

Bonds: 'I'm just being realistic with myself'

Home-run hitter reports to camp, saying this year could be his last

By JOSH DUBOW
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz.

Barry Bonds showed up at the San Francisco Giants' camp Wednesday, saying there's a good possibility this would be his last season in baseball.

"I've thought about it a lot," he said after his first workout with the team this year. "I'm just being realistic with myself. Every year that's the last year of my contract, that's how I think."

"I don't assume I'm going to continue on. ... If something happens in the future, I'll make that decision later on."

Bonds arrived at Scottsdale (Ariz.) Stadium shortly before 8 a.m. At the end of last season, Bonds vowed to be "skinny" when he showed up at spring training, but it didn't appear he lost much weight, if any.

Bonds joined teammates on the field for workouts but stretched for less than five minutes before leaving the field when they started running drills. He returned to



AP PHOTO

Barry Bonds throws during a spring-training workout with the San Francisco Giants on Wednesday in Scottsdale, Ariz. The 41-year-old is in the final season of his \$90 million, five-year contract and said this season may be his last.

take part in fielding drills, playing catch and shagging flies.

He then hit in the batting cage before taking three rounds of batting practice off Jason Schmidt and Noah Lowry. In all, Bonds took 17 pitches, had two swings and misses, two grounders, four balls hit into the netting of the batting cage and one home run.

"It was great. I'm good. It felt good to be out there," Bonds said.

Bonds missed the team's first full workout Tuesday, but his agent had told the Giants that he would be a day or two late because of personal issues. The mandatory reporting date for

players is next Tuesday.

After having three knee operations and playing only 14 games last year, the Giants are eager to learn what they can expect from Bonds this season. He showed signs of his old self in his brief September return, hitting five homers in 42 at-bats to help the Giants make a late run at the San Diego Padres in the NL West that ultimately fell short.

Bonds, 41, is in the final season of his \$90 million, five-year contract and will be eligible for free agency after the World Series, meaning his time with the Giants could be up even if he doesn't retire.

Controversial catcher ready to give White Sox an edge again

The Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz.

A.J. Pierzynski crouched behind the plate for a round of spring training batting practice Wednesday and already was chirping.

"Swing the bat," Pierzynski told teammate Pablo Ozuna. "It's right down the middle."

And when Joe Crede got plunked by a pitch from Freddy Garcia, there may have been more than early season wildness to blame.

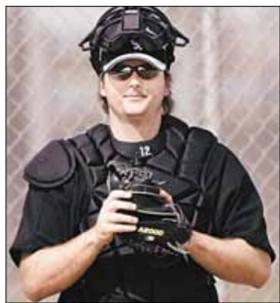
"A ball got away from Freddy, but I think A.J. may have been behind it," Crede said.

Pierzynski can stir it up. Early season, middle of the season and, as he proved last year in the playoffs in helping the White Sox win the World Series, the postseason.

And after one championship year, Pierzynski's life has changed, and his reputation as an agitator has been enhanced.

He spent his offseason in Florida with his young daughter and wife.

He also made GQ's list of the 10 most-hated athletes, signed a



AP PHOTO

Chicago White Sox catcher A.J. Pierzynski works out during spring training in Tucson, Ariz., on Saturday. Pierzynski became a household name after last year's postseason.

three-year, \$15 million deal with the White Sox and hung out with friend Johnny Damon.

"Yeah, I got recognized more at home. That's for sure," Pierzynski said. "People do when you do some of the stuff that happened to me."

Most of what made Pierzynski a savior to his teammates and a vil-

lain to others happened during the AL Championship series against the Los Angeles Angels, when he was involved in three controversial plays that all went Chicago's way.

"Controversy always follows that guy everywhere. It didn't seem as though he was looking for it," Crede said. "It just seemed like it happened to him in the playoffs."

Pierzynski spent three seasons with the Twins before he was traded to the Giants for the 2004 season. Known for annoying tactics like stepping on opposing players' bats, Pierzynski's reputation in his year with San Francisco took a bigger hit when he was called a clubhouse "cancer" by a teammate.

Chicago decided he was worth the risk and signed him as a free agent. He batted a career-low .257 last year but hit a career-high 18 homers. He added three more in the postseason.

"I want to prove what we did last year wasn't a one-time thing," he said. "I was on a mission last year, and I'm on a mission again this year."



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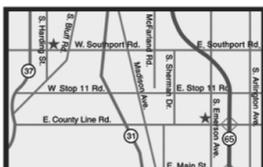
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