it."

Williams made that comment in David Halberstam's book "Summer of '49" about the 1949 pennant race between the Yankees and Red Sox.

I knew the 1949 American League season ended as 2003 did: the Yankees and Red Sox pitted in a winner-take-all game at Yankee Stadium for the pennant and a spot in the World Series.

I also knew, as I trust almost every Red Sox fan does, that the foundation of the Yankees' victories in both those games came from an eighth-inning rally.

But in the years since I read Halberstam's book, I had forgotten that the Yankees' key eighth-inning hit in 1949, as in 2003, was a blooper.

Last fall, Posada dropped his two-run bloop double into centerfield off the fatigued, over-extended Pedro Martinez. Posada's hit capped a three-run rally and tied the score. Mariano Rivera blanked the Red Sox until the Yankees won in the 11th on Aaron Boone's leadoff homer.

The 1949 blooper came from Yankees rookie infielder Jerry Coleman. New York had scored once in the eighth to increase its lead to 2-0. Coleman then batted with two out and the bases loaded. He hit his

blooper down the rightfield line. It fell, and three runs scored for a 5-0 Yankees lead. Boston scored three in the ninth, but lost, 5-3.

Four decades later, Williams lamented Coleman's hit as if it had just landed.

It's cruel that Williams, who understood the science of the line drive as well as anyone who ever gripped a bat, should have to stand in the outfield and watch his team's season vanish on a blooper.

It's cruel that bloop hits in 1949 and 2003 would enable the Yankees to extend baseball's most famous shutout: Since Ruth joined the Yankees, the Yankees have won 26 World Series and the Red Sox haven't won any.

As when they acquired Roger Clemens in 1999, the Yankees have welcomed spring training by acquiring a Hall of Fame talent. They again have dropped the hammer of competitive imbalance on the rest of baseball at the very juncture — the opening of training camp — when optimism among all fans should peak.

But the Yankees might yet need another big bloop hit this fall. Even with Rodriguez's arrival, the good ship Steinbrenner can't be called anything close to a lock for the World Series title (as if anyone ever could be in February).

No matter how many runs Rodriguez helps the Yankees score in the regular season, they likely will encounter pitchers in the postseason who can restrain them. The Yankees will then need strong games from their starters — their new starters. Only Mike Mussina remains from last season's rotation regulars. Clemens, Andy Pettitte and David Wells are gone. The new starters carry credentials and questions: Javier Vazquez, exchanging Montreal's obscurity for the big stage; Kevin Brown, needing to stay healthy; Jon Lieber, returning from a major arm injury; and Jose Contreras, carrying all of nine career starts on his resume.

The Red Sox classically have loaded up with hitting, while the Yankees countered with superior pitching. Now look at this off-season. The Red Sox didn't get Rodriguez, but they added Arizona starter Curt Schilling and signed Oakland free-agent closer Keith Foulke.

John Lowe is a sports columnist for the Detroit Free Press (c) 2004. Distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.