

# Clemens, Pettitte report to spring training

By Mark Babinek  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — Roger Clemens and Andy Pettitte had just arrived at spring training Sunday when Houston Astros manager Jimmy Williams announced that neither one would start on opening day.

But the decision to go with Oswalt came as no surprise to the ex-Yankees.

"Jimmy and I talked about it a couple of weeks ago and that's why we talked about it," Clemens said. "To me, all the guys are deserving. We've all got our opportunities to start opening day."

Oswalt, one of three starters from last year's rotation along with Wade Miller and Tim Lincecum, is one of the best young pitchers in baseball. But he was hampered by chronic elbow injuries in 2003 and had surgery in the offseason to correct the problem.

Clemens and Pettitte were the Astros' two big offseason acquisitions, but Williams decided to go with Oswalt against Barry Bonds and the San Francisco Giants in Houston on April 5.

"He has come through the team system and he was injured... three times with his elbow, and basically could have pitched it in," Williams said. "I could have said, 'I'm injured, I need an operation, I might hurt myself if I try to continue pitching.'"

Pettitte will go second in the rotation, followed by his pal Clemens. Miller, the club's opening day starter in 2002, will pitch fourth, and Redding is No. 5.

"He's got a lot of pitching

over there," Yankees manager Joe Torre said in Tampa, Fla.

He would know.

Setting up the starting rotation two weeks before exhibition games begin gives the pitchers time to prepare their throwing routines in February, a luxury Pettitte said he and Clemens never had in New York.

"Usually that's top secret where we come from," Pettitte said. "For us, this is great."

Oswalt, a 19-game winner in 2002, was on the disabled list three times last season. But he returned to the mound and won four games down the stretch as Houston's bid to catch the Chicago Cubs in the NL Central fell just short.

"If I go first or I go third it doesn't matter," Oswalt said. "It's an honor, so of course it's special, but I don't see (the others) behind me. I see them with me."

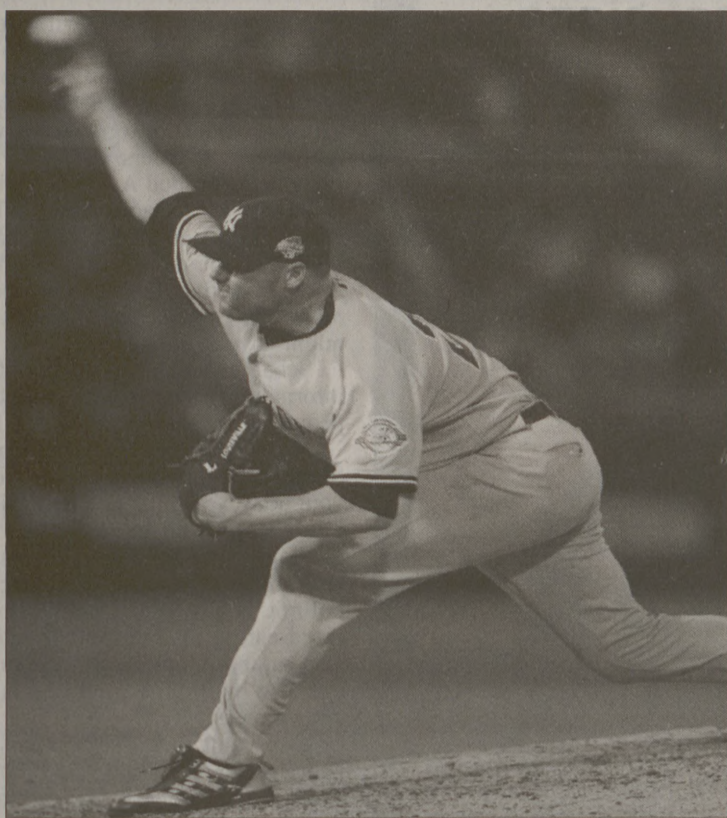
Despite constant pain and limited action, Oswalt, 26, went 10-5 with a 2.97 ERA in 21 starts last year. His 2.92 ERA the last three seasons is better than either Clemens or Pettitte.

Williams' decision was partly to reward Oswalt and to position the left-handed Pettitte between the team's top right-handers.

"I basically thought that way after the season, before these other two big pitchers came in," Williams said. "But we're certainly happy to have them."

Williams told the pitchers of his final decision just hours after pitchers and catchers underwent physicals and prepared for the first workout of spring training.

Pettitte signed a \$31.5 million, three-year deal with the Astros in December. That helped convince his friend and fellow Houston-area resident, Clemens, to end a brief retirement and join the



PAUL J. BERESWILL • KRT CAMPUS

Roger Clemens pitches in the first inning of game four of the 2003 World Series on Oct. 22, 2003, against the Florida Marlins. Clemens signed with the Houston Astros over the off-season and arrived at spring training Sunday.

Astros for \$5 million this season.

The signings have led to the most anticipated season in recent memory for Astros players and fans.

"You look across the (locker) room and there are two legends wearing the same uniform as you," reliever Kirk Saarloos said.

As for their first day of workouts with the Astros, Pettitte said everything felt fairly normal except going through NL-style bunting and baserunning drills. He talked about getting schooled in the art of sliding and bunting, things the Yankees didn't exactly

stress on reporting day.

Clemens, also switching leagues for the first time, chided Pettitte at a news conference.

"Surely you knew all that, right?" he said.

Brad Ausmus, the veteran catcher assigned to help the former Yankees learn NL lineups, said he wasn't surprised by the rotation order and believes the team has four No. 1 starters.

"You could put their names in a hat and pull any one out," he said. "I'm confident with any one of those guys, and I think most of the team is."

## Safe!

### SPORTS IN BRIEF

#### Aggie men's tennis wins first conference test

The Texas A&M men's tennis team opened Big 12 play with a 7-0 blanking of the University of Nebraska Saturday in Lincoln, Neb.

The No. 9 Aggies dropped only one set on the day in their nine matches.

A&M juniors Lester Cook and Ante Matijevic got back on a winning track by defeating Nebraska sophomore Gerhard Posch and junior Jose Rivera, 8-4.

"All in all, I thought it was a good effort by our group across the board," said A&M head coach Tim Cass. "We knew we needed to come out and play well in doubles, and I thought we did that. We were then able to carry that over to singles play. I thought we posted some really good scores throughout the lineup."

The Aggies will travel to Boulder, Colo., to face the University of Colorado at 1 p.m. Monday.

#### Golf finishes eighth in Hawaii

The Texas A&M men's golf team opened its spring season last week with an eighth-place team finish at the John Burns Intercollegiate tournament at the Leilehua Golf Course in Wahiawa, Hawaii.

The Aggies finished with rounds of 283, 280 and 286 on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday respectively, for a three-day total of a 15-under par 849.

A&M was led by senior David Tasker, who finished in a tie for seventh place individually after rounds of 70, 67 and 70. Finishing out the Aggie scoring were junior David Schultz (t22nd, 212), senior Stephen Reed (t41st, 215), sophomore Andrew Parr (t41st, 215) and senior Parker Briley (t27th, 227).

The team title was won by the University of Arizona with a 31-under par 833.

A&M will see action next on March 6-7 at the Louisiana Classics in Lafayette, La.



Evan O'Connell • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M junior left fielder Andrew Baldwin slides in safely at third base Friday during the Aggies' 13-3 win over South Alabama. A&M swept the Jaguars over the weekend by winning 8-0 Saturday and 4-3 Sunday. A&M is now 7-0 on the season.

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