



SF Giants Press Clips

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San Francisco Chronicle

Giants' roster move means no Cueto until at least June 28

Henry Schulman

PHILADELPHIA - Days after the Giants said Johnny Cueto would miss six to eight weeks with a sprained right elbow, they conceded the "six" part was not going to happen. They needed a 40-man spot to promote reliever Jose Valdez from Triple-A on Thursday and placed Cueto on the 60-day disabled list.

Cueto will not be eligible to return until June 28, two months after his last start. Manager Bruce Bochy said the Giants are "being on the safe side of when we think he'll be ready and finish his rehab."

Meanwhile, Madison Bumgarner is expected to throw off a mound for the first time next week and could start what should be a four- or five-game rehab assignment in the minors within two weeks.

The absences of Bumgarner and Cueto have led to a lot of short outings by starters, necessitating gobs of bullpen innings. That in turn has created a nearly constant shuttle of relievers between the big club and Sacramento.

D.J. Snelten threw 54 pitches of mopup Monday night so he went down and Derek Law came up. Law threw 39 pitches Wednesday, so down he went (without a chance to pitch in his hometown of Pittsburgh this weekend) and up comes Valdez, a 28-year-old right-hander who has thrown in 46 big-league games since 2015.

This is hardly the ideal to run a roster, but this is the Giants' lot with their top two starters gone unless those who are here step up and provide more quality innings, as Chris Stratton, Ty Blach and Andrew Suarez did in Atlanta.

As long as rotation struggles to provide innings, the Giants will have to stick with 13 pitchers. So the question of when Mac Williamson or Hunter Pence might return is moot for now. The Giants do not have a spot for a fifth outfielder.

The Giants made one more roster move, activating left-hander Josh Osich from the disabled list and optioning him to Sacramento

Sweep-aversion: The Giants are leaning on Blach to pitch another game like he did at Citizens Bank Park last year, when he pitched his only career shutout, to get out of Philly with one game out of four.

It's odd after three hideous losses to think that a win Thursday (in a game that will not be on TV) would give the Giants a winning record on the trip, at 4-3, heading into the final three games at Pittsburgh.

Friday is going to be a big deal in the 'Burgh. It's Andrew McCutchen's return. McCutchen got a rare day off Thursday, which was planned. Same with Buster Posey.

San Francisco Chronicle

Giants' Philadelphia story no comedy — three straight losses

Henry Schulman

PHILADELPHIA — This is one Philadelphia story that Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant could not have saved.

This visit to Citizens Bank Park has been a disaster flick for the Giants, who spent three games in Atlanta decimating the Braves only to get a gallon of their own medicine here.

Philadelphia crushed the Giants 11-3 Wednesday night and has outscored them 26-5 in the first three games of a series with Thursday's matinee remaining, which can be viewed only with a Facebook account.

Their pitching aside — Chris Stratton allowed five runs in 42/3 innings and Pierce Johnson surrendered six in relief — the Giants have gone stone cold at the plate after they scored 24 runs over three games in Atlanta.

“You have to give them credit,” manager Bruce Bochy said, referring to Phillies starters Zach Eflin, Aaron Nola and Nick Pivetta. “They pitched well and we didn’t quite pitch as well. When you don’t get hits with runners in scoring position, you look flat. We need to get somebody to do something to provide energy in the dugout.”

Bochy made a change, hoping to goose the offense. He had Brandon Belt start in left field and Pablo Sandoval at first base to get both in the lineup together.

“It’s something I’ve been thinking about doing,” Bochy said. “Things have been going well the last couple of weeks, but when you have a couple games like we’ve had, this does give you two pretty good left-handed bats in the lineup. I think you’ll see more of it.”

The move also underscores an odd imbalance in the pitching the Giants have faced and the roster flaw it has exposed.

For reasons that are hard to pinpoint, the National League West is flooded with left-handed starting pitchers. In their first 31 games, mostly within the division, the Giants faced 18.

The East is stuffed with right-handed starters, and the Giants are seeing nothing but righties on this 10-game trip.

The main problem lies in the outfield. With Mac Williamson and Hunter Pence hurt, Gregor Blanco has become the regular left fielder, leaving right-handed hitters Gorkys Hernandez and Austin Jackson to share center.

That is not what the Giants employed them to do. Blanco and Hernandez were supposed to be the fourth and fifth outfielders. The Giants signed Jackson to move around the outfield, face left-handed pitching and perhaps platoon with Steven Duggar when the Giants thought their center-field prospect was ready.

Jackson has had to start against many of the righties the Giants have faced, and his numbers reflect it. He entered Wednesday night’s game batting .224 with a team-leading 35 strikeouts in 85 at-bats, which would be easier to accept if he were playing well in center. But he’s not.

Hernandez, who started against Pivetta, had a .298 average but still was hitting 54 points lower against right-handers.

None of this was an issue in Atlanta, where the Giants pounced on right-handers Mike Foltyniewicz, Brandon McCarthy and Mike Soroka in a sweep. It has been in Philadelphia.

The problem would ease if Williamson returned from his concussion soon. He could play left field every day and give Bochy the option of choosing among Hernandez, Jackson and Blanco to play center based on matchups.

Another potential solution that lies in the minors is unlikely to occur.

The Giants could promote Duggar, giving them a left-handed bat and a much better center fielder. But they are reluctant to add him to the 40-man roster, requiring another player to be cut, and disrupt Duggar’s development only to send him back to Sacramento when Williamson returns.

“There are things we are having him work on, and we don’t want to disrupt that, change direction and then send him back down after 10 days,” general manager Bobby Evans said.

Duggar has cooled off, too, including a recent eight games in which he was 5-for-27 with 13 strikeouts.

San Francisco Chronicle

Giants’ Chris Stratton can’t stop Phillies in another big defeat

Henry Schulman

PHILADELPHIA — During their three-week run of series wins, the Giants rightly praised the players who had produced for those on the disabled list. Starters Chris Stratton, Ty Blach and Andrew Suarez got a lot of the credit.

The three losses to the Phillies by scores of 11-0, 4-2 and 11-3, which erased all the Giants’ gains from the weekend sweep in Atlanta, provided a reminder that trying to thrive, much less survive, is not easy without Madison Bumgarner and Johnny Cueto.

For the moment, the Giants lack a true stopper, that big arm that can go seven innings almost without fail and stifle the opponent, the type of pitcher who becomes even more important for a team struggling to score.

Stratton has not been a stopper, but he consistently kept the Giants in the games he started for most of 2018. That has changed. He lasted just 11/3 innings in an April 28 start against the Dodgers, allowing six runs, and on Wednesday, he gave up five runs in 42/3.

That first game came with a good excuse — his marathon, sleepless journey to Mississippi for the birth of his daughter.

Fatigue was not the issue against the Phillies. Walks were. Stratton walked Odubel Herrera with two outs in the first inning, made a wild pickoff throw, then allowed two runs on a Carlos Santana double and Maikel Franco single.

After Franco homered in the fourth, Stratton walked three more in the fifth, leading to two runs and his exit.

“Overall, I didn’t do a good enough job commanding the fastball,” Stratton said.

Stratton considered something else. He has allowed first-inning runs in each of his past three starts, including Friday’s 9-4 win at Atlanta.

“I don’t know if I need to change my routine or something, but I’ve got to do a better job of setting the tone for the game,” he said.

Getting early run support would help, too, but the Giants could not provide any despite one-out singles in the first by Andrew McCutchen and Buster Posey off Nick Pivetta.

In what has become a theme in the series, Pivetta escaped by striking out Brandon Belt and Evan Longoria.

Had one more hitter struck out Wednesday, the Giants would have had at least 12 strikeouts for three consecutive games, which would have been a first for the franchise in at least 110 years.

The game became a rout when Pierce Johnson walked three in a six-run sixth inning.

San Jose Mercury News

Should the Giants be concerned about their increase in strikeouts?

Kerry Crowley

PHILADELPHIA—Phillies starter Aaron Nola should be an All-Star this year, but on Tuesday night, the Giants helped the right-hander look like a Cy Young contender.

Nola induced 26 swings and misses on 109 pitches, the second-most whiffs generated by any pitcher in a single game this season. His curveball darted out of the zone and his changeup complemented a pair of fastballs he commanded on either side of the plate, so it wasn't a surprise that Nola established a new career-high with 12 strikeouts.

One element of Nola's performance that might raise concerns for the Giants is that he picked up his final strikeout in the sixth inning, meaning San Francisco did little to test the Phillies' defense early in a game decided by two runs.

It's not the first time an opposing starter has carved up Giants hitters and cruised to a win this year, a trend that may prove troublesome if it continues throughout the season.

Through 37 games, the Giants have already struck out at least 10 times in 18 contests and posted a 6-12 record in those games.

After Nola exited Tuesday's game, three Phillies relievers combined for five more strikeouts as the Giants ended a nine-inning game with 17 punchouts for the second time this season. Prior to 2018, the Giants had only struck out 17 times once in a nine-inning game and that was an 18-strikeout day against Dodgers left-hander Sandy Koufax on August 31, 1959.

Between 1960 and 2017, the Giants had never struck out more than 16 times in a nine-inning game. In the past three weeks, they've done so twice.

Contact is down around baseball as the so-called "launch angle revolution" has inspired players

to swing for the fences, but teams that strike out more than others aren't necessarily doing themselves any favors.

The club with the lowest strikeout rate in the Major Leagues last season was the Houston Astros, and they won the World Series. But was their ability to put the ball in play a predictive measurement for their overall success?

The 2016 champions, the Chicago Cubs, ended the regular season with the eighth-worst strikeout rate of any team, so striking out at a high clip isn't guaranteed to prevent success.

On the opposite side of the equation, the 2018 Kansas City Royals currently lead the league with the fewest strikeouts per nine innings this season, but they're already 12 games under .500.

Over the course of a season, a team is bound to face pitchers who earn their paychecks because they miss bats with such regularity, but the Giants have already matched up against several of the league's strikeout leaders.

Nationals starter Max Scherzer leads all of baseball with 13.94 strikeouts per nine innings and he racked up 17 swings and misses and 10 strikeouts in a 15-2 win over the Giants. D'Backs left-hander Patrick Corbin, who ranks second in the National League in strikeouts per nine innings, has faced the Giants twice and picked up 17 strikeouts over 14 and 1/3 innings.

Angels left-hander Garrett Richards hasn't thrown enough innings to qualify for the leaderboard, but his 11.8 strikeouts per nine innings would rank fourth among all Major League pitchers. His outing against the Giants padded his total, as he punched out 11 San Francisco hitters in the club's first 17-strikeout game of the year.

Is a high strikeout rate destined to doom the Giants over the course of a 162-game season? The data available suggests it's difficult to draw any significant conclusions, but whiffing so frequently probably won't crush the Giants' bid to contend.

The New York Yankees have won 17 of their last 18 games and strike out at a nearly equivalent rate to the Giants. Of course, the Yankees have hit a Major League-best 51 home runs, but they're not the only team that's succeeding despite their swings and misses.

The Phillies are on the brink of surpassing the Braves for the National League East lead and their 9.83 strikeouts per nine innings is the third-worst rate in baseball. The first-place team in the National League West, the Arizona Diamondbacks, are also striking out more often than the Giants, and they don't rank among the top half of baseball in total homers.

With six weeks of the regular season in the books, it's too soon to say if a Giants team that posted the sixth-best strikeout rate in baseball in a 98-loss season will be held back by having the league's eighth-worst strikeout rate to date.

Instead, it might be better to hold off from big-picture conclusions and evaluate strikeout rates on a micro level.

Center fielder Austin Jackson's strikeout rate is up 13 percentage points this season compared to his career rate of 23 percent. Jackson has struck out in 17 of his 29 at-bats against right-handed pitchers, and the Giants know Jackson is best served by playing in favorable matchups against lefties.

If left fielder Mac Williamson returns from the disabled list and picks up where he left off, the Giants won't need to use Jackson against right-handed pitchers. But with just four healthy outfielders on the roster and a limited amount of options for manager Bruce Bochy to turn to, Jackson has had to take more at-bats against righties.

"Right-handers, he's had his struggles," Bochy said. "He'll try to get a little more contact here and put the ball in play, but in the early go he just hasn't gotten on track."

Shortstop Brandon Crawford and third baseman Evan Longoria are the two regular starters whose strikeout rates have spiked at least five percentage points above their career averages this season, but both players struggled through tough stretches at the beginning of the year.

"We said the same thing about Crawford a week ago and you see how he's picked it up," Bochy said. "It's going to take a good game or two and (Jackson) will get rolling."

Thanks to a late April surge, Longoria cut down his strikeout totals and raised his batting average. During the first week of May, Crawford did the same. Though a higher strikeout rate for either player shouldn't dramatically alter the Giants' ability to drive in runs, the club might actually benefit if both players attempt to lift the ball in the air more often.

Longoria leads the Giants in extra base hits and big swings from Crawford have the potential to extend big innings because he usually hits in the sixth slot or lower in the Giants order.

Ultimately, the Giants have posted a better record when they don't strike out so frequently, but on some days, they're bound to run into All-Star candidates like Scherzer, Corbin and Nola. Those are games they're more likely to lose anyway, so perhaps it's too soon to evaluate how an increased strikeout rate may be hurting the Giants' chances.

And perhaps Nola will contend for that Cy Young Award after all.

San Jose Mercury News

Giants blown out for second time in three nights, losing skid hits three games

Kerry Crowley

PHILADELPHIA—In the midst of a 98-loss season in 2017, an early June visit to Philadelphia left a

scuffling Giants team dejected as they dropped two of three to the last-place Phillies.

In a season marked by low points, that was rock bottom.

Though the 2018 Giants remain above .500 at 19-18, they certainly anticipate this year's series at Citizens Bank Park is the most suffering they'll have to endure.

After an 11-3 loss, their second blowout defeat in three nights, they hope their fortune won't get worse.

Manager Bruce Bochy's squad won't allow its three-game losing streak to shake a big-picture perspective, and considering the Giants opened a 10-game road trip with three straight wins, there's still plenty of ways for the club to ensure its east coast travels yield success.

Doing so after their last three contests, though, will require remarkable resilience.

"You can look at these three games and let that define what's happened on the trip," Bochy said. "But we're .500 against two pretty good teams and we've just got to bounce back. We've still got a chance to have a good road trip here."

When starter Johnny Cueto joined ace Madison Bumgarner on the Giants' disabled list with a sprained ankle in early April, right-hander Chris Stratton pitched as if he belonged at the top of a rotation rather than a player who had to solidify his job with a strong spring training.

But with Cueto out for at least six-to-eight weeks with an elbow sprain and Bumgarner expected to miss another month, Stratton did not meet the same standards in Wednesday's defeat.

The right-hander lasted 4 and 2/3 innings and surrendered five earned runs before the Phillies unloaded on rookie reliever Pierce Johnson for six earned runs.

After outscoring the Braves 24-9 over the weekend, the Giants have lost three in Philadelphia by a combined score of 24-5.

"You're talking about just the oppo happening," Bochy said. "Give them credit. They're pitching well. You're not quite pitching as well and you're not getting hits with runners in scoring position. You look flat."

Two outings after Stratton allowed a career-high six runs in 1 and 1/3 innings against the Dodgers, the Phillies became just the second team to tag him for more than three earned runs in a start in his career.

"I guess you would say (Stratton) is one of our established guys," Bochy said. "He's been throwing the ball well, had one hiccup, but they got the timely hits. We're hoping to get six out

of him but he just couldn't get through that fifth."

The Giants' offense did little to ease mounting concerns over back-to-back rough nights as San Francisco didn't score against starter Nick Pivetta. Pivetta needed 29 pitches to escape the first inning, but after allowing a pair of one-out singles, the right-hander struck out Brandon Belt and Evan Longoria to end the frame.

A failure to make Pivetta pay for first-inning location mistakes proved costly, especially considering Pivetta surrendered six earned runs in one inning of work in his last start. Once the second-year right-hander settled in, he cruised against a Giants' lineup that has struggled to make contact all series.

Pivetta easily outdueled Stratton, who allowed a pair of runs in the first after recording two quick outs to lead off the inning.

Phillies first baseman Carlos Santana continued to crush Giants pitchers as he provided an RBI double in the first inning before delivering a two-run single to knock Stratton out of the game in the fifth. For good measure, Santana greeted reliever Derek Law with a two-run single in the sixth.

Santana entered the series with a .169 average and 13 RBIs and will start Thursday's game with a .189 mark and 23 RBIs.

The first time Cueto joined Bumgarner on the disabled list, Stratton threw seven innings of scoreless ball to quiet the Padres at Pecto Park. The former first round draft pick's ability to shut down the Diamondbacks with seven more innings the day after Cueto returned in a 1-0 loss helped keep the Giants afloat, but this time, Stratton couldn't put an end to the Giants' losing streak.

"I just think overall I didn't do a good job of commanding the fastball today," Stratton said. "That put us in some bad counts and you just can't walk people. I don't know how many three-ball counts I had today but I feel like it had to be a lot."

The three-game skid is the third the Giants have suffered this year, but San Francisco has yet to lose four in a row.

After back-to-back off nights from the Giants' offense, Bochy attempted to shake up the lineup by sending Brandon Belt out to left field and starting Pablo Sandoval at first base.

The maneuver didn't provide the type of spark the Giants were hoping for, though, as Sandoval finished the night 1-for-4 with an error.

Despite being taken out with a double switch in the sixth inning, Longoria recorded a multi-hit game as he laced a double off the top of the left center field wall in the top of the fourth before

doubling down the line to drive in Belt in the sixth.

MLB.com

Stratton struggles as Giants drop series to Phils

Chris Haft

PHILADELPHIA -- With one rough series, the Giants have nearly negated all of their recent accomplishments.

Their streak of five winning series in a row ended with their 11-3 loss on Wednesday night to the Philadelphia Phillies, who won the first three games of this four-game set.

The Giants own a respectable 19-18 record, but they strongly resembled a sub-.500 club against the Phillies, who have defeated them in seven of their last nine meetings while outscoring them, 63-41, in that span.

San Francisco lost by a respectable 4-2 margin Tuesday but dropped the other pair of games by a combined score of 22-3. That's about as lopsided as it gets in Major League baseball.

"We have to have somebody come through to raise the energy in that dugout. That's up to us to do that," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said.

Reaching these depths hasn't been easy for the Giants. They had to underperform in virtually every facet of the game. Here's how they did so in their latest setback:

- The welcome surge of offense that they received in last weekend's sweep of Atlanta has become a memory. Since that series, they're 1-for-17 with runners in scoring position, including 1-for-8 Wednesday.
- The ability to apply pressure on opposing starters has deserted them. Zach Eflin, Aaron Nola and Nick Pivetta combined to limit San Francisco to one run and 13 hits in 18 2/3 innings while walking three and striking out 28.

Pivetta, the Giants' tormentor on Wednesday, surrendered 10 runs over six innings in his previous two starts. He labored through a 31-pitch first inning before recovering to last five innings.

"They're a veteran hitting club, they spoiled some pitches and I was able to capitalize and throw some breakers when I needed them," said Pivetta (2-2). "That first inning kind of killed me. It was a little hard, but I got out of it with no runs so I was pretty happy with that."

- The Giants remained susceptible to the long ball, a tendency that could worsen once summer arrives and batted balls fly more comfortably through the air. Maikel Franco's fourth-inning homer off Chris Stratton (3-3) was the 13th homer San Francisco has allowed in its last eight

games.

- Defense remained a problem. Stratton's first-inning throwing error on a pickoff attempt did not directly influence the scoring, though it did ease Odubel Herrera's trip to home plate on Carlos Santana's double, since he was able to take off from second base instead of first. San Francisco has committed at least one error in its last seven games for a total of 14.
- A study in precision when he's thriving, Stratton issued a season-high four walks. Three of those baserunners scored. The other free pass was a four-pitch giveaway to Herrera, which set up Santana's single with two outs in the fifth inning and finished Stratton.

"Walks have killed us," Bochy said. "If you look at all these rallies, there's been a walk involved."

Said Stratton, who criticized his fastball command: "I don't know how many three-ball counts I had today, but I felt it had to be a lot." (Answer: seven out of 22 batters he faced.)

SOUND SMART

Despite their offensive inconsistency, the Giants are the only Major League team with two players who have reached base safely in at least 20 consecutive games apiece. Both streaks are current. They belong to Brandon Belt (21 games) and Andrew McCutchen (20). Belt has posted a .320 batting average and a 1.040 OPS during his streak. McCutchen has a nine-game hitting streak.

HE SAID IT

"You don't want to think like that, but obviously that is when you miss your top two guys, especially with the way they throw the ball." -- Bochy, on not having sidelined co-aces Madison Bumgarner and Johnny Cueto around to stop losing streaks

UP NEXT

The Giants will try to avoid a series sweep in Thursday's finale against the Phillies. Ty Blach, who pitched his first career shutout at Citizens Bank Park last June 2, will try to approach that performance in the 10:05 a.m. PT encounter against the Phillies and right-hander Vince Velasquez. The game will be broadcast exclusively on Facebook.

MLB.com

McCutchen looking forward to Pittsburgh series

Chris Haft

PHILADELPHIA -- Andrew McCutchen said that he didn't know how he'll feel on Friday when he approaches the batter's box for his first PNC Park plate appearance as a member of a Major League ballclub other than the Pittsburgh Pirates, a team and city he represented with distinction from 2009-2017.

In anticipation of that event, however, the Giants right fielder did liken it to a pair of life-

changing experiences.

"I didn't know how I was going to feel before I got married, walking down the aisle," McCutchen said Wednesday, two days before San Francisco opens a three-game series at Pittsburgh. Referring to his son, Steel, McCutchen added, "I didn't know how I was going to feel when my wife was having that child."

Summarized McCutchen, "I'm going to be there and be in the moment and let my emotions be what they are."

More than likely, those emotions will run deep. McCutchen created a place for himself in the distinguished pantheon of Pittsburgh sports heroes, winning the 2013 National League Most Valuable Player Award and symbolizing the hopes of Pirates fans for nearly a decade until economic concerns forced the team to trade him to the Giants on Jan. 15 for right-hander Kyle Crick and outfield prospect Bryan Reynolds.

At 31, McCutchen is continuing to perform as a leader should. Overcoming a slow start, he entered Wednesday batting .423 (11-for-26) during an eight-game hitting streak.

"I don't want to be going in there not feeling great," McCutchen said. "To be going back and doing a fairly good job definitely is a plus."

McCutchen praised the Giants, expressing thanks for their treatment of him: "You feel really good to know that they're in your corner." McCutchen insisted that he immediately felt as if he were part of the organization, saying, "As soon as the jersey gets put on me, that's what I am. It's only been good things, positive vibes here and everyone's been very welcoming."

Asked if he's having fun with the Giants, McCutchen said, "Fun is fun, man. I always have fun. That never changes. I'm sure the cameras catch me smiling, laughing, whatever -- that's what I do. That never changes."

During serious moments, McCutchen said that he can commiserate with teammates such as Evan Longoria, another transplant who spent 10 years with Tampa Bay before joining the Giants.

"It's not just me that's going through this, which makes it easier, too," McCutchen said. "He had to uproot his family as well. We're all going through this together and I have some guys that I can talk to who are able to emphasize with each another about it."

When McCutchen steps in for that first Steel City at-bat in the unfamiliar role of visitor, though, all of it -- the ovation he'll surely receive, the maelstrom of sensations he'll struggle to override with his professionalism -- will be his and his alone.

Giants name honorary bat girl for Sunday

Helen Hughes Struck, whose determination would rival that of any ballplayer, has been named as the Giants' MLB Honorary Bat Girl.

Struck beat an aggressive form of invasive breast cancer which was diagnosed in late 2014, when she was 35 and the mother of a 16-month-old girl, Noa.

Under the care of her doctors at UCSF, Struck endured multiple surgeries and five months of chemotherapy.

Through this ordeal, Struck maintained her full-time job as an attorney and public defender.

Struck and her husband, Rocky, didn't allow her illness to affect their family planning. They recently adopted a baby son, Huck.

The Honorary Bat Girl program is part of MLB's industry-wide efforts to raise breast cancer awareness. During games on Mother's Day, players will wear newly designed caps highlighted by a pink crown and team color brim, while club uniforms will feature a pink ribbon on the left chest. A matching pair of pink socks is optional for every player.

During batting practice and in the dugouts throughout Sunday's games, players and managers can also wear new, grey, lightweight hoodies emblazoned with their team name and the MLB logo in a matching pink design. MLB players will continue to have the opportunity to use pink bats during Mother's Day games.

Louisville Slugger, the Official Bat of Major League Baseball, will donate proceeds from the sale of their pink bats, which will be stamped with the MLB breast cancer awareness logo, to Susan G. Komen and Stand Up To Cancer. In addition to the pink bats on Mother's Day, the following game equipment can be used for breast cancer awareness: pink compression sleeves, pink batting gloves, pink footwear, pink wrist/elbow/leg guards and catcher's equipment.

- Giants manager Bruce Bochy indicated that a schedule of rehabilitation pitching appearances could be established for right-hander Mark Melancon after he throws off a bullpen mound Friday.

NBC Sports Bay Area

Giants place Johnny Cueto on 60-day DL, add new arm to bullpen Alex Pavlovic

PHILADELPHIA -- The six-to-eight week estimate the Giants first gave for Johnny Cueto's return will be at least eight. The right-hander was put on the 60-day disabled list Thursday, clearing a roster spot for Jose Valdez, who adds a fresh arm to the bullpen. Cueto is not eligible to return until June 28, but manager Bruce Bochy said that's about the date they were looking at anyway.

In the meantime, Bochy is trying to patch his way through a stretch of 17 consecutive games

without two starters who usually go deep. Madison Bumgarner will throw a bullpen session next week but figures to be at least a month away. To make it through this stretch, the Giants have shuttled relievers in and out. They don't have a true long man, and Derek Law was the latest to take the hit.

Law flew to Philadelphia, threw 2 1/3 innings Wednesday night, and then was optioned. The timing was poor for Law; he's a Pittsburgh native and won't make the trip home for this weekend's series. Law has twice been optioned after seeing heavy work. D.J. Snelten was optioned earlier this week after throwing 54 pitches.

"We need guys who can give us multiple innings and length," Bochy said. "You're seeing some of these guys get stretched out more."

Bochy said Tyler Beede and Derrick Rodriguez were considered as additions, but the Giants want to keep them on turn in the minors in case they are needed as starters. Beede is coming off a good start. Instead it was Valdez, who has 46 previous big league appearances under his belt.

--- Andrew McCutchen is getting a scheduled day off. Ditto for Buster Posey. The staff is trying to spread out the off days given this current stretch.

--- Bumgarner should be on a rehab appearance in about two weeks. He played catch again Thursday morning and has had no setbacks. For reference, Bumgarner made four minor league rehab starts when he was hurt last year.

--- Hunter Pence is close to restarting his rehab assignment. There is nothing new with Mac Williamson, but he will need a rehab assignment when he's cleared of this concussion.

NBC Sports Bay Area

'Something has got to change' for Chris Stratton after latest rough outing

Alex Pavlovic

PHILADELPHIA — Sometimes you miss your ace at the strangest times. At Citizens Bank Park on Wednesday night, the middle innings might have qualified.

Chris Stratton has been forced into the top role thanks to injuries to Madison Bumgarner and Johnny Cueto, and ineffectiveness for Jeff Samardzija, but as he walked three in the fifth, the Giants got a reminder that he's probably not ready to be the stopper on the staff. In the sixth, they got a reminder that having to plug holes in the rotation can leave some big gaps in the bullpen.

The result was an ugly 11-3 loss to the Phillies, the third straight after a sweep of the Braves. Stratton gave up five earned and walked four. Pierce Johnson, a late addition to the staff this spring, but one who has pitched well, compounded the damage and was charged with six

earned. Derek Law, called up Tuesday because the Giants simply don't have healthy arms on the 40-man roster, couldn't stop the bleeding until the game was well out of hand.

The Giants were not winning this one given the way Stratton pitched and the lineup failed to hit early, but sometimes you can make a charge in the late innings in a small park. All too often, two or three-run deficits have turned into blowouts.

"Those guys have got to hold them there to give you a chance to come back, but they keep tacking on," manager Bruce Bochy said. "That's hard for everybody."

It won't get any easier. Bumgarner isn't due back for another month or so. Cueto will be at least two to three weeks behind him, and that's if neither suffers a setback. They'll need to find a way to pitch through this, and it'll have to start with Stratton. There aren't other options, really.

Stratton got off to a scorching start this season but has given up 14 earned runs in his past three starts and pitched just 12 innings.

"Overall I didn't do a good job of commanding the fastball today," he said. "I've got to do a better job in the first inning. The last three starts I've given up some runs in the first. I don't know if I have to change my routine or have a different mindset, but something has got to change in that first to set the tone for the rest of the night."

The lineup could have set a different tone, but Brandon Belt and Evan Longoria struck out against Nick Pivetta with two on in the top of the first. It was all quiet from there. The Giants struck out 11 times.

The Giants' pitchers also struck out 11, but they walked seven, too. Six of the Phillies who walked came around to score.

"The walks have killed us," Bochy said. "You look at all these rallies, there's a walk involved. We just don't seem to get away with those walks, and that's got to get better."

NBC Sports Bay Area

Giants roughed up again, drop third straight to Phillies

Alex Pavlovic

PHILADELPHIA — Somewhere on the short flight from Atlanta to Philadelphia, the Giants forgot how to play reasonable baseball.

Chris Stratton struggled with command and the bullpen followed suit. The lineup wasn't any sharper. The Giants lost 11-3 on their third night in Philadelphia, and thus far have been outscored 26-5 in the series.

The series loss is their first since a trip to Phoenix in the middle of April. If you would like to

know more, here we go ...

— Stratton became the de facto ace after Johnny Cueto went down, but for the second time in three starts he failed to get through five innings. The Phillies got two in the first, a solo homer in the fourth, and a walk-fueled rally in the fifth. Stratton walked three in his final inning and Carlos Santana knocked him out with a two-run single to left. After a scorching start to the season, Stratton has come back to earth. He has a 4.60 ERA.

— Pierce Johnson followed Stratton and walked three in the sixth. He also threw a wild pitch that allowed a run to score. Derek Law followed Pierce Johnson and gave up some rockets. He also threw a wild pitch that allowed a run to score.

— Brandon Belt's first appearance in left field this season went relatively smoothly. He easily gloved Pedro Florimon's line drive in the second and a hard shot from Nick Williams in the sixth. He also looked comfortable on two singles to left and a double that landed on the track.

— The Giants committed two more errors. They have made 31 errors this season, the most in the National League. That won't play.

The Athletic

Media column: Today's Giants game will air only on Facebook, which is a bad look for everybody

Steve Berman

Today's game in Philadelphia between the Giants and Phillies will be shown on Facebook. No, not "also on Facebook," or "Facebook, in addition to all of the other outlets." Just Facebook, at least if you want to actually see the game.

Why? Why do leagues make any decision that irks the majority of their fans — like ads on NBA jerseys, or NFL "home games" in London or Mexico City? To open up new revenue streams, of course.

"This partnership with Facebook reflects the ongoing commitment of Major League Baseball and our Clubs to connect with people around the world," said Tony Petitti, MLB deputy commissioner of business and media.

Yep, some pipe dream about kids across the globe huddling around smartphones, tablets and laptops, watching every second of a game started by Ty Blach and Vince Velasquez.

But even the jersey ads, and the NFL games played in front of 80,000 murmuring, confused London fans at 6 a.m. PT, are more popular — or more easily tolerated by the masses — than this Facebook-only thing, which sort of caught Giants fans by surprise this week.

Phillies fans have already seen (or not seen) their team three times this season due to MLB's

agreement with Facebook to air an exclusive game of the week.

And once everyone affiliated with the Giants heard about this, the collective reaction was grouchier than Duane Kuiper saying, “This is not good, folks.” Maybe it’s just a sign of the times with modern social media, but no one comes out of this looking good. Let’s list the bad actors involved here, going from least annoying to most.

A little bit whiny: The fans and media

It’s understandable that a baseball fan would be irked at the thought of losing a game they paid to watch, either through a local cable or MLB.tv subscription. And for a reporter or columnist who didn’t make the trip to Philly, the Facebook thing certainly qualifies as an annoyance — particularly if you don’t own a smart TV or never created an account.

But, c’mon. It’s not the end of the world. It’s an annoyance, like just about everything else on Facebook. But I am on Facebook, even though I rarely visit and can’t stand the rampant narcissism the site breeds. And I’d be willing to bet that almost anyone who really wants to watch Thursday’s Giants-Phils game could access Facebook — either their own or someone else’s.

I will watch brief segments of the game during lulls in my workday, which is probably how thousands of cubicle-bound Giants fans probably suffered through this calamity. And for those who work hard and can’t dawdle all day on the internet while on the clock, and were hoping to watch the game on their respective DVRs in the evening, it sucks but you’ll get over it. It’s one game. There are 162 of these things.

A little bit evil: Facebook

Talk about not reading the room.

It’s not enough that this social networking site is frequently forced to apologize for allowing nefarious activities, to the point where founder Mark Zuckerberg was recently called to Congress to discuss his platform with elected officials who seemed like they obtained their knowledge about Facebook that morning. Or how Facebook earned 18 percent (!) of all global online ad revenue in 2017.

MLB wants to work with Facebook and broadcast a few games? Fine, who cares. But Facebook is effectively forcing baseball addicts to log on to their site for the only broadcast of this game other than local terrestrial radio.

Twenty MLB games were shown on Facebook in 2017, but those games weren’t removed from MLB.tv or local TV feeds. So, maybe in the wake of the whole Cambridge Analytica thing, Facebook could have loosened the restrictions imposed in 2018? No? OK, then.

More than a little bit clueless: MLB

With this botched social media venture, they’ve officially become the professional sports

embodiment of the Steve Buscemi meme.

And isn't this just sooooo baseball, making changes with an eye on attracting kids while at the same time alienating the game's core constituency and missing the boat with the younger generations, anyway?

As our parents and grandparents flocked to Facebook in the mid-2000s, kids reacted the way one would expect — they bailed and focused their energies on stuff like Snapchat, Instagram, and anywhere else parents either hadn't heard of, or didn't totally understand.

So there's a comedic angle to MLB's decision to sell their souls to the Zuck, but this is a bad idea mostly because MLB is stripping access from current subscribers (and the local outlets — I can't imagine NBC Sports Bay Area is too pleased that they're losing a game broadcast when they have a crew on the East Coast, even if the game aired at 10 a.m. locally).

The NFL has been streaming Thursday night games on Twitter and Amazon for the last couple of seasons, but that didn't mean those games were removed from the TV networks that paid for the rights to show those games. Granted, the NFL — even with declining ratings — is always in a better bargaining position than MLB, with their higher viewership and 1/10th the amount of regular-season games.

Plus, fans seem like they're a bit put off by the MLB product in 2018. With a third of the league spending half (or less) of what Boston's 2018 payroll was on Opening Day, attendance is down across the board. Maybe that has a lot to do with the awful March/April weather in many Midwest and Eastern cities, but baseball seems to spend a lot of time proposing rule changes no one requested (like a baserunner starting on second base during extra innings) or making it harder to access the visual product (like their strict online highlights policies or this Facebook-only thing).

Maybe if MLB spent more time promoting their biggest stars and narrowing the ridiculously large gap between the sports' upper- and lower-class franchises, instead of negotiating with unscrupulous media companies, they'd find it easier to acquire the younger fans they so desperately seek.

The Athletic

Giants have been unwatchable in Philadelphia, and they'll be even more unwatchable tomorrow

Andrew Baggarly

PHILADELPHIA — The Giants are about to step into baseball's little broadcast experiment Thursday afternoon. Their game against the Phillies at Citizens Bank Park will be streamed live on Facebook. It will be one of 25 major league games this season broadcast exclusively on the social media behemoth.

If you pay to subscribe to MLB.tv, well, sorry. You can't watch the content you paid to get.

If you keep ponying up those exorbitant cable fees so you can watch the Giants on NBC Sports Bay Area, well, you're out of luck too.

And if you never signed up for Facebook, or you nuked your account out of protest or principle for the laissez faire way in which Mark Zuckerberg's overgrown kraken of a web portal treated their privacy settings like a moving screen or allowed users' personal information to be breached by democratically threatening data miners, or you are disgusted by its failure to torpedo fake news and instead strong-armed traditional media outlets in order to promote their content while simultaneously squeezing every bit of ad revenue away from them that they could, or if you were simply fatigued by your cousin's baby photos being despoiled and crowded out by angry political screeds, then, well, sorry.

You can't watch the game, either.

The upshot: this could be a blessing in disguise. The Giants haven't been worth watching the previous three nights in Philadelphia.

They arrived at Citizens Bank Park fresh off a road sweep in Atlanta in which they outscored the upstart Braves 24-9, only to play three offensively uninspiring games while getting outscored 26-5 by the Phillies.

Their 11-3 loss Wednesday night might have been the worst of the bunch, if only because right-hander Nick Pivetta couldn't establish anything but his hard fastball while throwing 30 pitches in the first inning and yet the Giants let him off the hook.

Pivetta settled down, but the Giants were still poised for a comeback from a 3-0 deficit when the Phillies pinch-hit for the right-hander in the bottom of the fifth inning.

But Chris Stratton issued a walk to .176-hitting catcher Andrew Knapp — the first of three walks in the fifth — and two more runs scored on Carlos Santana's single.

The deficit became 5-0. And if the fifth inning was toilet paper stuck to your shoe, the sixth inning amounted to dropping your cell phone in the urinal: Three walks, two wild pitches from two different pitchers (Pierce Johnson, Derek Law) that each plated a run, and well, unless you have Santana on your fantasy team, you don't want the download beyond that.

The Giants issued seven walks. Six of them scored.

"You know what, walks have killed us," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said. "You look at these rallies and there's walks involved. That's got to get better."

Stratton grimaced while remarking on the two walks he issued in the fifth and also the two-out

walk in the first inning to Odubel Herrera, who somehow has morphed into prime-years Joe Morgan while reaching base in 38 consecutive games. Herrera advanced on an errant pickoff throw and scored on Santana's double. Santana also scored after a wild pitch moved him to third and Maikel Franco tagged a single to left field for a 2-0 lead.

Franco also homered off Stratton in the fourth inning; the Phillies have out-homered the Giants 8-1 in the series. The Giants also have struck out 40 times over the three games.

Stratton is so concerned with his first-inning struggles that he is contemplating changes to his routine.

"I don't know how many three-ball counts I had today, but it had to be a lot," he said.

I'd look it up, but there's a day game tomorrow. So we'll go with a lot.

This much I can tell you: the Giants are 13-4 when they score first, and 6-14 when they do not, and they had a terrific chance to set a different tone against Pivetta in the first inning after Andrew McCutchen and Buster Posey lined consecutive one-out singles. But even though the Giants knew they could hunt fastballs, Brandon Belt fouled off a pitch down the middle before striking out on a perfectly placed fastball at the top of the zone. Then Evan Longoria took two called strikes before chasing 96 mph at the letters.

If it seems like Longoria is forever in an 0-2 count ... well, that isn't accurate. But he is behind the count almost twice as often as he is ahead. He has been 1-0 in 38 plate appearances and 0-1 in 82 of them. He has just 14 2-0 counts this year and 39 0-2 counts.

He also continues to be one of the club's most dependable sources for extra-base power. He doubled in the fourth and the sixth, and knocked in a run.

But that's enough analysis for one night.

Bochy probably was wise to focus on this: "We're .500 against two pretty good teams. We've just got to bounce back. We still have a chance to have a good road trip."

Their chances will improve if they can steal the series finale here where the Schuylkill flows into the Delaware and Cheez Whiz does brisk local sales.

You'll have to log in to watch. Like it or not.