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Notes: Broussard makes history
Slugger's third career pinch-hit slam Saturday ties record

By Jim Street / MLB.com

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ANAHEIM -- The pinch-hit grand slam Ben Broussard delivered in the eighth inning Saturday night against the Angels put him in some select company, but not in the Mariners' starting lineup in the series finale.

The Mariners' reserve infielder/outfielder joined Hall of Fame first baseman Willie McCovey, Rich Reese and Ron Northey as the only MLB players to hit a pinch-hit slam three times in their careers. Broussard, the first Mariner to slug a pinch-hit slam, did it twice for the Indians in 2004.

The first occurred on June 23, when he batted for catcher Lou Merloni in the top of the eighth inning against the White Sox.

Almost two months later, on Aug. 12 at Jacobs Field against the Blue Jays, Broussard batted for Jason Phelps with two outs and the bases loaded in the seventh inning, and duplicated the slam he hit in Chicago, giving the Indians a four-run victory.

"The fans were going crazy," Broussard recalled. "I got a standing ovation [when introduced as the batter]. They were expecting another grand slam, and I hit one."

It was his third slam of the season and record-tying second pinch-hit slam of the season, and his bat was sent to the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

Three days earlier, Broussard hit his second slam of the season (not a pinch-hit shot), also against the White Sox. He came to bat with the bases loaded in the top of the third inning and drove a ball into the right-center-field seats.

And if he does it one more time in a pinch-hit roll, he'll be in a class by himself.

According to David Vincent, the guru of home runs, Broussard's pinch-hit slam against the Angels was the 129th in American League history and the first since Indians designated hitter Travis Hafner did it on July 1, 2006, against the Reds.

While Broussard's first home run of 2007 was an individual accomplishment, he gave teammate Willie Bloomquist some credit.

"I work with him every day before and during the game," Broussard said. "In the sixth or seventh inning, we go to a batting cage and he pitches to me like a real pitcher. I can barely foul the ball off because he's right on top of me.

"He throws fastballs, sliders, curveballs and splits. He feels good about himself because he thinks he's a



Ben Broussard shares the MLB record for most career pinch-hit grand slams (3) and most pinch-hit grand slams in one season (2), which he accomplished in 2004. (AP)

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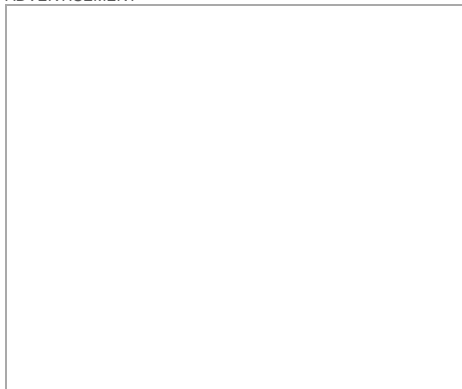
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nasty pitcher. But for me, it keeps me as sharp as I can be in the situation I'm in right now. I just go in there and have fun with it."

The game within a game has been played for nearly three weeks now and keeps both players active during their normal down time.

"If he can hit me, he can hit anybody," Bloomquist said, smiling.

"We started doing it about a week and a half ago, and he liked it. He said it helps him get locked in, and I told him I'd do it anytime he wants."

What started out as mostly batting-practice fastballs has expanded.

"I started busting out some [split-finger fastballs], sliders, curveballs, power curves, changeups and what-not," Bloomquist said. "He has offered to reciprocate, but he's a little wild."

With Bloomquist starting the series finale, Broussard was on his own on Sunday.

Asked if he considered starting the left-handed-hitting Broussard against Ervin Santana, manager Mike Hargrove said he didn't because of his 1-for-6 career batting record against the Angels' right-hander. That one hit is a home run.

Learning curve: The Mariners plan on making 22-year-old rookie right-hander Brandon Morrow a fixture in the starting rotation some day, but there's no rush to make it happen.

Morrow basically is getting his feet wet in the shallow end of the pool.

"There are different lessons to be learned along the way, and one of those is how to play and compete at the big-league level," Hargrove said. "I think he could do this all year long."

After the first three weeks of the regular season, the team's No. 1 draft choice last June has made four relief appearances, pitched five innings, surrendered seven hits, walked four and struck out four.

Pitching so infrequently makes it difficult to find a rhythm, and stay in it, but Hargrove said, "I don't think there is a problem there at all."

Decision near: Injured reliever Arthur Rhodes has a CT scan scheduled for Monday, possibly the final step before he decides whether to have season-ending (and perhaps career-ending) surgery on his left elbow.

He met with noted orthopedist Dr. Lewis Yocum on Saturday and discussed the results of the MRI taken in Seattle.

"What I had hasn't changed," Rhodes said. "I just want to get it over with."

Rhodes, 37, has been holding out hope that complete rest would cure his elbow problems. But he might need Tommy John ligament replacement surgery.

On deck: The seven-game road trip moves on to Arlington for a two-game series against the Rangers. Right-hander Cha Seung Baek, who beat the Rangers twice last season and is 3-0 in his career against them, is expected to get his first MLB start of the season in the series opener.

Jim Street is a reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

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