

# Royals one short of five-pitcher starting rotation

**SURPRISE, Ariz. (AP) —** With three days off early next month, the Kansas City Royals plan to start the season with a four-man rotation and keep an extra position player for the first 13 games.

The Royals open the season March 31 against the Los Angeles Angels, but are not scheduled to play April 4, 7 and 11. That means they can get by with four starters working every fifth day for the first two weeks.

"That's my intention," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "I won't need my fifth starter until April 15th or 16th, so we'll definitely keep a four-man rotation through the middle of April."

Barring injuries, the four starters appear to be right-handers Luke Hochevar and Kyle Davies and left-handers Jeff Francis and Bruce Chen.

Hochevar is expected to start the season opener, followed by Francis, Davies and Chen.

"I don't like my lefties throwing back-to-back if I can help it," Yost said. "We'll probably break them up in there somewhere."

Yost has said Hochevar, the first player selected in the 2006 draft out of Tennessee, has the stuff to be a consistent 15-game winner in the majors. Hochevar has a 19-32 record with a 5.60 ERA in 69 games in the majors.

Hochevar said he is a different pitcher than early in his career.

"When I first came up, I felt I was a little more finesse," Hochevar said. "I think I came up more of a command guy, trying to induce early contact, which obviously I still do, but now I feel like more of a power guy. My mentality is I'm still attacking the strike zone, still going at them."

Initially, the Royals tried to get Hochevar to be more of a Brandon Webb-type pitcher, inducing ground balls.

"I just don't think that's me,"

Hochevar said. "I don't think my sinker is a pitch I can throw every pitch and I found that out. ... It's just been a process and a development for me, kind of finding my own. Last year I felt like I did. I'm excited about this year, just keep it rolling into this year."

Chen, who led the Royals with 12 victories last season, is the only one of the four who had a winning record in 2010. Davies was 8-12 with a 5.34 ERA in 32 starts. Francis, who missed the 2009 season after having shoulder surgery, was 4-6 with a 5.00 ERA in 20 games with the Colorado Rockies.

Vin Mazzaro, who was acquired in a Nov. 10 trade with Oakland for David DeJesus, and Sean O'Sullivan are the leading candidates for the final rotation slot.

"Definitely, there are spots open," Mazzaro said. "It's a battle. In spring training, everyone is playing for a job. The last two years I've been fighting for a spot in Oakland. I came over here and it's the same battle, the same focus."

O'Sullivan, who was 3-6 with a 6.11 ERA in 14 games with Kansas City after being acquired in a July trade with the Los Angeles Angels for Alberto Callaspo, came to spring training 25 pounds lighter.

The Mazzaro and O'Sullivan competition for the final rotation slot could continue beyond spring training. Both could start the season with Triple-A Omaha to keep on a regular routine until the Royals need a fifth starter.

Nate Adcock, a Rule 5 pick from the Pittsburgh Pirates, has not allowed a run and only seven hits in eight innings. He has been primarily a starter in the minors, but the 23-year-old right-hander has not pitched above Class A. If he makes the staff, it will likely be as a long reliever to begin the season.

# Bulldogs lose by 20 at state

## Bulldogs end season as substate, league champs

By Judy Rogers  
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Despite double-digit scoring from a junior and two seniors, the Golden Plains High School boys' basketball team was never able to take the lead in the Class 1A Division II state basketball preliminary game in Hays last Thursday.

This was the first year for Class 1A to be split into two divisions. The boys entered the tournament as the Palco substate champions, seeded No. 5 with a 14-8 record. This was the fourth time in Golden Plains school history for a boys' team to make the state tournament.

The boys started the tournament playing the No. 4-seeded Kiowa-South Barber Chieftains, who held a 17-6 record.

Senior Devinn Ritter started the game with a single free-throw, but that would be the Bulldogs' only point throughout much of the first quarter as the Chieftains pulled ahead to a 12-1 lead before senior Rilee Spresser put in a bucket and the Bulldogs got their offense rolling.

With under two minutes remaining in the quarter, Tate Preston put in a three, followed by two buckets from underneath by Cole Christensen to end the quarter with the Bulldogs trailing 17-10.

In the second quarter, both teams put in 14 points to keep the 7-point spread at the half. The Bulldogs got scoring from Christensen, Spresser and Preston. The score stood at 31-24 at halftime.

The third quarter found both teams continuing to play aggressively, but the Bulldogs struggled to get the ball to fall. Christensen posted 7 points along with 2 from Ritter and 1 from Preston. The Bulldogs held the Chieftains to 13 points, but that extended their lead to 44-34 by the end of the third.

During the last eight minutes, Spresser continued to hit shots,



JUDY ROGERS/Golden Plains High School Golden Plains junior Cole Christensen went up for two at the state basketball tournament in Hays last Thursday. Christensen got 17 points, 4 rebounds, 2 blocks and a steal in the Bulldogs' first-round loss to Kiowa-South Barber High School.

making three for three from the line along with a couple of buckets and a three pointer. Preston added a bucket and Ritter put in two for the Bulldogs. Junior Kalyn Weber entered the game and put in two more free throws to finish the

Bulldogs' scoring at 52. Coach Preston gave every player on the bench time on the court — including senior Casey Gould, juniors Ethan Walter, Tyler Stevenson and Trey Schwarz, sophomore Andrew Luna and freshmen Grant

Spresser and Tristan Schwarz. The Chieftains put in 28 points to finish the game 72-52, advancing them to the semifinal round.

Three Bulldogs were in double figures, with Christensen finishing the game with 17 points; Rilee Spresser, 16; and Preston, 10. Ritter brought in 7 points and Weber contributed 2.

In other preliminary stats: Spresser pulled down 11 rebounds; Christensen, 4; Preston, 4; Tyler Stevenson, 2; and Grant Spresser, 1. Preston had 5 assists; Stevenson, 2; Spresser, 1; Ritter, 1; and Christensen, 1. Christensen had 2 blocks and 1 steal. Stevenson and Spresser each had a steal.

The Chieftains went on to play the other Western Kansas Liberty League team in the tournament, the Greeley County Jackrabbits from Tribune. The Jackrabbits defeated the Chieftains 39-31 and went on to win the state championship over Hope. The Chieftains finished the tournament in fourth place behind Otis-Bison.

This loss finished the Bulldogs' state tournament play and concluded their season. Parents and fans surrounded the boys following the game to congratulate them on a job well done.

Although the boys were saddened to lose out at the tournament, they were proud of their season accomplishments. Senior Aaron Emigh proclaimed at the pep rally before the game that the Bulldogs did "Look good, feel good, play good!" all season. They finished the season with a 14-9 record, placed third in the league tournament and were substate champions.

"Qualifying for state was a great way to finish our four years of Golden Plains High School basketball," said Rilee Spresser, speaking for all the seniors.

"We achieved something I never thought we could until this year," added Casey Gould.

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