

"All postseason competitors seek trade to strengthen their rosters around this time of year," the Major League's official website MLB.com said on Monday (Korea time). "However, top stars who have returned from long-term injuries can be another internal reinforcement," introducing 15 long-term injuries.

Among them, the most familiar name to Korean baseball fans came from the Arizona Diamondbacks. MLB.com said, "If 15 players return, it could have the same impact as recruiting big-time players," adding, "In Arizona, Kelly and Eduardo Rodriguez are the same."

This season, Kelly was cruising with a 2.19 ERA with two wins and no losses in four games, but suddenly felt uncomfortable around his shoulder ahead of his appearance in April. A thorough examination revealed that he was on the injured list on the 15th due to shoulder muscle damage and soon moved to the injured list on the 60th, causing great concern. Arizona was also shaken when Kelly, who had been consistently playing in the starting rotation for the past five years, left.

Jordan Montgomery, who was recruited ambitiously by former ace Jack Gallen, was sluggish in 13 games with 6 wins, 5 losses and an earned run average of 6.44, which made it difficult to comfort him. He ranked 27th among 30 teams in the Major League with an ERA of 4.57 in the first half. Rather, Brandon Pot and Line Nelson, who were considered fourth and fifth starters, have played many innings, ranking second in the National League West with a winning rate of 50%.

At a time when it is difficult to give up the postseason and rush in with enthusiasm, Arizona is leaning on returning to its internal resources rather than actively reinforcing its external resources. In fact, Arizona's batting average in the first half of the year was 107 in the adjusted scoring capacity (wRC+), ranking 10th overall in the Major League, and if the starting lineup is stable, the postseason competition can be sufficient.

In that sense, Kelly and Rodriguez are considered players who, if healthy, will be beneficial enough to the team. First of all, Rodriguez signed a four-year, 80-million-dollar FA contract with Arizona ahead of this season after recording 13-9 with a 3.30 ERA in 26 games with the Detroit Tigers last year. He has not played in a single game with Arizona due to his left oblique muscle injury. As such, Arizona can feel the effect of adding new strength.

If he is healthy, Kelly is considered to be a higher rank than Rodriguez. After returning to the U.S. in 2019, Kelly played as Arizona's de facto first starter for the past six years. Although he was an ordinary minor leaguer who had not even entered the big leagues before coming to Korea, he has posted a record of 50 wins and 43 losses with an ERA of 3.75 and 702 strikeouts in 775 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings in 131 games. [토토사이트](#)

Arizona also expected to play a role as a third or fourth starter at the beginning of the recruitment, but it was Kelly who played many innings every year and consistently turned the starting rotation. Excluding the shortened season due to COVID-19 and this year, he played more than 150 innings every year, and last year led Arizona to a National League championship

and a World Series stage. After winning the second game of the World Series, he was praised by Arizona coach Tony Rubio as "Merrill Kelly is the ace of the Diamondbacks, not Zac Gallen."

His experience in the Korean KBO League played a significant role in the background, which led to his being called a "reverse export myth." Kelly joined the SK Wyverns (current SSG Landers) at the age of 26 in 2015 and posted a record of 48-32 with an ERA of 3.86 in 119 games over the past four years. In 2018, his last year, he led SK to victory in the Korean Series. Ahead of the 2019 season, he signed a two-plus-year, maximum of \$14.5 million contract with Arizona that includes club options. However, he was the only Arizona starter to play full time, and the club executed all of its two-year club options, and signed a two-year, \$18 million extension contract starting in 2023 ahead of the 2022 season.

MLB.com said, "Arizona is still in the race for the National League wild card and is trying to regain two starting pitchers for a bigger leap forward. Kelly and Rodriguez were expected to be the second and third starting pitchers for Arizona this season, following ace Gallen. However, Kelly only made four starts before collapsing due to a shoulder injury, and Rodriguez missed the entire year after joining the FA."