

A's News Clips, Wednesday, December 2, 2009

Winter Meetings likely to be quiet for A's

GM Beane not interested in free agents, but is open to trades

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com 12/2/09

OAKLAND -- A wheeler/dealer by nature, Billy Beane has made his fair share of news at the Winter Meetings since taking over as the A's general manager shortly after the 1997 season.

Whether pulling off a four-team trade, as was the case in his "Holy Grail" deal for Erubiel Durazo in 2002, or welcoming a steady stream of rivals into his suite to talk trade regarding his "Big Three" of Tim Hudson, Mark Mulder and Barry Zito, as was the case in 2004, Beane is typically one of the belles of baseball's annual December ball.

Next week in Indianapolis, however, Beane might be more of a wallflower than anything.

Fully committed to rebuilding with youth in the wake of a third consecutive sub-.500 season -- after a string of five playoff appearances in seven years (2000-06) -- that was marked by the relative backfiring of several high-profile veteran additions last offseason, Beane has made it clear that he isn't going to be hot on the trail of any major free agents.

The eventually fruitful pursuit of Frank Thomas during the 2005 meetings? The Randy Johnson rumors last year in Vegas? Don't expect anything of the sort this time around.

"To sign a couple free agents and have three or four press conferences during the winter doesn't get it done," Beane says. "We're going to be disciplined."

That doesn't mean Beane won't jump on a free-agent bargain that falls into his lap. Disciplined, yes. Stubborn, no.

But with the Hot Stove having only recently been cranked up to "HIGH," bargains aren't going to present themselves in Indy, where the meetings commence in full force Monday and effectively end after Thursday morning's Rule 5 Draft.

Beane, whose general disdain for the Winter Meetings has grown commensurate with the advancement of technologies that easily keep GMs in contact year-round, insists he's perfectly content to let the free-agent frenzy play out without his active participation.

He's willing to talk trades, of course, and he certainly has enough top prospects to engage fellow GMs should he decide to get the rumor mill smoking. But ideally, his own prospects will help fill his team's current need, which includes long-term solutions at third base, first base, shortstop and left field.

"We've always been proud of our player development history here," Beane said. "Really, if you look at when the club has been good, it's been with players we've brought through our own system. [Closer and 2009 American League Rookie of the Year Andrew Bailey] is the fourth [Rookie of the Year Award winner] we've had since '98, and usually following that we've had some pretty good success."

"So the next step is to continue to bring guys like Andrew up here. That's our responsibility, and I know the deal."

He also knows *how* to deal. He used the 2004 Winter Meetings to lay the groundwork for the trades of Hudson and Mulder, and part of the haul from those blockbusters helped -- directly and indirectly -- Oakland reach the '06 AL Championship Series.

"We don't have those types of guys right now, obviously," Beane said. "But that doesn't mean we're not going to look at trades. I'm sure there will be plenty of conversations."

Plenty of the talking will be done before Beane leaves the Bay Area, and if you see him turning Indy into something of a swap meet, it'll be safe to assume that his talent evaluators have told him the in-house talent needs an upgrade.

"I think our first goal this winter is the positions we need to fill -- fill them with young guys," Beane said. "The first goal is to find a young guy. Our long-term goal is to create a team with continuity that is going to be here for a number of years. If we get into January and we haven't acquired a young player, then we'll consider a guy to fill in temporarily."

"We're going to look at young players to fill spots, first and foremost. If those players we'd like to acquire aren't obtainable, we'll consider bringing in guys who can hold the positions down.

"We're going to ... try to do everything we can to fill those spots with young players."

Oakland A's offer arbitration to Duchscherer

Oakland Tribune wire report 12/2/09

The Oakland A's have offered arbitration to right-handed pitcher Justin Duchscherer, the club announced on Tuesday.

Duchscherer is a Type B free agent and by offering him arbitration, the A's will receive a compensation pick following the first round of the 2010 draft should he sign with another team.

Duchscherer missed the entire 2009 season after undergoing surgery on his right elbow during the spring and later being diagnosed with depression. He made three rehab starts following the March 31 elbow surgery and did not allow a run in 11 innings. On Aug. 21, it was announced that he would not pitch the rest of the season after being diagnosed with clinical depression.

The 32-year old right-hander went 10-8 with a 2.54 ERA in 22 starts in 2008 and is 31-24 with a 3.14 ERA in 219 career appearances, including 27 starts.

Jerry Brown campaign gets funds from casinos

Phillip Matier, Andrew Ross, San Francisco Chronicle, 12/2/09

Boxscore: A new poll shows San Jose voters equally split over the idea of the Oakland A's relocating to their city.

The poll of 400 Santa Clara County voters found that the half living in San Jose were split, 45 to 44 percent, on whether they approve of the A's moving to town.

Countywide, support for the move was slightly better, 45 to 37 percent.

The survey was conducted Oct. 26 to 28 by Oregon pollster **Rick Lindholm**, who tells us he added the A's question to a broad survey of Santa Clara County opinion "to get a benchmark of what was going on."

The survey pretty much mirrors what the Giants, who are opposing the move, found in their polling - but sharply differs from what A's boosters in Santa Clara found in their survey.

A Giants poll of 528 county voters, including 275 from San Jose, conducted from April 21 to 27 found respondents leaning 2 to 1 against the move if it meant spending public money, and rating a new ballpark as dead last among seven possible spending priorities in the county.

"I think that's going to be a hard sale," said Giants pollster **Peter Hart**.

Santa Clara County Assessor **Larry Stone**, however, tells us his booster group's poll - taken three months ago - showed "surprisingly strong support" for the team moving, though he didn't provide details.

Whatever the case, we're told that San Jose officials have had two meetings with the Major League Baseball committee reviewing the A's possible move. At this point, that's probably the only group that counts.