

Twins are receptive as Neagle makes his pitch

By Patrick Reusse
Staff Writer

Cooperstown, N.Y. Denny Neagle came to audition for the Twins on Monday. He pitched six innings in the Twins' 6-4 victory over San Francisco in the Hall of Fame exhibition game.

Neagle's raw numbers were not that impressive: five hits, four runs, two earned. But there was an explanation. Shortstop Greg Gagne kicked a ground ball, and that led to two unearned runs. Later, the Giants' Dave Anderson hit a fly ball that carried the 336-foot power alley in left-center at Doubleday Field for a two-run home run.

"That might have been a double off the wall in Fenway Park, although I doubt it," said Neagle, a former Gopher.

For more than a month, there has been speculation Neagle would be recalled from Class AAA Portland to join the Twins' starting rotation — first as a replacement for Mark Guthrie, now as a replacement for Allan Anderson.

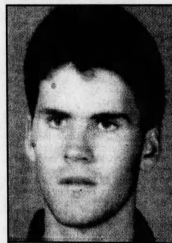
Neagle had a couple of bad starts earlier this month, so David West was recalled from a rehabilitation assignment and given Guthrie's spot. Now, manager Tom Kelly has elected to skip two of Anderson's turns in the rotation because of off days.

There are plenty of rumors. One has the Twins trading Anderson to the Yankees for lefthanded reliever Greg Cadaret. Another has the Twins trading Anderson to Baltimore for righthanded reliever Mark Williamson.

"I've been getting calls from a newspaperman in the Twin Cities for the past few weeks, telling me I might get called up," Neagle said. "I've been aware of the possibility all along. I know that the rumors won't mean anything, if I don't pitch well at Portland."

Neagle had six strikeouts and no walks. He also showed a new pitch for Kelly and pitching coach Dick Such — a slider. "I haven't thrown a slider since college," Neagle said. "I've gone with the fastball, change-up and curveball in pro ball. There were times lately when I felt I needed a sharper breaking ball. I threw a few sliders warming up today, and Dick Such told me to throw it in the game."

Neagle struck out Matt Williams, Mark Leonard and Rob Thompson. Leonard looked helpless flailing at a



Denny Neagle

slider for strike three. "That was one of the best breaking pitches I've thrown this year," Neagle said. "I junked the slider because I thought it was too hard on my elbow. Now, I'm stronger and more mature. I'm going to start working it in again."

"I have to keep the hitters off the plate, too. I was bombed in Albuquerque when I threw a lot of fastballs down the middle. Mickey Hatcher is one of the coaches there. He told me, 'You have good stuff, but you have to pitch inside more.'"

Neagle said he was determined to do that yesterday. He tried to drive the Giants' Kevin Mitchell off the plate and hit the big man with a fastball. "I know he was mad, because he just wanted to swing the bat and get out of there," Neagle said. "He didn't want someone pitching inside, not in a game like this."

Neagle flew to Detroit on the Twins' charter last night. He will leave today and rejoin Portland. "T.K. and Such both told me I did a good job, threw the ball well," Neagle said. "I think this guarantees I'll be called up in September. If what I did today makes it happen sooner, so much the better."

There are two other Portland starters who are hot prospects: Willie Banks and the 21-year-old kid just in from Orlando, Pat Mahomes. "Mahomes and I started last season together at Valsala and became good friends," Neagle said. "Willie and I are friends, too, from playing together the past two years. You're teammates, but there is also competition. In a way, you're pitching against each other, because you have the same goal: getting to the big leagues as soon as possible."

Twins beat Giants 6-4



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