



SF Giants Press Clips Saturday, August 4, 2018

San Francisco Chronicle
Giants' Posey forced out of loss with possible concussion
Henry Schulman

PHOENIX — By hanging around .500 in this injury-scarred season, the Giants have proved that nobody is indispensable.

All except Buster Posey, of course, and the Giants lost him in the third inning of Friday night's 6-3 Arizona victory at Chase Field, which ended their four-game win streak.

Posey was removed so the medical staff could monitor him for concussion symptoms. He took a Paul Goldschmidt foul tip to the mask toward the end of a five-run first inning against Chris Stratton, a rally that began with Goldschmidt hitting a home run.

Manager Bruce Bochy said after the game that Posey was feeling better and the staff hopes Posey can play Sunday.

But concussions have been such a big issue for Posey, the Giants have to put their interests aside and consider his. Most recently he spent a week on the concussion list after he was beamed in the 2017 home opener against Arizona. He has taken innumerable foul tips to the mask since.

"Trust me, we're going to err on the side of caution here," Bochy said. "He's been through it. What's important is his health, long term. We're not going to take any risks."

The club had no immediate plans to plumb a catcher from the minors, but Bochy said that could change if Posey feels worse overnight or Saturday morning. The Giants might start the game with one healthy catcher, Nick Hundley. Pablo Sandoval, who suffered a season-ending hamstring injury Sunday, had been their emergency guy. The front-runner now is Chase d'Arnaud.

The Giants were down 6-1 in the third when Posey hit a one-out single off Patrick Corbin.

With Evan Longoria batting, Posey told first-base coach Jose Alguacil that he was light-headed. Alguacil called for head athletic trainer Dave Groeschner, who wasted no time getting the catcher out.

The Giants are light on catchers ready for the big-leagues. The two at Triple-A Sacramento are Trevor Brown, who has not been in the majors since 2016, and journeyman Ronnie Freeman. Their lone minor-leaguer on the 40-man roster is Aramis Garcia at Double-A.

The Giants will make roster moves Saturday, likely promoting two pitchers after Stratton lasted just three-plus innings and allowed six runs. Fourteen of his 22 batters reached, including 12 of the first 15.

The club held two pitchers back from Sacramento's game in Memphis on Friday anticipating a need on the big club. One likely to return is Pierce Johnson. Stratton likely will be optioned to clear one spot.

The Giants put Stratton into Johnny Cueto's turn in the rotation, but a day off Wednesday affords them the opportunity to skip that spot next week. The Giants next need a fifth starter in Los Angeles on Aug. 13.

Stratton, the Giants' leader with eight victories, does not look ready to be part of the rotation.

He was unable to command his fastball in his first start since July 3 and allowed the five first-inning runs on Goldschmidt's 200th career homer, an RBI single by Eduardo Escobar, a bases-loaded walk to No. 8 hitter Alex Avila and, worst of all, a two-run single by Corbin on an 0-2 pitch down the middle.

"I've got to make better pitches in traffic," Stratton said. "What (Madison Bumgarner) did last night, that's why he's great. That's what I need to improve on to become a better pitcher."

The Giants stayed in the game thanks to six shutout innings from Ty Blach, Reyes Moronta, Mark Melancon and Sam Dyson. Melancon pitched on consecutive nights for the first time this year.

Posey started both Giants scoring rallies with singles. Austin Slater continued to wield a hot bat with two RBI singles. But the Giants went hitless between Stratton's two-out single in the fourth and Hunter Pence's two-out single in the ninth.

San Francisco Chronicle
Giants' Cueto was not alone attempting rehab before Tommy John
Henry Schulman

PHOENIX — The fan reaction to news this week that Giants right-hander **Johnny Cueto** needed Tommy John surgery was predictable. Why, they asked, did he not bite the bullet and have the operation when he got hurt in late April so he could recover in time to pitch down the stretch in 2019?

Tommy John has become so prevalent, people have gotten the false impression that it's foolproof. No surgery is, and other complications can arise, which is why Cueto was not the first pitcher and won't be the last to attempt rehab first.

The Angels allowed starter **Garrett Richards** parts of three seasons to rehab a partially torn ulnar-collateral ligament before he finally threw in the towel last month and had Tommy John.

"Number one, you're trying to avoid surgery," pitching coach **Curt Young** said, speaking generally. "You're willing to take that time to see if it does heal up, to see if a certain amount of time can help that area. It's that tough situation where some guys have healed and go back to throwing again, and boom, it pops again."

The Giants medical staff believes Cueto injured the ligament on a single pitch. Surgery seemed inevitable when tests revealed the tear, but Cueto did not get a definitive recommendation when he visited Dr. **James Andrews** in early May, team sources say.

Andrews told Cueto the ligament was torn enough to warrant surgery, but not so much to preclude a successful rehab.

Head athletic trainer **Dave Groeschner** said Cueto sought every opinion he could and opted for rehab because he wanted to get back on the mound and help the team as quickly as possible.

But the damage revealed in the latest tests after Cueto's four-start comeback attempt left no option.

“I think he was ready,” Young said. “I think he knows his stuff. He knows what his arm feels like when it’s pitching. I think he was ready to get it done and be 100 percent again.”

Cueto’s prognosis is 12 to 14 months on the sidelines, but pitchers sometimes need up to 18 months to return to full strength. If he does not return late next year, he will get 19 months to prepare for his next game in spring training 2020.

Briefly: Giants reliever **Hunter Strickland** threw to hitters for the first time Thursday since breaking his hand, 20 pitches to Arizona League prospects. He is eligible to return Aug. 18. ... The Giants, known for their lack of power, entered the day with more homers hit (102) than allowed (98), the latter ranking best in the majors.

San Francisco Chronicle
Baseball’s shifts are wrecking the show
Bruce Jenkins

My neighborhood raccoons hate it when I put the shift on. Just when they find a clear path to the trash can, there’s a new set of obstacles in their way. Last seen, in a desperate adjustment, they were scavenging in the opposite field.

And now this question for baseball fans: Is the shift craze getting to be too much?

It has definitely become an annoyance. I never thought I’d say this, because I’ve always believed you could play any brand of defense in every sport, but something must be done. Nothing radical, along the lines of commissioner **Rob Manfred**’s 2017 suggestion to ban shifts altogether. Just a simple rule change would do it for me.

Make the infielders be infielders. Take the term literally. Shift anywhere you want, but stay on the infield dirt — no venturing into the outfield. (If you creep onto the grass to play closer to home plate, that’s fine.)

It’s very easy to tell hitters, “Just beat the shift. Lay down a bunt. Punch a grounder to that open hole.” But seriously, who wants to see that, especially from left-handed power hitters who thrive on a dead-pull stroke? Not the fans, cheated out of entertainment value. Not the hitters, who feel stripped of their prowess. And not the managers, who realize that every time your hitter takes the dare, abandoning his best option to do some damage, the opposing manager wins.

“It goes back to the question of, ‘How can I help the team the most?’” Seattle’s **Kyle Seager** told ESPN. “Do I help the team over the course of the season hitting weak groundballs to shortstop (for a single)?”

Plus, it’s not that easy to defy the shift. Pitchers work the inside part of the plate against left-handed hitters to discourage opposite-field hitting. Bunts are fine, but hardly an option if you’ve got two runners on, you’re down by two runs and your big slugger is due up.

From the standpoint of fundamentals, the game is in a precarious state. Practicing the launch-angle theory with uppercut swings, too many players have abandoned any thought of hitting a groundball. Forget the situational beauty of a grounder to the right side, or anything that sustains a rally; just swing from the heels, and don’t worry about striking out. That used to be an embarrassment for hitters — at least those with a shred of pride — but it’s perfectly OK now. Whiff away.

Now examine the exaggerated shifts, which discourage the groundball even further. Can’t anyone just put the ball in play? On the night of the All-Star game, I was excited over the prospect of watching **Nolan Arenado**, **Brandon Crawford** and **Javier Baez** in the same National League infield. Was there a grounder hit to *any* of them?

At least two managers, the Royals’ **Ned Yost** and the Cardinals’ recently replaced **Mike Matheny**, have called for rule changes regarding the shift. St. Louis infielder **Matt Carpenter** said he’d love to see two infielders required on each side of the bag. I like **Tom Verducci**’s take on Si.com, calling for “a rule in which all infielders must have at least one foot on the dirt portion of the infield.”

Noted Verducci, “If you wait for change — and there’s no sign of it coming, not when 12-year-old travel ball kids are training on ‘launch angle’ tees — it will be too late for baseball. ... The single up the middle and the one-hop line drive to right field — base hits for more than a hundred years — are being removed from the game.”

Formidable competition

Giants pitcher **Dereck Rodriguez** is making a powerful case for Rookie of the Year, but he could pay the price for playing so often in the Pacific time zone. Those East Coast voters are getting a longer look at Washington outfielder **Juan Soto**, who exuded five-tool stardom from the moment he took the field in mid-May. He’ll be tough to catch. ... The Giants will be retiring **Barry Bonds**’ No. 25 next Saturday before the game against Pittsburgh. Contrast: The Cubs hold a long-standing grudge against **Sammy Sosa**, who left the club under volatile circumstances and remains under steroid-related suspicion. The Cubs have handed out Sosa’s 21 to nine players, and he hasn’t been back to Chicago in 11 years. ... An encouraging sign for the Warriors’ **DeMarcus Cousins**: Former Stanford star **Chiney Ogwumike** had Achilles-tendon

surgery in December 2016 and missed the 2017 season, but she's back at full strength for the Connecticut Sun and played in the WNBA All-Star Game last weekend. ... For years, with the Pac-12 Network not available to DirecTV subscribers, football fans had to add a subscription to Comcast if they wanted the combination of Pac-12 football and the NFL's "Sunday Ticket," available only on DirecTV. The stalemate has become so exasperating, Pac-12 commissioner **Larry Scott** says he's resigned to "no deal" through the end of the conference's television contract in 2024. Translation: *dismal failure*. ... Meanwhile, the Pac-12 Network's Bay Area channel (as opposed to the main channel) remains unavailable in HD on Comcast. Shouldn't we be past all that? ...

As USA Basketball prepares for 2020 Olympics, forecasts suggest that as many as four Warriors — **Stephen Curry, Draymond Green, Kevin Durant and Klay Thompson** — could make the final 12-man roster. It's an honor to play for your country, but if I'm Golden State management, I'd want the four of them to be resting up that summer. ... In a light workout with teammates at the U.S. camp in Las Vegas, **Russell Westbrook** blatantly traveled, retreating about six steps while holding the ball, in a hilarious impression of **James Harden's** step-back three-pointer. ... There's no way for Cleveland Cavaliers fans to be heartbroken over **LeBron James'** departure. He gave them the 2016 championship, and he recently graced his hometown, nearby Akron, with the I Promise School for some 240 at-risk third and fourth graders, stressing reading skills and how to handle trauma. It's a public, non-charter school funded largely from the LeBron James Family Foundation, and it shows the kind of impact a sports hero can make in the community. Safe to say he's gaining fans who won't really care if he plays for the Lakers.

San Jose Mercury News

Giants monitoring Posey for concussion symptoms, Stratton roughed up in loss Kerry Crowley

PHOENIX—"Giants torture" is back, but not in the form of the heart-stopping, gut-wrenching, late-inning drama that made watching the club's on-field product so thrilling earlier in the decade.

Instead, "Giants torture" is back for anyone who takes a look at the team's injury report.

After manager Bruce Bochy said he had no bombshell injury news to drop before Friday's 6-3 loss against the D'backs, Bochy found himself escorting catcher Buster Posey off the field so Posey could be monitored for concussion symptoms.

Two days after the Giants announced Johnny Cueto needed season-ending Tommy John surgery and one day following the news infielder Pablo Sandoval would require season-ending

surgery to repair a torn hamstring, Posey was the latest player to need assistance from a trainer.

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Though the Giants didn't reveal whether Posey has officially been placed in concussion protocol, he exited shortly after taking a hard foul tip off his catcher's mask in the bottom of the second inning. After walking off the field following his third inning single Friday, Posey immediately left the dugout with trainer Dave Groeschner.

Posey was replaced by reserve catcher Nick Hundley, who is the only other player with major league catching experience on the team's roster. Sandoval was the Giants' emergency catcher, but his injury robbed the team of an additional option for a nightmare scenario.

A nightmare for the Giants had already unfolded at Chase Field before Posey left Friday's game as right-hander Chris Stratton allowed five earned runs in the bottom of the first inning against the D'backs. Stratton returned to the rotation to make his first start since July 3 due to Cueto's injury absence, but may not be a long-term solution for the Giants as he lasted just three innings.

Stratton allowed opposing starter Patrick Corbin to drill a two-run single in the first and opened the bottom of the fourth inning by loading the bases. Bochy pulled Stratton after he had thrown 81 pitches, but inserted Ty Blach who escaped a nearly-impossible situation without allowing a run.

The Giants managed to keep the game within reach by touching up Corbin for a run in the first and two more in the second as rookie Austin Slater recorded a pair of RBI singles. Slater received his fourth consecutive start at first base after Sandoval left Sunday's game against Milwaukee with a torn hamstring.

Sandoval was initially penciled in as first baseman Brandon Belt's injury replacement, but Slater has been forced into action and the converted outfielder has seized the opportunity.

Perhaps the only silver lining of the unending list of Giants injuries is that replacements including Slater have typically exceeded expectations and helped the club remain within striking distance in the National League West.

However, with Cueto and right-hander Jeff Samardzija (shoulder inflammation) sidelined,

Stratton was unable to provide the Giants with the length they were looking for out of their starting pitcher. For the second straight night, Bochy called on Blach to throw multiple innings as he looked to preserve more of his late-inning options.

It's unclear whether Stratton will receive another opportunity in the next turn through the Giants rotation, but an upcoming off day on Wednesday would allow Bochy to skip the fifth starter. Regardless of whether Stratton receives an opportunity, the stress placed on the bullpen due to short outings from the Giants' last two starters will force the club to consider optioning a player to promote a fresh arm ahead of Saturday's game.

If Posey requires a stint on the concussion disabled list, the Giants may also need to add a catcher before Saturday evening's game in Arizona. Double-A prospect Aramis Garcia is the only other catcher listed on the team's 40-man roster.

If the Giants would prefer to promote either of their Triple-A catchers, Trevor Brown or Ronnie Freeman, they can clear a roster space by transferring Cueto or Sandoval to the 60-day disabled list.

Posey was 2-for-2 Friday against Corbin and has raised his average to .297 with 13 hits in his last 25 at-bats.

Melancon throws back-to-back

For the first time this season, reliever Mark Melancon pitched on consecutive days as he threw the seventh inning in Friday's game.

Melancon's workload has been watched closely this season as he began the year on the disabled list after undergoing surgery to heal his ailing pronator last September. After allowing a leadoff single Friday, Melancon induced a 6-4-3 double play and a groundout to end the inning.

San Jose Mercury News

Giants changing approach to dividing playing time at second base

Kerry Crowley

SAN FRANCISCO—Joe Panik opened the season by making history at Dodger Stadium.

The Giants second baseman hit solo home runs in each of the first two games, providing the only offense for the club as it became the first team to open a season with back-to-back 1-0 victories.

Though Panik appeared poised for a career year in March, injuries have taken a toll on his effectiveness and his average has plummeted to .235. While he's been a regular starter since he joined the Giants back in 2014, Panik is now being asked to platoon at second base with right-handed infielder Chase d'Arnaud.

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Giants manager Bruce Bochy penciled d'Arnaud into Friday's lineup against D'backs lefty Patrick Corbin and when asked whether he considers the current state of affairs at second base a platoon, Bochy said "pretty much."

"This situation could change if Joe gets on a roll," Bochy said. "That could change."

A fractured thumb altered the course of Panik's season at the end of April, forcing him to miss a full month of action while fill-in Alen Hanson provided a spark with his impressive speed as Panik's replacement.

Though Panik returned to the Giants June 1 and recorded at least two hits in his first three games off the disabled list, he hit .182 in his next 99 at-bats.

On July 6, Panik suffered a groin strain running the bases against the Cardinals and needed another stint on the disabled list. Though the Giants wanted Panik to find his timing at the plate during a rehab assignment, Pablo Sandoval's season-ending hamstring injury left the club short on infield depth.

The Giants cut Panik's rehab stint short, but since he flew in to San Diego to rejoin the club Tuesday, he has only started one game and that came against D'backs right-hander Zack Greinke. After Greinke was lifted Thursday, Bochy inserted d'Arnaud in as a substitute to hit against lefty reliever Jake Diekman.

Bochy is hoping Panik seizes opportunities to regain his full-time starting role, but Bochy also knows he can't start Panik against lefties unless he finds a groove at the plate.

"They've taken a toll on his season with the time that he's missed," Bochy said of Panik's injuries. "He did get off to a great start but he had a couple of pretty big interruptions so that's going to play a part in your season."

With Panik expected to play against righties and d'Arnaud starting most games against lefties, Hanson will continue in his current bench role and provide coverage at a variety of positions.

Hanson is 8-for-14 as a pinch hitter this season and delivered an RBI single a five-run eighth inning for the Giants Thursday.

"I like having him coming off the bench," Bochy said. "He has pretty good numbers there, he gives you speed, there's a few positions I can double switch with him. He gives you value there."

Panik is hitting .165 in 79 at-bats against left-handers this year while d'Arnaud is 11-for-29 (.379) with three home runs against left-handers since he joined the Giants July 8.

San Jose Mercury News

Rookies destined for bigger roles as Giants continue quest for playoff berth

Kerry Crowley

PHOENIX—After a 98-loss season in 2017, Giants' executives made a statement.

As other losing clubs began to gut their rosters, the Giants said they would refuse to rebuild and start from the ground up.

With two months left to play in 2018, the Giants still aren't rebuilding, but a quarter of the team's roster spots now belong to rookies who are seizing larger roles as the season wears on.

Two of the Giants' five starters, a pair of the club's top relievers and a few of the team's most exciting position players are all handling their first full seasons of major league ball with the type of poise the franchise's front office has come to expect from the core members of the roster.

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During the club's four-game win streak, rookies have largely led the charge, particularly in the Giants' last two games as Dereck Rodríguez tossed seven innings of one-run ball against San Diego Tuesday while Austin Slater and Ray Black helped finish off Arizona Thursday.

With Brandon Belt (hyperextended knee) out for the next eight-to-10 days and Pablo Sandoval (torn hamstring) finished for the season, Slater is receiving the lion's share of starts at first base and delivered two hits, three runs and two RBIs Thursday.

"I'm feeling like I don't have to go get the game, I can let the game come to me," Slater said. "Trying to understand how guys are attacking me and what pitches I should be looking for in every at-bat."

Slater drove in two runs with a bases loaded single in the eighth Thursday to help the Giants break open an 8-1 win shortly after Black pitched under pressure. With sluggers Paul Goldschmidt and A.J. Pollock due up in the seventh inning of a 3-1 game, Bruce Bochy called on Black to face the heart of the D'backs lineup.

Black struck out Goldschmidt with a 99-mile per hour fastball before fanning Pollock with a devastating slider that has one of the highest spin rates in baseball.

"When a guy like that steps in the box, you can't be too timid," Black said of Goldschmidt. "You pay him a great amount of respect, you know who he is but at the end of the day, it's still just trying to compete and get an out."

By striking out the first two hitters he faced, Black completed a rare "relief pitcher no-hitter," as he recorded 27 straight outs dating back to July 10 without allowing a hit. His dominance out of the bullpen has inspired Bochy to look for more high-leverage situations for Black so he can use one of his most reliable arms with games on the line.

Black and fellow rookie Reyes Moronta have become the two most reliable right-handed arms in the Giants bullpen, and they'll continue to earn opportunities later in games. Some of their chances could fall after Rodríguez and rookie Andrew Suárez are removed from starts, as the duo has consistently provided the Giants with chances to win.

While Rodríguez is a dark horse Rookie of the Year candidate, Suárez has a 3.23 ERA in 11 starts since the beginning of June and helped the club withstand the injuries Johnny Cueto and Jeff

Samardzija have suffered.

The sixth rookie attempting to help the Giants hang in the hunt is their starting center fielder, Steven Duggar, who is hitting .258 with a .324 on-base percentage in his first month in the big leagues. Though Duggar is prone to striking out and is still finding his way at the plate, he's the best defensive center fielder the Giants have had in recent memory.

Because the Giants are determined to avoid a rebuild, the success of their rookies and the larger roles they've assumed over the course of the year has prevented the franchise from giving the idea of starting from the ground up much thought. Most core players are under contract for the next two-to-three seasons while all six rookies appear capable of contributing at high levels for the foreseeable future.

Even if the Giants do reassess their personnel and decide to take a step back after the 2019 or 2020 seasons, the readiness of starters like Rodríguez and Suárez, the reliability of bullpen pieces like Moronta and Black and the improvements made by Slater and Duggar have given the franchise hope that the next wave of talent has more force behind it than the Giants initially anticipated.

MLB.com

Giants unable to overcome shaky Stratton

John Magruder

PHOENIX -- On Thursday, **Chris Stratton** saw the pitcher he is striving to emulate.

Giants ace **Madison Bumgarner** was in and out of early trouble in Thursday's victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks, but he made the pitches he needed to keep the D-backs at bay.

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Stratton could not find command of the put-away pitch he needed early Friday, and it cost him in a five-run first inning that led to a 6-3 loss at Chase Field.

- **Posey to be monitored for concussion symptoms**

In his first start since July 3, Stratton gave up 10 hits and six runs in three-plus innings. But Stratton was so close to avoiding that trouble, twice one pitch away from limiting the damage in the first, when the D-backs scored four of their runs with two outs.

Stratton (8-7) walked **Alex Avila** with the bases loaded and two outs to force in the third run of the inning, and winning pitcher **Patrick Corbin** grounded an 0-2 fastball up the middle to drive in the final two runs in the inning.

Suddenly it was 5-1, negating **Austin Slater's** RBI single in the top of the first.

"Just have to make some better pitchers, especially with traffic on," Stratton said. "That's something that 'Bum' did a great job of yesterday. That's why he's great. It's something I have to improve on to be a better pitcher."

Bumgarner left nine runners on base in five innings Thursday, and gave up only one run despite facing bases-loaded situations in the first and second innings.

"He was just off with fastball command," manager Bruce Bochy said of Stratton. "I think the pitch ... you look back at that game. It's 3-1. Corbin got an 0-2 pitch right down the middle. He has to execute to execute a little better right there. His stuff is fine.

"What he needs is some confidence, and you just don't quite see that with him right now. There is no reason why he doesn't have it, because his stuff is good. That's the biggest issue with him, I think. If he'd had a good first inning, he might have got on a roll. But he battled, I'll say that. He logged a lot of pitches."

Stratton pointed to the Avila and Corbin plate appearances also. Avila walked on a 3-1 pitch that was inside and down.

"The one to Avila was brutal as well," he said. "Can't let that guy get away from me, especially with the pitcher coming up. Corbin was late on two fastballs and I threw one right down the middle. I can't really expect anything from that."

Stratton, 4-4 with a 3.68 ERA in the first 10 starts of his Major League career last season, has a 5.52 ERA in 20 appearances, 19 starts, this season.

He said his cutter has been moving more in the last month or so, leading to the command issues, and that is something he will find a way to correct.

"I just have to make an adjustment somehow," he said. "If it is changing grip, if it's changing stride length, if it's something. I have to do a better job of commanding the fastball, because everything plays off of that."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Left-hander **Ty Blach** entered with the bases loaded and no outs in the fourth inning and cut off

a potential big inning by getting **Eduardo Escobar** to foul out and **Daniel Descalso** to ground into a double play started by second baseman **Chase d'Arnaud**. Blach gave up one hit in 2 1/3 innings after pitching two scoreless innings Thursday.

- **Black's role in Giants' bullpen increasing**

"I can't say enough about what Blach did after his workload last night," Bochy said. "Those guys [bullpen] did a heck of a job keeping us in the game. That game could have easily gotten away from us. The bullpen picked each other up. They did a great job."

SOUND SMART

The Giants will recall one pitcher, maybe two, on Saturday, Bochy said, after the bullpen logged nine innings in the last two games and also put in a lot of work during a two-game sweep of San Diego on Monday and Tuesday.

They, of course, are prepared. The Giants held out several pitchers in the farm system Thursday night in just that eventuality. They will not need a fifth starter the next time through the rotation because of an off-day Wednesday, which also could play into the moves.

HE SAID IT

"You hate it. Those guys take a beating back there. You kind of take it for granted, because most of the time they just kind of shrug it off and go to the next pitch. I think he'll be fine, but you definitely hate it when something like that happens." -- Stratton, on catcher **Buster Posey** being forced to leave the game after being struck by a foul tip in the mask

UP NEXT

The Giants will send left-hander **Andrew Suarez** (4-6, 4.11 ERA) to the mound against the D-backs on Saturday for the 5:10 p.m. PT start. Suarez made his Major League debut against Arizona in a loss on April 11 and had one of his best outings in a victory at Chase Field on June 29, when he gave up one run and seven hits in six innings. Five of those hits did not leave the infield. The D-backs will start **Clay Buchholz**(4-1, 2.65).

MLB.com

Posey to be monitored for concussion symptoms

Jack Magruder

PHOENIX -- Giants catcher **Buster Posey** will be monitored overnight for concussion symptoms after leaving in the third inning of Friday's game at Arizona, but manager Bruce Bochy did not seem to believe Posey's injury was too serious.

Posey became light-headed after singling to right field with one out in the third inning of **the Giants' 6-3 loss**. He signaled to the dugout and was removed after trainer Dave Groeschner met him at first base.

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Posey took a moment after being struck in the mask on a foul tip by **Paul Goldschmidt** in the first inning, but remained in the game. Posey will not play Saturday, Bochy said, but could be available for the final game of the series Sunday.

"He's feeling better," Bochy said. "He had the [concussion] test done. We will monitor Buster overnight and tomorrow. If all goes well, he could be in there Sunday. Right now, it's important we keep an eye on him.

"It's a matter of what kind of night he has, how he feels tomorrow. We'll check him out again tomorrow."

Posey has been through this before. He was placed on the concussion list and missed seven days last season after being struck in the helmet by a 94 mph fastball from D-backs right-hander **Taijuan Walker** on April 10, 2017.

"You are not going to take any chances, especially in his situation, being there before," Bochy said. "We're hoping for the best news.

"Trust me, we are going to err on the side of caution with him because he's been through it. What's important is his health long-term, baseball. We're not going to take a risk with him."

Posey is slashing .297/.370/.411 with 22 doubles, five homers and 37 RBIs in 91 games.

Nick Hundley ran for Posey in the third inning and remained in the game Friday night. He's the only other catcher on the roster now that **Pablo Sandoval** is out for the season, but Bochy said that as things stand now, the Giants will not add a catcher Saturday.

"I could wake up tomorrow after talking to Buster and change the plan, but I think we are OK," Bochy said.

Infielder **Chase d'Arnaud** appears to be the top choice as the stopgap backup. d'Arnaud's brother, Travis, is a catcher.

The Giants understand concussion issues too well to take chances. **Brandon Belt**, **Joe Panik** and **Hector Sanchez** missed time the past few seasons with concussions. Belt saw a

concussion specialist.

MLB.com

Black's role increasing thanks to recent surge

Jack Magruder

PHOENIX -- Right-handed reliever **Ray Black** completed another hitless outing with a blow-them-away seventh inning Thursday, and his role is evolving along with his success.

Black struck out **Paul Goldschmidt** on a 99 mph fastball and fanned **A.J. Pollock** on an 84 mph slider before getting a weak popup while protecting a 3-1 lead in what turned into an 8-1 victory over the D-backs, the first time this season he was used in a save/hold situation. It will not be the last.

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"He'll be used like he was last night," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said. "No problem using him in the sixth, seventh, eighth. He's in the mix with those other guys. What that allows you is to rest some of those guys.

"That's the luxury of having five or six guys you are comfortable with pitching high-leverage situations."

Rookie Black extended his hitless to streak to 9 1/3 innings in his last nine appearance Thursday, with 13 strikeouts in that span. He was touched for a three-run homer by the Cardinals' **Matt Carpenter** in his Major League debut July 8 but has allowed only three baserunners, all walks, since.

"After that, it's been incredible," **Madison Bumgarner** said. "Not pretty lights out. Lights out, for sure."

Black, 28, averages 98 mph with a fastball that he throws about 70 percent of time, according to fangraphs.com, and uses the slider as a primary secondary pitch.

The key word?

"Conviction," Black said. "Each pitch, attack the hitter. Have conviction with this pitch. Two-two sliders, don't think about babying it over the plate. Let it go. You see guys strike out on pitches in the dirt all the time in this league.

"You just have to trust your stuff and trust your catchers. The guys behind the plate are really the ones that do the most work. I'm just throwing the pitch. They are evaluating the hitters. They have the pregame reports. They have everything. They are the ones thinking. I'm just a robot out there."

Options at second

Chase d'Arnaud started at second base for the third time in four games Friday when Arizona threw left-hander **Patrick Corbin**, and the Giants will use a platoon there for the time being, Bochy said.

Left-handed-hitting **Joe Panik** started against **Zack Greinke** on Thursday, and both d'Arnaud and **Alen Hanson** were used as pinch-hitters in that spot later in the game.

Panik, who returned from his second stint on the disabled list Monday, has played only 57 games this season because of thumb and groin injuries. After hitting 10 homers and driving in at least 53 runs each of the last two seasons, he has four homers and 14 RBIs.

"No question they [injuries] have taken a toll on his season," Bochy said. "He did get off to a great start. Had a couple of pretty big interruptions, and that's going to play a part in your season. In this situation something could change. Joe gets on a roll, that could change. But we had to rush him up here a little bit because of our injury situation."

Switch-hitter Hanson started four of the five games before Panik was activated and has been effective as a pinch-hitter, going 8-for-14 with a homer and six RBIs, all hitting left-handed.

"I like having him come off the bench," Bochy said. "He's got pretty good numbers as a pinch-hitter. There are few positions I can double-switch with him, so that gives you value there. The speed plays well. Instincts. He has scored a couple of runs where he is probably the only guy on the club who would have scored those runs."

NBCsportsbayarea.com

Buster Posey being evaluated for concussion symptoms after foul tip

Alex Pavlovic

PHOENIX — Nobody on the field felt comfortable Friday night. It was over 100 degrees outside at first pitch, and even though the roof was closed at Chase Field, it still is sweltering on the grass and in the dugouts. But trainer Dave Groeschner knew there was something more serious going on when Jose Alguacil motioned him over to first base in the third inning.

Buster Posey had singled for the second time, and as he stood on the bag he turned and told his first base coach that he felt light-headed. Posey took a foul tip off the mask in the first inning, and the Giants did not waste any time getting him out of the game once symptoms popped up. Groeschner rushed onto the field and took Posey back to the clubhouse, where he was put into the concussion protocol.

The Giants do not necessarily have to make a move, manager Bruce Bochy said later. But it seems likely that they will. They know better than just about any organization that these things linger, and it seems irresponsible to assume Posey can play again this weekend, or that the team can get through a couple of games without a backup. Bochy said the staff will check on Posey in the morning and then make a decision. At the very least, Nick Hundley is starting Saturday.

“Trust me, we’re going to err on the side of caution here with him because he’s been through it,” Bochy said of Posey. “What’s important is his health, of course, and the long term. We’re not going to take any risks.”

Posey was put on the concussion disabled list last season after getting hit in the head by a fastball in the home opener. He was reinstated eight days later, and didn’t show any concerning signs the rest of the season. Posey has mostly avoided foul-tip issues as a professional, but the Giants did admit last year that there was a time earlier in Posey’s career that he was watched closely after a series of foul tips. In recent years, the concussion protocol has become much more stringent.

Bochy said Hundley will start Saturday and he has not ruled Posey out to start somewhere on Sunday if he feels fine over the next day. If the Giants do have to make a move, it will be somewhat complicated. The only other catcher on the 40-man roster is Aramis Garcia, who has been in camp for a couple of years but is still just in Double-A. The Giants have two 40-man roster spots to play with because of the Johnny Cueto and Pablo Sandoval injuries, and they could add someone like Trevor Brown. Any addition will get them closer to the tax line, though.

On Friday night, team officials indicated that would not be a concern. But they’re hoping it doesn’t get there regardless. The hope is that Posey is fine. In the meantime, Bochy said he would need a new emergency backup with Sandoval on the DL. The frontrunner is Chase d’Arnaud. His brother, Travis, has been a big league catcher.

“I’m sure he’s probably caught somewhere along the line,” Bochy said.

NBCsportsbayarea.com
Giants Notes
Alex Pavlovic

PHOENIX — The Giants kept some pitchers off the mound in Triple-A on Friday night, fearful that Chris Stratton's rough start might put the bullpen in a bad place. It turned out to be the right decision.

Stratton was very nearly knocked out in a five-run, 40-pitch first inning and made it through just three in a 6-3 **loss to the Diamondbacks**. He allowed 10 hits and walked four, becoming just the second Giants starter to allow 14 baserunners while recording fewer than 10 outs.

Afterward, manager Bruce Bochy said there will be at least one roster move Saturday, and possibly two. It wouldn't be a surprise at all to see Stratton sent right back down after his brutal return to the rotation. The Giants have an off day Wednesday that can help them shorten the rotation temporarily, and then they can figure out what to do with the fifth spot.

Stratton had the opportunity after Johnny Cueto went down, but he fumbled it in the first inning. The first big mistake was walking .171 hitter Alex Avila. The second was throwing an 0-2 fastball right down the middle to Patrick Corbin. The opposing pitcher bounced a two-run single up the middle, giving the Diamondbacks a 5-1 lead.

“Can't let that guy (Avila) get away from you, especially with the pitcher up next,” Stratton said. “Corbin was late on two fastballs and I literally threw one right down the middle.”

Bochy said Stratton's stuff is playable. It's another issue on the mound.

“What he needs is confidence,” Bochy said. “There's no reason why he doesn't have it because his stuff is fine.”

Pierce Johnson appears a lock to return Saturday. Derek Law pitched in the Triple-A game, so he likely is not on the list, but Josh Osich and Steven Okert are still down there. The Giants also could finally take a look at Tyler Rogers because they have open 40-man spots.

--- Mark Melancon pitched in back-to-back games for the first time this season. Melancon has been watched closely since returning from a flexor strain, but he told Bochy recently that he was bouncing back better and felt up to the task. He gave up a leadoff single, but then got a

double-play grounder and a soft roller to second.

--- Paul Goldschmidt joined Luis Gonzalez as the only Diamondbacks with 200 homers. He has 23 against the Giants, including his first and 200th. The first came almost exactly seven years ago, on Aug. 2, 2011.

--- A night after throwing two innings, Ty Blach saved the bullpen with 2 1/3 more. He got Stratton out of a bases-loaded jam in the fourth. Blach has a 1.50 ERA in his last eight outings.

NBCsportsbayarea.com

Five-run first inning from D'backs ends Giants' four-game win streak

Alex Pavlovic

PHOENIX — The first inning at Chase Field took 40 minutes. At some point during that span, this game became about surviving to adequately compete over the weekend.

In that respect, it was a mixed bag.

Chris Stratton very nearly was pulled in the first inning of a 6-3 loss to the Diamondbacks, which would have put a tremendous strain on a bullpen that already is stretched thin. He made it — barely — through three and Ty Blach did some good work saving the bullpen, but the **Giants lost Buster Posey to concussion symptoms** and appear to have several roster moves on the way Saturday.

The bullpen could use another arm, the fifth spot of the rotation may need to be changed yet again, or skipped once, and another catcher may be here Saturday. As for Friday's result, here's how it all went down ...

— Posey was pulled after a single in the third inning. Posey took a wicked foul tip off the mask in the first and appeared to be clenching and unclenching his jaw as he stood on first base two innings later. Trainer Dave Groeschner noticed and ran out to the bag, immediately pulling Posey from the game. The Giants later announced that Posey was being watched for concussion symptoms. If Posey is to miss time, the Giants are in a bit of a jam -- their only other catcher on the 40-man roster, Aramis Garcia, is only in Double-A.

— This was a nightmare for Stratton. He needed 40 pitches to get through the five-run first inning and was pulled with the bases loaded in the fourth. Stratton allowed 10 hits and walked four. According to baseball-reference, Stratton is the just second Giants pitcher to allow 14 baserunners while recording fewer than 10 outs. Joe Nathan did it in 2000 at Coors Field.

— Paul Goldschmidt hit his 200th career homer, with 187 coming against the Giants. No, it's really *just* 22, which actually only ranks third among NL West opponents. He has 30 against the Dodgers, 23 against the Rockies and 20 against the Padres.

— This was also a defensive mess. Two liners popped out of Brandon Crawford's glove, Evan Longoria couldn't wrangle a difficult pop-up in foul territory, a potential double play was botched and several other Giants looked a step behind at times.

The Athletic

Buster Posey exits with a possible concussion, throwing doubt on more that just 2018 for the Giants

Andrew Baggarly

PHOENIX — It's been the story of the Giants' season: win one, lose one.

Except their 6-3 loss to the Arizona Diamondbacks Friday night might count for more than a mere setback in the standings that they could not afford. They likely sustained a much greater loss — one that could force them to confront some difficult, franchise-defining decisions far sooner than they had planned.

Buster Posey is being monitored for signs of another concussion.

Posey absorbed a foul tip off the bat of Paul Goldschmidt in the first inning, and while the plate umpire called time so he could compose himself, he was not checked by trainers and remained in the game.

When Posey hit a leadoff single in the third inning, though, he told first base coach Jose Alguacil that he felt lightheaded while running down the line. He exited with minimal discussion and was escorted to the clubhouse with head athletic trainer Dave Groeschner.

The Giants did not plan an immediate roster move for another catcher, even though Nick Hundley is the only other backstop on the roster — and the club was meticulous in how it worded a mid-game update on Posey, saying he was removed “to be watched for concussion symptoms.”

Giants manager Bruce Bochy said afterward that Posey reported feeling better, and a decision on the 7-day concussion disabled list wouldn't be made until they see how their All-Star catcher feels Saturday morning.

But Bochy was quick to note that this would be Posey's second documented concussion. Left unsaid: how many more undocumented events have there been?

“Trust me, we're going to err on the side of caution here,” Bochy said. “What's important is his health, of course, long term and in baseball. We're not going to take any risks with him.”

No major league organization takes potential concussions lightly anymore, and the Giants understand the risks better than most. One too many foul tips in close succession brought a sudden end to Mike Matheny's career while catching for the Giants in Miami in a game in 2006.

The Giants had planned for Posey to remain behind the plate at least until 2020, when perhaps Joey Bart, their second overall pick in June, would be ready for a changing of the shin-guards. But what if they are forced to make that move sooner?

The long-term question sure does seem more important than the short-term worry of missing yet one more everyday position player as the Giants attempt to hang in a pennant race they appear destined to sit out. Just this week alone, they lost Johnny Cueto to Tommy John surgery, Pablo Sandoval to season-ending hamstring tendon surgery and now, in all likelihood, the heartbeat of their team just as he was beginning to find his stroke. Posey's single in the third was his 13th hit in his last 25 at-bats.

It might be a manager's hope, but for now, Bochy would only rule out Posey to play on Saturday. He said Posey had concussion tests, but did not say whether he passed them or not.

"Right now we feel it's important we keep an eye on him," Bochy said. "I'll have to figure out my backup catcher (for Saturday) tonight."

Infielder Chase d'Arnaud doesn't know it yet, but it's likely to be him. His brother, Travis, is a catcher for the Mets rehabbing from elbow surgery, and the shared genes make him as qualified a candidate as anyone. The Giants also expect to make at least one roster move to add a pitcher.

"Maybe two," Bochy said.

They must refresh a staff that was obligated to pick up Chris Stratton after the right-hander allowed five runs in a 40-pitch first inning that more or less settled the game from the outset.

Stratton allowed a few soft hits in the first inning, but Goldschmidt's solo home run wasn't among them. Stratton also walked in a run. But Bochy was most perturbed about an 0-2 fastball to pitcher Patrick Corbin with two outs and the bases loaded. A single up the middle scored two runs and opened up what had been a manageable 3-1 game.

"He's got to locate better there," Bochy said. "His stuff is fine. What you don't see is the confidence. He doesn't have it right now, and he should."

Stratton was pitching in Cueto's spot for the first time since the Giants' right-handed ace underwent reconstructive elbow surgery that will take him out of the picture until 2020, or perhaps September of next year if all goes without a hitch.

The Giants' depth pieces did so well to cover massive rotation casualties and a never-ending assortment of DL subtractions to their everyday lineup throughout the season. Considering it all, it might be a miracle that they are one game over .500.

But now the depth has eroded and the scramble is on. The problem is that the Giants cannot try to scramble for par. They must card birdies, and maybe an eagle, to get back in the race.

The way this season is ending, though, the Giants' chief decision-makers might have to confront the notion that more than 2018 is being lost.

ESPN.com

Nine teams in 11 years? Jesse Chavez's life as a baseball journeyman

Jesse Rogers

ST. LOUIS -- At least he didn't have to change his clocks this time.

Unlike the cross-country trips Jesse Chavez has twice had to endure during midseason trades, the reliever remained in the Central time zone when he was dealt from the Texas Rangers to the Chicago Cubs in mid-July.

As he finds his way with his ninth team in an 11-year career, it's safe to say Chavez has this middle-of-the-summer move down -- but that doesn't mean it's easy. After all, there are the essentials to be packed up at a moment's notice.

"I would say the Xbox and PlayStation," Chavez said with a laugh one recent morning when asked about must-have items for any move. "Good for me and the kids. Mainly me."

Chavez and his wife, Crystal, have three kids and the family has learned what to expect by now.

"Pack a bag, tell your wife we're on to another city, get the kids ready and enjoy it," Chavez said. "You have to embrace it."

And that's exactly what Chavez is doing in Chicago so far. Outside of one recent hiccup against the San Diego Padres, he has been lights out in a Cubs uniform in posting a 1.86 ERA and 0.72 WHIP so far.

He has had plenty of experience learning how to hit the ground running when he has moved, so what's the most important thing to know when the call comes?

"If you can believe it, what kind of clothes you have to wear to the field," Chavez said. "What the dress code is like. I keep it simple. I wear the same thing that I did with the previous team."

When informed that Joe Maddon doesn't have a dress code, Chavez didn't exactly relax.

"I still can't bring myself to be that comfortable," he said with a smile. "It'll take some time to get used to."

While Chavez settles into his new surroundings during his first few weeks with the Cubs, one past trade remains in his mind as a key stop for creating his major league path.

In 2010, the Atlanta Braves sent him to the Kansas City Royals, stunning the then 26-year-old, but fortunately, the experience on a veteran team prepared him as best it could.

"With that group, numerous Hall of Famers, my ears were open and my eyes were wide," Chavez said. "That team, when I left there, benefited me the most. They had a lot to do with keeping me in line."

Cubs right fielder Jason Heyward was a rookie on that Atlanta team, which also featured Troy Glaus, Brian McCann, Chipper Jones, Tim Hudson, Derek Lowe and Billy Wagner.

"Each trade has its own meaning," Chavez said. "That one was kind of devastating but those guys helped me prepare."

Speaking of old teammates, by now, at least Chavez is likely to know someone when he's on the move. He scanned the Cubs' clubhouse as he reminisced.

"I played with Heyward. Also, Brandon Morrow in Toronto. Addison Russell was in the minors with Oakland when I was there. Let's see, who else? Oh, Mike Montgomery in Kansas City. There's about four in every clubhouse."

"Pack a bag, tell your wife we're on to another city, get the kids ready and enjoy it. You have to embrace it."

Jesse Chavez on when learning he has been traded

Pretty soon, people will be able to play six degrees of separation with Chavez, who has been coast to coast, in each league and now in the Midwest. Twice he has been traded from Toronto to the West Coast, to Oakland in 2012 and then to the Dodgers in 2016. So what's the toughest part of a midseason move?

"Just making sure the family is accommodated," Chavez said with a look of remembering something else. "Oh, and getting used to being without a car. Some places you need it, some you don't. I had a car in Dallas. Now I can jump in a car or Uber in Chicago."

He rates one of the trades from Toronto as the toughest, logistically. His kids were younger and they weren't in the same vicinity when it happened.

"Wife and kids were at Niagara Falls and we had to pack up the apartment in Toronto," Chavez said. "It wasn't easy."

This time around, Chavez got the call after landing in Dallas after a road trip. He, his wife and kids packed up and came to Chicago a day later all together.

"We're still adjusting, especially to the day games," Chavez said.

Potentially complicating matters is Crystal Chavez's job. She's a longshoreman out of Long Beach, California. Once a month, for just a day, she puts in her hours.

"Finding a babysitter when she has to go to work is a big challenge," Chavez said. "Her job is interesting. Scary. Very dangerous."

If it sounds like an interesting life, it is. And Chavez has no plans on retiring at age 34. He and his wife get help from family when their life is uprooted, and of course from the new team's traveling secretary.

"Those guys are key," Chavez said. "They take care of a million little things."

First and foremost is setting up hotel accommodations in the new city. The team pays for the first week, then it's up to the player where he wants to go.

"We just stay at the hotel," Chavez said nonchalantly. "Don't want to bother with a lease or anything like that each time."

In the end, there's one thing that keeps Chavez going. After 11 years and eight teams before joining the Cubs, he's still without a ring.

"You talk about the bucket list," he said. "You can keep it on five fingers. Get to your big leagues, get to arbitration, get to free agency, get to 10 years in the league. The ring is the elusive one."