

Waiting Season
Minor league
baseball players on
hoping to get called
up to the majors

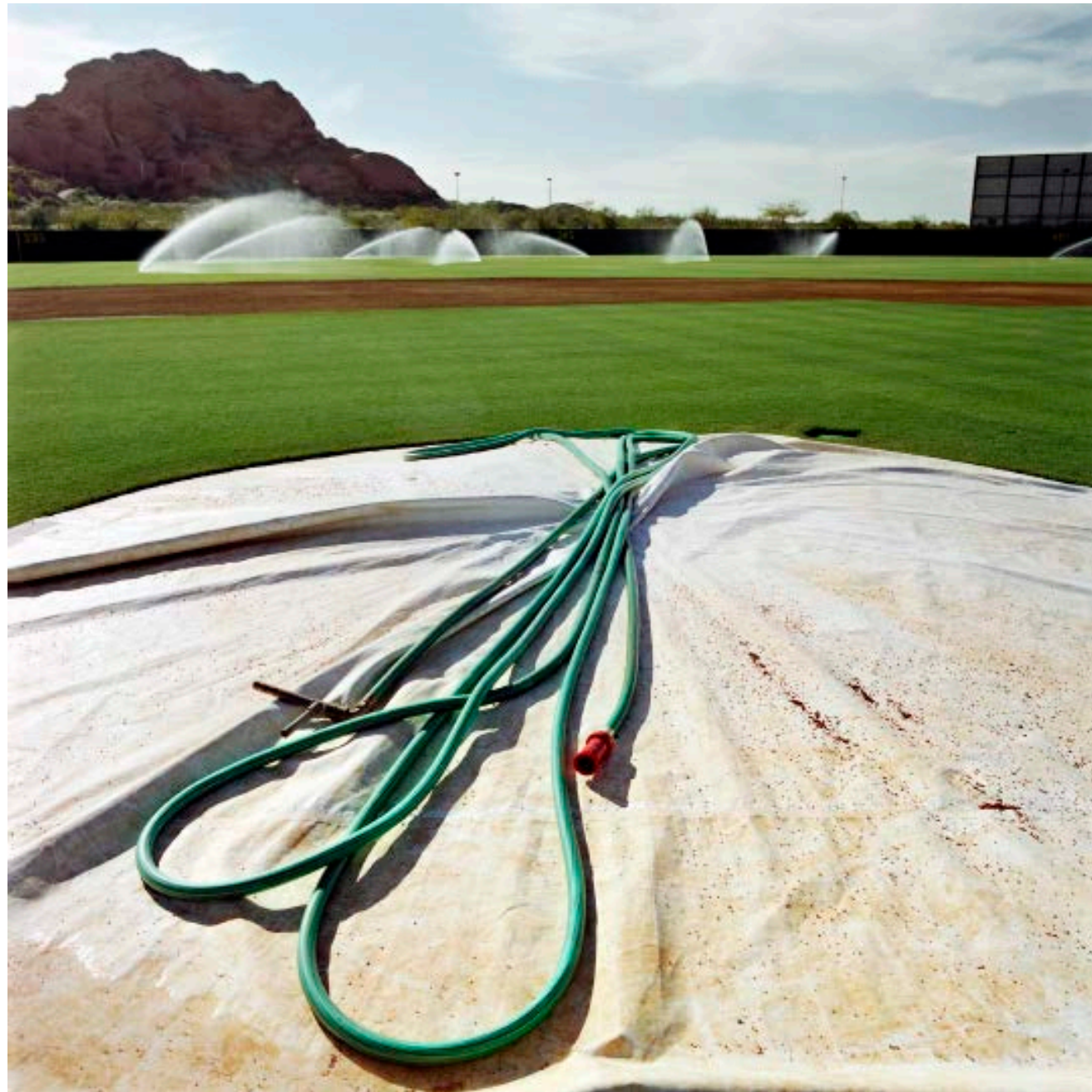
AS TOLD TO GREG NICHOLS



*Photographs by
Tabitha Soren*

*Tabitha Soren has spent the past TK months photographing major and minor league teams across the West for a solo show, *Fantasy Life*, that opens at Kopeikin Gallery in Los Angeles in April.*

CLAYTON BLACKBURN, 22, PITCHER FOR THE GIANTS ORGANIZATION / Everyone's the best where they came from. I went into it not knowing what to do or how to act. You don't know coming in whether you should have a sense of arrogance about you or just try to fit in. There's 180 or 200 guys all competing for a job. We all know it's close and it could happen, but talking about it all the time is just going to make it more stressful. That's something that you try to get past. If you don't make it, it's not the end of the world. There are plenty of other things out there I could do. But obviously the dream of being a professional baseball player outweighs all those options. **ZACH LEE, 23, PITCHER FOR THE DODGERS ORGANIZATION** / I like to come out relatively early to throw, maybe 40 or 45 minutes before a game. I'll take five or 10 minutes to look around the ballpark,



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start walking around, kind of get acclimated. Thirty minutes before the game is where I really start to get into stretching and going to the bullpen. The nerves for me come in the bullpen, right before I go out to the field. **DARNELL SWEENEY, 24, SHORTSTOP, SECOND BASEMAN, AND CENTER FIELDER FOR THE DODGERS ORGANIZATION** / When it hits you that you can have a career in professional baseball, the mindset definitely changes. You make sure you start doing the little things, doing a little extra. You want to be the first person on the field and the last to leave. But you're playing a game for a living, so you also want to make sure you're having fun no matter what. It's still the game of baseball—just a little bit faster, and with a lot of guys that you see on TV. **STEVEN OKERT, 23, PITCHER FOR THE GIANTS ORGANIZATION** / I didn't play much in high school.



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I was one of the smaller guys. At one point I was thinking, 'Man, am I ever going to get a junior college that's going to want me to play there?' I was probably 5'8" or 5'9" my junior year. Senior year I was 6'1" and I realized this could turn into something. Yesterday was the first team practice at camp, and when we lined up to stretch was when it hit me. Man, I'm here in Major League spring training with all these guys that just won the World Series. You know?