

Dodgers honor military with Fourth of July events

By Alex Angert and Ken Gurnick / MLB.com | 07/05/12 12:31 AM ET



LOS ANGELES -- The Dodgers had a lengthy tribute to members of the military on the Fourth of July as part of Military Appreciation Night. A flag of the United States of America was draped across the outfield, stretching from left to right field, and recording artist Billy Ray Cyrus sang the national anthem.

A number of members of the Wounded Warriors project lined the outfield and videos of Dodgers fans deployed in Afghanistan were displayed on the JumboTron.

In between the top and bottom of the first, a soldier and Dodgers fan stationed in Afghanistan surprised his wife, who was in attendance, with a video message letting her know he was OK and how much he missed her.

Army Specialists Joseph Paulk and Luis Dahlman threw out the ceremonial first pitch and kicked off the game chanting, "It's time for Dodger baseball."

Both were injured while serving -- Paulk in Afghanistan and Dahlman in Iraq -- and they were part of the [Welcome Back Veterans](#) program and UCLA Operation Mend.

An all-stadium Salute to the Troops opened the celebration.

Before the game started, manager Don Mattingly talked to reporters about what it's like playing on Independence Day.

"As a player, it was always the one day that was kind of weird because as a kid you grow up with picnics and fireworks and hanging out with your family and as players we're here," he said. "Then I look at the NBA and they are playing on Christmas, it's part of it. For us to be part of the past time and thinking about our independence of our country, it's kind of cool."

Gordon dislocates thumb on 30th steal of year

LOS ANGELES -- Dodgers shortstop Dee Gordon dislocated his right thumb sliding headfirst into third base on an eighth-inning steal in Wednesday night's 4-1 win over the Reds.

X-rays were negative for a fracture, and he had the thumb in a splint. Gordon accompanied the club after the game to Arizona, where he will have an MRI on Thursday to determine the full extent of the injury and a timetable for his return.

"I have no idea about a timetable yet," manager Don Mattingly said.

But a dislocation is bad enough, because it means ligaments were completely or partially torn, and it is the thumb on his throwing hand. Gordon said the swelling was significant. He's virtually certain to go on the disabled list.

"I stole third and I actually don't know what was caught, but I think it went underneath the base," said Gordon, who swiped his Major League-leading 30th base. "It was a weird play and a weird thing happened. I felt I hit something real hard and got up and looked at my batting glove and it looked big. I looked at my finger and it was not a good sight."

Gordon said he had never been injured like that on a headfirst dive, but he did hurt his shoulder last year making a diving tag on defense and has tried at times this year to slide feet first but always reverts to headfirst.

Gordon had opened the game with a double to trigger a three-run first-inning rally.

Mark Ellis, in his first action since May 18, pinch-ran for Gordon.

Dodgers place Ethier on DL as Ellis reinstated

LOS ANGELES -- The Dodgers placed Andre Ethier on the 15-day disabled list on Wednesday in a cautionary move influenced by what happened to teammate Matt Kemp in his return from a left hamstring strain.

Ethier hasn't played since straining his left oblique muscle on a checked swing on June 27, which means he could be activated by the team's first game after the All-Star break against the Padres on July 13, if healthy. Manager Don Mattingly said he doesn't expect the right fielder to need to play any rehabilitation games in the Minor Leagues during the break.

In response to sending Ethier to the DL, the team has reinstated second baseman Mark Ellis, who expects to be in the lineup on Thursday for the first time since injuring his left leg on May 18.

"It just didn't seem to make any sense, more than anything else, taking a chance of it being another four weeks or something if we let this thing go and end up with a situation like we've got with Matt," Mattingly said. "We thought he was ready and we end up four or six weeks later and we're still playing without him. I don't really want that."

Ethier said there was no setback and added he could go out there and play now if needed. And although he was frustrated by the news, he was understanding of the cautionary approach. He was on the field taking batting practice and running the bases on Wednesday.

"How do you test it?" he asked. "That's the problem we're running into. How do you test it without going out there and taking the chances of doing it again and prolonging it."

Mattingly said the best-case scenario with Ethier was that he would be ready to play on Friday. But with a day game on Sunday, he didn't see it necessary to risk bringing him back early for what would likely be only two games.

"It's minor, but it's still there," Mattingly said. "He says, 'As long as I don't miss, I'm fine.' Well, you miss sometimes here and you sometimes way out there."

Kemp plays center, tallies two more hits in rehab

LOS ANGELES -- In his second rehabilitation game with Class A Rancho Cucamonga, Matt Kemp made his return to center field for the first time since aggravating a left hamstring strain on May 30.

Kemp went 2-for-4 with three RBIs and a run while batting third and playing five innings for the Quakes. He hit a two-run double in the third and got caught retreating to second after rounding the base too much. He didn't see much action in the field with only one ball hit his way.

Dodgers manager Don Mattingly said he expects Kemp to next play two seven-inning games, a nine-inning game and then one more at DH. The Quakes travel to San Jose on Saturday, and Mattingly said Kemp will go with them before bringing trainer Sue Falsone with him to Kansas City for Tuesday's All-Star Game. He will participate in the State Farm Home Run Derby, on Monday at 5 p.m. PT on ESPN.

Kemp went 2-for-3 with a run, walk and a strikeout on Tuesday in the first game of his rehab assignment.

Deadline has Dodgers ramping up scouting efforts

LOS ANGELES -- The Dodgers recently shuffled coverage by their special assignment scouts to target teams that are their most likely partners by the July 31 Trade Deadline.

Dodgers scouts have an increased presence with Milwaukee, as well as continued coverage of the Chicago Cubs, Colorado, Philadelphia and Minnesota.

The players believed in their sights include Brewers sluggers Aramis Ramirez and Corey Hart; Cubs starting pitcher Ryan Dempster; Rockies outfielder Michael Cuddyer; and Phillies starting pitcher Cole Hamels. At the top of the club's wish list are a productive corner infielder and a starting pitcher.

Each of these players has an expensive contract, which makes them prime candidates for the Dodgers, who now have the financial wherewithal to pick up another club's bad contract. Conversely, many of the most attractive obtainable players this summer will cost a package of prospects that the Dodgers don't have.

Ramirez might be the best fit, a 34-year-old third baseman with 10 homers and 50 RBIs who is owed \$31 million through 2014. Hart, a 30-year-old outfielder with first-base experience, has 16 homers, 37 RBIs and is owed \$13 million through 2013.

Cuddyer, a 33-year-old outfielder who can play first base, has 12 homers, 49 RBIs and is owed \$26.5 million through 2014. Dempster, currently on the disabled list with a strained lat muscle, is owed the remainder of his \$14 million salary this year then will be a free agent.

Cruz earns third straight start since promotion

LOS ANGELES -- For the third straight day, recent callup Luis Cruz was in the Dodgers' lineup after impressing in two starts. Cruz was originally called up to give shortstop Dee Gordon a day of rest, but he's stuck around in the lineup with Juan Uribe recovering from an ailing ankle.

After going 1-for-3 in the seven-hole Tuesday night, Cruz was slated to bat second and play third base in Wednesday's rubber match against the Reds.

"He's been hot," manager Don Mattingly said. "He's been a guy that has been on the go since last winter."

He doubled home the tiebreaking run on Tuesday and then scored an insurance run when he stole home. He was 0-for-2 with an RBI on a sacrifice fly on Monday.

Prior to being called up this week, Cruz had appeared in 56 games in three seasons combined with the Brewers and Pirates. He batted .308 with a home run and eight RBIs in 24 Spring Training games.

"He was probably down a little bit not making the club and then he makes the club and goes down there and he's tearing it up," Mattingly said. "He's looked OK since he's been here. We'll see, but he's been pretty good so far."

Worth noting

- Manager Don Mattingly said Javy Guerra has been cleared medically, but he said the team would prefer the reliever to throw one more extended session with about 30 pitches. However, with the team down one pitcher in the bullpen, he said the next step with Guerra will depend on what happens during Wednesday night's game. The reliever is nearing his return after being out since June 3 with right knee inflammation.

- Juan Uribe, who sprained his right ankle rounding second base on Monday, was out of the lineup again, but he took batting practice Wednesday. After waking up feeling better, Uribe was available to pinch-hit and possibly more for Wednesday's game, if needed.

- On Tuesday night, the Dodgers signed second-round pick Steven Rodriguez, a reliever out of the University of Florida. The team has now signed 31 of 41 selections and all 16 of its picks from the top 15 rounds. Scouting director Logan White will answer questions at 2 p.m. PT on Thursday via Twitter as part of [Dodger Chat](#).