

Hoffmann takes in spring training

By Jim Bastian — Journal Sports Writer

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NEW ULM - New Ulm native Jamie Hoffmann has been taking in spring training with the New York Yankees the past few weeks.

"Spring training has been going pretty good for me," he said. "I got a few at-bats [in a Yankee split squad game]. I got a couple of walks [Friday]."

Hoffmann is hitting .143 in 21 at-bats, but if you look at the rest of the Yankees outfield no one is tearing the cover off of the ball.

Marcus Thames is hitting .143, Curtis Granderson is hitting .182 with Randy Winn batting .167.

"That is spring training," Hoffmann said. "You really do not look at the numbers, you just try and work hard and make sure that you are doing everything right and hopefully the results come later."

He said that it had been a struggle early.

"I have been trying to find my swing," he said. "I just go out and do my job - show them my work ethic. I take pride in my defense. My making the final 25 man roster is really still up on the air. We will just have to see what happens."

One important date for Hoffmann will be March 31. That is the last day to request unconditional release waivers on players without having to pay them their 2010 salary.

If Hoffmann is not kept on the Yankees 25-man roster, he would have to be put on waivers and then returned to the Los Angeles Dodgers.

"It all depends on when the Yankees make their mind up," he said. "I really do not have a lot of control over that. I am just going to go out there and play and not worry about it."

Twenty-five man rosters are officially set on April 4th.

HITTING IS MENTAL: Hoffmann said that the art of hitting is about 90 percent mental.

"You can do all the other things right but if you are not right in your head it will not go very well for you," he said. "But that is baseball in general, it is a battle. It is 162 games not including spring training or the playoffs so you are at it for a while. Your mind has to be in shape as well as your body."

Coming into a new situation with the Yankees, Hoffmann has tried to reinforce some things as well as change others.

"I am usually pretty intense so I need to relax more," he said. "I tend to try too hard in this new environment. I just to need to slow down my swing, slow down what is going on and hopefully have some success."

He said that Yankees hitting coach Kevin Long hasn't changed his style.

"I have been experimenting a little bit right now because I have not felt very comfortable at the plate," Hoffmann said. "But that could have come from never being really comfortable this spring. He told me a few things that I can work on and I totally agree with him."

Hoffmann is up by 6:30 a.m. and on the way to the park by 7 a.m. for a day game and does not return home until after 4 p.m.

"It is a long day," he said.