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Juan Gonzalez expected to miss rest of season

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. – Kansas City Royals outfielder [Juan Gonzalez](#) is expected to miss the rest of the season with a lower back injury.

Gonzalez has been sidelined since getting hurt May 22. He was examined by spine specialist Dr. Robert Watkins in Los Angeles this week after experiencing discomfort while on a rehabilitation assignment with the rookie league Arizona Royals.

"Juan has an old disc problem that has been re-injured," Kansas City trainer Nick Swartz said Thursday. "The extent of that injury basically is the same as what we saw back in May. He was progressing through his rehab his past week and he felt the return of symptoms. Monday he had increased pain. He had spasms again much like we saw back at the end of May."

Gonzalez, a two-time MVP, hit .276 with five homers and 17 RBIs in 33 games with the Royals before being injured.

"Juan needs to go back to a period of time of conservative care, rest from baseball activities," Swartz said. "The doctor didn't put out a timetable other than it will be about four weeks before he will be re-evaluated and in all likelihood what you're looking at is Juan not being able to return to active player, competitive play for the rest of the 2004 season."

Surgery is not currently under consideration.

"Dr. Watkins said he feels there's a real good change given enough time for this to rest and calm down, surgery would not have to take place," Swartz said. "You go through the conservative care and you see if it responds to the treatment and the medication."


The Royals optioned pitcher [Jimmy Gobble](#) to Triple-A Omaha after losing 2-0 to the Tampa Bay Devil Rays on Thursday night.

Gobble went 6-8 with a 5.75 ERA in 20 games, including 19 starts. He allowed eight runs and 10 hits over 4 2-3 innings of the Royals' 10-1 loss at Tampa Bay on Wednesday night.

Kansas City will fill the roster spot Friday.

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