



SF Giants Press Clips Tuesday, March 6, 2018

San Francisco Chronicle

Giants' Dave Righetti discusses losing coaching job and starting new role
John Shea

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Dave Righetti has adjusted to different roles his entire baseball career.

He went from a starting pitcher to closer. From closer to setup man. From pitcher to pitching coach. From working under manager Dusty Baker to manager Felipe Alou to manager Bruce Bochy.

Righetti handled all roles professionally and skillfully, which explained his success and lasting power in the game.

His new role, however, won't be an easy adjustment.

Righetti was dismissed as the Giants' pitching coach three days after the 98-loss season and became special assistant to general manager Bobby Evans. The new pitching coach is Curt Young.

"I'm not going to sit here and tell you I won't miss it," Righetti said Monday. "I don't know how I'm going to be during games, especially when the team is on the road. I'll be there hopefully for every homestand. I can't tell you how it's going to go, those three, four hours when you're watching. I'll be out of sorts a little bit, to be honest. I can't lie to you."

In a Chronicle interview at Indian School Park, where the Giants were holding their first full-squad minor-league workout, Righetti spoke publicly for the first time since losing his job.

Righetti, 59, said he was disappointed when Evans gave him the news Oct. 4, is somewhat hesitant about his new role and is leaning toward not accepting another job as pitching coach.

He got feelers for coaching jobs in other organizations but didn't push for them. Admittedly, it has been tough to separate himself from a position he held for 18 years, since the Giants opened their ballpark in 2000.

"All that went down, it's part of the game, and I'm part of that," said Righetti, noting one reason he didn't give interviews before Monday is he didn't want to be a distraction as the Giants restructured

their team, remodeled their farm system and adapted new philosophies. “I’m just trying to help. I don’t want to do anything that’ll set anything back.”

Righetti didn’t do anything wrong, according to Evans, who said it was a group decision and the preference was for new voices and perspectives on staff. What Righetti did do was guide a staff that threw five no-hitters including a perfect game, won two Cy Young Awards, got 22 All-Star selections and was the leading force for three World Series championships.

Matt Cain, Tim Lincecum and Madison Bumgarner were among the key pitchers developed on Righetti’s watch, and he helped Ryan Vogelsong resurrect his career.

“When we won in ’10, it wasn’t just that the Giants won,” Righetti said. “The people liked the guys they were rooting for. They didn’t just get their championship. It seemed they really loved the team. I was proud of that, especially because a lot of them were young pitchers who came up in the organization.

“I talked to guys all the time, ‘I want you guys to be looked at from across the field and in the organization, you’re Giants and you know what you’re doing on the field and how to act.’ That’s important to me.”

Over the winter, the Giants made a bigger leap into the analytics world, adding coaches from teams that heavily rely on advanced data to shape their rosters and decision-making.

Righetti takes exception to anyone suggesting he or others in the game can’t adapt to the analytic side. It wasn’t emphasized during the Giants’ championship runs — they were known to be more scouts-driven than numbers-driven — nearly as much as by recent teams that won the World Series, including the Cubs and Astros.

“As you grow as a player or coach, anybody who’s been in the game, you’re adapting all the time,” Righetti said. “The only thing it does, it hurts guys my age because they make it sound like we’re so old-school, but we’ve been adapting since day one.

“You don’t want a wedge between the baseball people (and analytics department). You’ve got to meld, and people have to understand, even folks who have never put on a uniform -- we know they love the game, that’s why they’re doing it -- just be mindful of folks who have been doing this for a long time.

“You’ve got to be respectful in the game no matter what you’re doing. We all love the analytic stuff. Who doesn’t? It all comes down to players. Houston won it last year because they had the best players.”

Evans said analytics didn’t prompt the coaching changes: “It wasn’t about analytics. That’s not fair to Rags or any of these guys. They were very attentive to ideas and thoughts, and they had some of their own. It’s about trying to find a way to put us in a strong position going forward.”

Righetti and Young, 57, have had a mutual respect as left-handed pitchers and pitching coaches. In fact, after his dismissal, Righetti spoke with Young about every pitcher on staff, and Evans said Righetti recommended Young as his replacement.

"I know what he's walking into," Righetti said. "I'm still part of the Giants, and I want to help. There are too many people I worry about, especially pitchers I worked really hard with to make sure they're on the path they're supposed to be. There was a number of different guys bandied about, but it was an easy call."

Righetti's contract runs through December. He won't necessarily work with pitchers (unless they ask) as much as monitor big-leaguers and minor-leaguers, including those on the Class A team in San Jose, his hometown, and provide input to Evans.

"You'll see me around," Righetti said.

San Francisco Chronicle

Ex-Giants pitcher Matt Moore willing to give Rangers' No. 55 to Tim Lincecum

John Shea

PHOENIX — When Tim Lincecum joins the Rangers, he'll presumably get his old jersey number, 55.

It currently belongs to another ex-Giants pitcher, Matt Moore.

"I don't want him to feel good," Moore said. "I want him to feel great. Part of that is being comfortable in what you're doing and what you're wearing."

Moore, traded to Texas in December, pitched against the Giants on Monday (a 5-4 Texas victory) and looked strong over 22/3 innings.

Moore wore 55 with the Rays and 45 with the Giants.

"It's not like it's something I have to have," said Moore, adding he met Lincecum in recent days. "When I saw we signed him, shoot, if that's something he wants, it's all his."

Lincecum could be in Texas' camp Tuesday. His arrival was delayed because of the death of his brother, Sean, 37.

Trade reaction: Moore said he was surprised by the trade that sent him (with international bonus-slot money) to Texas for two prospects to free up money the Giants used to upgrade their offense. He's making \$9 million.

"They had a lot of moving pieces," he said. "They were trying to get (Giancarlo) Stanton, a lot of guys, and so for them, it just made the most sense to deal from what they considered their strength."

"I wish them the best of luck. I think they did a good job with their lineup. They're getting a great clubhouse guy and great player in (Evan) Longoria."

Moore, a teammate of Longoria with Tampa Bay, went 6-15 with a 5.52 ERA last year and said he never felt comfortable with his cut fastball, a pitch he plans to throw less. He has changed where he stands on the pitching rubber to be more square to the plate.

Asked about the 2018 Giants, Moore said, "I like their chances. Obviously, it's a tough division, but if there was a group of guys you wouldn't bet against, it would be them."

Briefly: The Giants are off Tuesday, their first of two off days during spring training. ... The listed battery for Wednesday's home game against the Padres: Madison Bumgarner and Buster Posey, and closer Mark Melancon is scheduled to pitch for the first time.

MLB.com

Crafty Blach continues strong spring

Chris Haft

SURPRISE, Fla. -- So far, the skeptics and the hitters Ty Blach faces have responded identically to his pitching.

They've disappeared almost noiselessly.

Blach allowed his first Cactus League earned run Monday in the Giants' 5-4 loss to Texas but otherwise subdued the Rangers while becoming San Francisco's first starter to last into the fourth inning during this Cactus League season. Blach thus strengthened his apparent hold on one of the two vacancies in the Giants' starting rotation.

Blach pitches to contact, relying on hitters to get themselves out by forcing them to overswing at deliveries that look like they should be crushed.

The flip side of this phenomenon, as well as the baseball cliché, is that Blach doesn't miss many bats, which can spell doom for soft-tossing lefties of his ilk.

Blach struck out 73 batters in 163 2/3 innings as a rookie in 2017. His 4.01 ratio of strikeouts per nine innings was a Major League low.

As crafty as Blach can be, such statistics seldom inspire confidence. But after finishing 8-12 with a 4.78 ERA last year, Blach knew he needed to progress to stay ahead of aspiring starters such as Tyler Beede, Andrew Suarez and Derek Holland. Not to mention Major League hitters.

This spring, Blach has focused on increasing the difference between his slider and his curveball. As a result, he has surrendered one earned run in 8 1/3 innings spanning three starts.

Moreover, Blach has struck out nine batters, averaging roughly one per inning. Giants manager Bruce Bochy has noticed.

"He has more 'giddyup' this year," Bochy said.

Said Blach, "I'm going to try to throw a few bigger curveballs and tighter sliders. That's been the goal every year. Nothing really new. I'm just trying to refine everything."

As long as Blach maintains the disparity, he'll keep opponents confused.

"I think it definitely gives hitters a different look, being able to execute some different breaking balls like that," Blach said. "But it still comes down to pitch execution and locating the fastball. I think that's what's been successful for me so far."

MLB.com

Crawford's finger fine in 1st game at shortstop

Chris Haft

SURPRISE, Ariz. -- Brandon Crawford bobbled the first ground ball hit to him Monday, Joey Gallo's first-inning smash that found the Giants shortstop playing a few paces to the right-field side of second base in an overshifted alignment.

"I think it sped up on me," Crawford said after the Giants' 5-4 exhibition loss to the Texas Rangers. "It's a quick infield."

The mild misplay shouldn't have been surprising, since Crawford was appearing in his first Cactus League game on defense. A jammed right index finger had prevented Crawford from making his spring defensive debut earlier. He had appeared in four games as a designated hitter.

Winner of the National League's last three Gold Glove Awards for fielding excellence at his position, Crawford maintained the presence of mind to flip the ball to second base for a forceout.

Crawford, who probably will begin playing every other day in his quest to prepare for the March 29 regular-season opener at Los Angeles, handled one other ground ball directly. He said his afflicted finger felt fine on all throws.

"It's not 100 percent yet, but it was definitely good enough to play out there," Crawford said.

Position battle

Nobody knows what position best suits Kyle Jensen. Quite soon, the Giants might consider trying to find him one. The first baseman increased his team-leading home run total to five with a pinch-hit, eighth-inning clout off Tony Barnette.

Injury update

Manager Bruce Bochy said catcher Buster Posey, who has appeared in two innings behind the plate this spring, will begin playing defensively Wednesday against San Diego following Tuesday's scheduled off-day.

The Athletic

Content with the Rangers, Matt Moore enjoys his spring reunion with the Giants

Jimmy Durkin

SURPRISE, Ariz. — Matt Moore won't be a name that goes down in the annals of Giants history.

He had a couple moments. Bruce Bochy's decision to pull him after eight innings in Game 4 of the 2016 NLDS will always be questioned, one of the few Bochy decisions about which you can say that.

Maybe the Giants' even-year magic would've continued if Moore had been allowed to finish that game rather than watching five relievers blow a three-run lead to end that season. Maybe that changes the trajectory of his time in San Francisco. Maybe he comes back in 2017 and pitches like the guy the Giants traded away fan-favorite Matt Duffy to acquire.

But no question, Moore's final season with the Giants was a disaster. He was one of the worst pitchers in baseball in 2017, going 6-15 with a 5.52 ERA that was the highest among qualified pitchers in the league. His pitching WAR of 1.0, as calculated by FanGraphs, was the fifth-worst.

His tenure ended when the Giants shipped him to the Texas Rangers on Dec. 15 in a cost-cutting move that netted the Giants two prospects but mostly allowed them to ditch his \$9 million salary. Without that move, the Giants couldn't have brought in Evan Longoria and Andrew McCutchen while maintaining their goal of staying under the \$197 million competitive balance tax.

Moore understands all that and doesn't hold any bitterness. But Monday, when he faced the Giants in a spring training game as a member of the Rangers, was a day he was excited about.

"I was looking forward to it. Absolutely," Moore said. "Not like I have anything out for them, right? It's just those are the guys I sat in the dugout with for the last year and a half and got to know 'em pretty well, so it was fun to just compete against them and see Boch over there. They wound up bringing some of their guys. It was a fun day for me overall."

Moore is impressed with the way the Giants have revamped their roster, even if it meant he had to leave as part of it.

"They had a lot of moving pieces," he said. "They were trying to get (Giancarlo) Stanton, a lot of guys. So for them it just made the most sense to deal from what they considered their strength.

"You know, I wish them the best of luck. I think they did a good job with their lineup offensively. A great clubhouse guy and a great player in Longoria. I would say, yeah, sure, it surprised me, but when I found out I'm going to Texas, it puts a smile right back on my face."

Moore lit up talking about Longoria, his former teammate with the Tampa Bay Rays.

"That's a huge upgrade for them," Moore said. "Just the defense that he brings, not to mention the offensive threat he is, but he gets you out of some innings and he puts that laying down a bunt out of their mind — it's not going to happen. I'm sure they're looking forward to seeing him all year."

Brandon Crawford was one of the Giants regulars in the lineup against Moore on Monday. He said sometimes he enjoys getting to face former teammates. Other times he doesn't like it as much. Where did this matchup against Moore fall?

"He had good stuff today," Crawford said. "That fastball that I hit kind of darted away from me, so he had a little life on it. The curveball looked good. Yeah, it's a lot more fun when a former teammate's just laying it in there, but he was making some good pitches."

Crawford grounded out to second base in that one at-bat against Moore, who went 2 2/3 innings and allowed one hit, one run, walked two and struck out two.

“He threw well,” Bochy said of Moore. “It was good to see him. He had good stuff. He did a nice job.”

Moore was obviously brought over in 2016 to be a big piece in what the Giants envisioned as a deep pitching rotation behind Madison Bumgarner, Johnny Cueto and Jeff Samardzija.

It took him until his fifth start before he got a win with the Giants, which was a masterpiece against the Dodgers in which he lost a no-hitter with two outs in the ninth inning. Then he was on the mound on the final day of the regular season when he threw eight innings of one-run, three-hit ball to beat the Dodgers again and clinch the second wild-card spot.

Combine that with his eight innings of brilliance in the NLDS against the Cubs and he brought momentum into the offseason that had the Giants thinking they'd deliver a line of four starters in 2017 as good as any in the league.

That didn't work out, of course. Bumgarner got hurt, Cueto dealt with blisters, Samardzija gave up too many home runs and Moore never could figure it out. What went wrong with him?

“I don't think it was just one thing,” he said. “I think I have a handful of things that from time to time I've got to keep in order, kind of got to readjust certain things. Right now, some of the stuff I'm focusing on is just making sure I'm nailed to the rubber, keeping my leg, keeping my back foot on that rubber as much as I can.

“That's helping clear up my direction, helping me get on top of the ball much better. I've got to think that's something I was doing last year. Obviously, relying on that cut fastball quite a bit wound up not being a good idea. Moving into this year, it's more so just about keeping things simple. It doesn't have to be this elaborate plan where I'm back-dooring cutters. Just throw the good four-seamer over the plate — not too much plate — and for the most part the secondary pitches are going to do their job if they're looking for a four-seamer.”

But what about those Giants? Moore knows the DNA of that team, even if there have been some changes. Can he see them bouncing back quickly and competing again for a playoff spot?

“If there was a group that you weren't going to bet against, it would be that one,” Moore said. “All of the horses they've got that have been there with all the lights on. You've got Madison and Jeff, Cueto leading the staff, so I like their chances. Obviously, tough division, but if there was a group of guys I wouldn't bet against, yeah, it'd be them.”

The Rangers figure to be a team Giants fans will pay a slight bit of attention to this year and, with all due respect, it has little to do with Moore. Tim Lincecum is set to join the Rangers this week, possibly on Tuesday, and there aren't many more beloved figures in Giants history than Lincecum.

Moore, in an odd way, will be affected by the Lincecum acquisition. Moore had always worn No. 55 with the Rays, but switched to No. 45 when he came to the Giants. That jersey may not be retired by the Giants, and quite possibly never will be, but nobody's wearing it now.

There was a little snafu in the offseason when a version of a roster mistakenly showed Moore having switched to 55, something done apparently by mistake and without Moore's knowledge. He quickly shot down any thought of him taking over Lincecum's old digits with the Giants; but upon his trade to Texas, he resumed wearing his old number.

And now Lincecum will be his new teammate in Texas. So, what's Moore going to do now?

"As far as I know, it doesn't sound like that's something he wants. I met him for two minutes the other day and it didn't come up," Moore said. "To be honest with you, I couldn't think of scenario where I wouldn't hand the number over to him. I want him to feel great. I don't want him to feel good, I want him to feel great. And part of that is being comfortable in what you're doing, what you're wearing. I wore 45 last year, so it's not like it's something that I have to have. When I saw we signed him, shoot, if that's something he wants, it's all his."