

Rangers try to stay afloat during key AL West trip

Written by Administrator
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ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Yu Darvish gave the injury-riddled Texas Rangers a nice send-off on an important road trip that includes all three teams above them in the AL West standings.

The Japanese ace's first complete game in the major leagues — a shutout, no less — still can't hide a sobering reality. The Rangers are eight games behind Oakland and dangerously close to last-place Houston, a 100-loss team for three years running.

Texas just made its 20th move on the disabled list. Four first basemen are on the DL. Left-handed starter Martin Perez won't be back until sometime during the 2015 season. Matt Harrison, another lefty that was supposed to be in the rotation, may be finished for good.

Somehow the Rangers will try to find a way to gain ground starting Friday night in visits to Seattle, division-leading Oakland and the Los Angeles Angels.

"At some point, we've got to start getting blessed by the baseball gods," manager Ron Washington said. "But we have to make that happen. They're not just going to come down and say, 'OK, you all have been through enough misery. I'm going to take you out of it.' No, you've got to pull yourself out of your misery."

The Rangers have actually done it once already. They started a challenging 11-game trip last month on the biggest downer of the season: news that first baseman Prince Fielder needed neck surgery and was finished for the year.

Texas took three of four from AL Central-leading Detroit and ended up winning seven games, capped by Darvish's eight shutout innings in a 2-0 win at Washington.

Fielder's replacement is the problem this time, with Mitch Moreland finally giving in to the need for surgery on an ailing left ankle. The first report was he would miss three months, but now there's a chance he could opt for a procedure that will reduce his absence to four weeks.

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Regardless, the Rangers had to give Brad Snyder a crash course on playing first at Triple-A Round Rock, and he started the final two games of the last homestand. Jim Adduci figured to follow Moreland, but he rebroke his left pinkie finger near the end of a rehab assignment and will probably miss another month.

The Rangers have used 40 players, and 10 are rookies. They have a majors-leading 14 players on the DL.

"I think for a little while, the training staff was like hesitant to deliver some of this news to Wash or myself," general manager Jon Daniels said. "But I think they've gotten over that unfortunately."

With the rotation crumbling around him and the Rangers carrying an AL-worst 4.53 ERA, Darvish is on the best run of his three seasons in the majors. In his last six starts, he is 5-1 with a 1.51 ERA and 59 strikeouts in 47 2-3 innings.

"Of course I get comfort with Darvish out there," Washington said before the right-hander ended a four-game losing streak in a 6-0 win over Miami. "It's not just Darvish. Darvish can go out there and pitch real well and if we don't score any runs, it won't matter."