

A's News Clips, Thursday, December 3, 2009

Who profits from revenue sharing?

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle, 12/3/09

A baseball owner popped off about other baseball owners, which is rare in this guarded fraternity. Boston's John Henry virtually accused seven teams of pocketing revenue-sharing checks instead of reinvesting in their teams.

Henry, proposing a plan with less revenue sharing and more payroll taxing, told the Boston Globe that "over a billion dollars have been paid to seven chronically uncompetitive teams, five of whom have had baseball's highest operating profits. Who, except these teams, can think this is a good idea?"

Was Henry including the A's, who received \$32 million in the latest round of revenue sharing?

Three years ago, the A's reached the AL Championship Series. They made the playoffs four straight years in the early 2000s. So if he's calling the A's "chronically uncompetitive," that's a bit unfair.

He might have a point when regarding "operating profits." Forbes reported the A's ranked seventh in the majors in 2008 operating income (\$26.2 million) behind a curious bunch: Marlins, Nats, Cubs, Rays, Orioles and Twins.

Revenue sharing, though costly to the Yankees and Red Sox, has helped lower-revenue teams such as the A's exist among the revenue giants. Forbes had the A's tied for 26th in revenue at \$160 million.

We contacted A's owner Lew Wolff, who declined to directly address Henry's take but said the A's use revenue sharing to invest in baseball operations, including a revamped farm system, the draft and the pursuit of foreign players (Dominican pitcher Michael Ynoa cost \$4.25 million), not solely the major-league payroll.

"We prefer to reach a point where our revenues do not require us to receive revenue sharing. To do so, we need a viable venue," said Wolff, whose latest ballpark target is San Jose.

Henry proposed a payroll minimum, but Michael Weiner, who replaced Don Fehr as the union's executive director Wednesday, said the players would oppose it because they believe it's a "precursor to a request for a salary cap."

The current deal expires after the 2011 season. We'll hear much more from both sides before then.

Devine, A's agree to one-year deal

Righty reliever missed all of last season after elbow surgery

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com 12/3/09

The A's agreed to terms with right-handed reliever Joey Devine on a one-year contract, the club announced Wednesday.

Devine was projected as the team's closer in 2009, but he had surgery on his right elbow in April that caused him to miss the entire season after posting impressive numbers as a rookie in '08.

The right-hander went 6-1 with a 0.59 ERA and one save in 42 relief appearances that season. He also struck out 49 batters in 45 2/3 innings.

In 67 career Major League appearances with the Braves and A's, Devine is 7-2 with a 2.48 ERA and 69 strikeouts in 65 1/3 innings. He was acquired by the A's in 2008 in the trade that sent Mark Kotsay to Atlanta.

The 26-year-old is the first of the six arbitration-eligible players on the A's to agree to terms on a contract for next season. The other five players eligible for arbitration are right-handed pitchers Santiago Casilla and Michael Wuertz and outfielders Jack Cust, Rajai Davis and Scott Hairston.

Oakland A's Top-50 Prospects: 40-36

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Dec 1, 2009

It's that time of the year when we take stock of the Oakland A's organization and analyze the top prospects. For the next few weeks, we will profile our top-50 prospect list in groups of five. Today, we continue the series with a review of prospects 40-36.

40. Connor Hoehn

The A's spent their 12th round pick in the 2009 draft on Hoehn, a big, strong right-handed pitcher out of St. Petersburg Junior College. Two years ago, Hoehn was a highly touted high school pitcher at St. Johns High School in Washington, D.C. and was pegged before the 2007 draft to go as high as the fourth round. He fell to the Milwaukee Brewers in the 21st round that season thanks to signability questions and passed on beginning his professional career. Hoehn instead attended the University of [Alabama](#), for whom he appeared in a handful of games his freshman season. After one year with the Tide, Hoehn decided to transfer to a junior college, where he would be eligible for the draft in 2009.

Hoehn signed with the A's in mid July and after a brief stint with the A's Rookie League club, the right-hander joined the short-season Vancouver Canadians, where he worked out of the bullpen for the rest of the season. Hoehn was one of the C's top relievers, appearing in 15 games and allowing only two earned runs in 18 innings. He gave up only nine hits and he struck-out 25 while walking seven. Over his final 10 appearances of the season, Hoehn gave up only an unearned run and he scattered four hits and four walks while striking out 19 in 12.2 innings. He finished second on the Canadians' staff with seven saves.

Not only were Hoehn's numbers impressive with Vancouver, but his stuff opened eyes, as well. His fastball was regularly clocked in the 93-95 MPH range. He also showed a sharp-breaking hard slider and a developing change-up. Hoehn's command was a little shaky towards the start of his stint with Vancouver, but he improved his command as the season wore on.

Despite his success in the C's bullpen, Hoehn is expected to move into the starting rotation in 2010. At 6'2", 210 pounds, Hoehn has a starter's frame. He was a starter in high school and he gained some experience in that role with St. Petersburg in 2009. Hoehn's fastball didn't quite get the same radar readings as a starter with St. Pete, but he did sit in the 89-93 MPH range in that role. He has a clean delivery that he repeats well and doesn't appear to put undue strain on his arm, so it should be a relatively smooth transition for Hoehn into the starting rotation.

Moving Hoehn into a starting role doesn't mean that he will be a starter throughout his career.. However, the extra innings he will get in that role will allow him to continue to refine his secondary pitches, especially his change-up, as well as a curveball that he didn't use much out of the bullpen. The A's know that he can handle the bullpen should it become apparent that that is the role he is best suited for down-the-road. Because he was a junior college draft pick, Hoehn is a little younger than many of the A's traditional college picks. He won't turn 21 until July 2010. Hoehn should start the 2010 season with Low-A Kane County.

39. Tom Everidge

Everidge's arduous journey through the A's system finally rewarded him with some time at the major league level in 2009. After getting his feet wet in the big leagues in 2009, he is looking to find a permanent role in the major leagues in 2010.

Everidge began his career with the A's in 2004 when he was taken in the 10th round of the draft by Oakland. Since that time, Everidge has put up solid numbers, but, until this season, he was rarely given an opportunity to perform at the higher levels. For instance, despite driving in 83 runs for the Stockton Ports in 2006, he was forced to repeat the level in 2007. That pattern repeated itself in 2009 when he was forced to repeat at Double-A despite driving in 115 runs for Midland in 2008. Through all of the disappointments of not being promoted quickly, Everidge has shown great resiliency. When he was passed over for a promotion in 2007, he responded by driving in 90 runs and hitting 26 homers for Stockton. In 2009, Everidge hit .306 with 53 RBIs in 55 games for Midland before finally being given a long-awaited promotion to Triple-A midway through the season.

Given his chance to compete at a high level, Everidge did not falter. He quickly became one of the Sacramento River Cats' top hitters and he batted .368 with 12 homers, 41 RBIs and a 1060 OPS in 52 games for Sacramento. His performance with the River Cats earned Everidge a nearly month-long stint with the A's. He hit .224 with two homers and seven RBIs in 24 games with the A's in August.

Everidge had to deal with disappointment again at the end of the 2009 season when he wasn't one of the A's September call-ups. However, he has remained on the A's 40-man roster thus far this off-season, and assuming he continues to hold onto his spot, he will get a chance to compete at the A's big league spring training camp for the first time in his career.

Assuming the A's don't bring in a veteran DH/1B type before the start of the season, Everidge is expected to have a legitimate chance to compete for a spot on the A's 25-man roster this spring. A right-handed hitter, Everidge brings a nice balance to the A's first-base and DH spots, which are currently expected to be occupied by the left-handed hitting [Daric Barton](#) and [Jack Cust](#). Everidge hit .333 with a 976 OPS against left-handed pitchers with the A's and he had an 855 OPS against southpaws with Midland and Sacramento in 2009.

Defensively, Everidge has improved greatly from his days as a big liability with the glove at first base, but he is still an average defender at best at first. He can also play third base in a pinch, something he did quite frequently with Midland at the start of the 2009 season. He is a below-average base-runner. Everidge employs an aggressive approach at the plate, looking for pitches to drive early in the count. He did an excellent job making regular contact in 2009, striking out only 68 times in 430 minor league at-bats, and he was able to take his walks when they were given to him, walking 51 times and posting a .402 OBP. He is short to the ball and has good power to the pull-side of the diamond.

Everidge will be competing with some of the A's top prospects for a spot on the team's 25-man roster this spring. This is nothing new for the North Bay native, who has been stuck behind Barton for much of the past four seasons. If he doesn't make the A's roster out of spring training, Everidge could be a trade target for another team looking for a right-handed power bat for their bench. Everidge will turn 27 at the end of April.

38. [John Meloan](#)

The 2009 season was a good one for Meloan's frequent flier mileage accounts, but it was otherwise mostly forgettable. The big right-hander began the season with an opportunity to earn a spot in the Cleveland Indians' bullpen during spring training and he ended the year in the Oakland A's bullpen. In between, he moved through four different organizations. Thanks to his performance in September with the A's, he may finally be able to call Oakland a permanent home in 2010.

Meloan began his career with the Los Angeles Dodgers' chain after being selected in the fifth round by the Dodgers in the 2005 draft. Mostly a starter in college at the University of [Arizona](#), Meloan was moved into the bullpen by the Dodgers and almost immediately became one of their top relief prospects. In 2007, Meloan was named the Double-A Relief Pitcher of the Year by MLB.com after he went 5-2 with 19 saves and a 2.18 ERA for Double-A Jacksonville. He struck-out 70 in 45.1 innings and allowed only 24 hits. Meloan also threw 21 innings for Triple-A Las Vegas that season and he posted a 1.69 ERA. He made his major league debut that September, but struggled in 7.1 innings, allowing nine runs and eight walks.

Meloan's momentum within the Dodgers' organization stalled in 2008 when the team made the curious decision to move him into the starting rotation despite his monster season in relief in 2007. The transition was not a smooth one for Meloan, who struggled badly with his command with Las Vegas, going 5-10 with a 4.97 ERA and 60 walks in 105 innings. He was dealt at the All-Star break to the Cleveland Indians along with catcher [Carlos Santana](#) in the trade that sent [Casey Blake](#) to Los Angeles. Once with Cleveland, Meloan moved back into the bullpen, but he still struggled with the Indians' Triple-A squad, posting a 4.30 ERA and walking nine in 14.2 innings. He did make two scoreless appearances for Cleveland at the end of the season.

Although it was believed that Meloan had a legitimate chance to win a role in the Indians' bullpen this spring, he was given only limited opportunities during big league camp. He allowed three runs in three innings and was sent back to minor league camp. That began a strange odyssey for Meloan that would take him through four Triple-A cities before landing him back in the big leagues in September. The journey began at Triple-A Columbus with Cleveland, where he continued to struggle like he had in 2008. In 44 innings, Meloan posted a 5.52 ERA and he walked 17 while striking out only 37. He was traded to the Tampa Bay Rays for Wilson Abreu on July 2nd. He spent more than a month in the Rays organization with Triple-A Durham, and while he showed some improvement (3.38 ERA in 13.1 innings), he still walked too many batters (10). He was designated for assignment by the Rays on August 7th and was quickly claimed by the Pittsburgh Pirates. Meloan made six appearances for Triple-A Indianapolis and was effective (one run on three hits and one walk allowed in 7.2 innings), but that didn't prevent him from being designated for assignment again, this time on August 31st.

The A's picked up Meloan on September 2nd and sent him to Triple-A Sacramento, where he appeared in three games with the River Cats before the close of the regular season. He pitched for Sacramento during the post-season and after the River Cats were eliminated in the PCL finals, Meloan was on the move again, although this time it was to the major leagues, rather than the waiver wire. He made a strong impression with the A's in his first big league action with the team, appearing in six games and not allowing an earned run. He scattered three hits and two walks over 8.1 innings and he struck-out 11.

Despite all of Meloan's travels in 2009, he is a legitimate relief prospect. During his minor league career, he has averaged

more than 10 strike-outs per inning and less than five hits per inning as a reliever. He has a max-effort delivery that has caused him some trouble with his command at times, but his command has been much better out of the bullpen than it has as a starter.

Meloan is a Texas native and he is built like a prototypical Texas flame-throwing right-hander. He stands at 6'3" and weighs in around 230 pounds with a strong lower half. Meloan has classic reliever's stuff, as well. He features a fastball that sits in the 90-95 range, which he compliments with a hard slider, cutter and change-up. Meloan receives high marks from scouts for his mental make-up and his intensity on the mound.

In many organizations, Meloan would be a favorite going away for a spot in their 2010 big league bullpen after his September major league performance. However, Meloan will be facing heavy competition at the A's big league spring training camp, as Oakland is expected to return nearly everyone from one of the top bullpens in all of baseball in 2009. Still, an arm like Meloan is hardly a dime a dozen and if he comes into spring training throwing like he was with the A's in September, it will be hard for Oakland to keep him off of their Opening Day roster. He will be 25 at the start of the 2010 campaign.

37. Ben Hornbeck

Hornbeck vaulted out of virtual obscurity in 2009, going from a player who projected as organizational depth to a legitimate pitching prospect in one short year. The left-hander was selected by the A's in the 32nd round of the 2008 draft out of Kansas State. He put together a relatively non-descript professional debut, posting a 4.58 ERA but striking out 45 in 35.1 innings with the short-season Vancouver Canadians and Low-A Kane County Cougars. Hornbeck began the 2009 season back in the Cougars' bullpen, but it wasn't long before he forced the Kane County coaching staff to put him in the starting rotation. He wound-up going 4-0 with a 1.24 ERA in 36.1 innings for the Cougars before being called up to High-A Stockton in late May.

"Hornbeck was a bit of a surprise for everybody that he had the success that he had. I don't think that anyone was surprised that he would have success, it was just that he kind of came out of nowhere, in a sense," Kane County manager Steve Scarsone said.

"The next thing you know he's one of our top starters and he is throwing up good start after good start. He really developed into one of our top pitching prospects."

Hornbeck's success continued with the Ports, with whom he spent most of the rest of the season. He made 11 starts with Stockton. His ERA jumped to 4.31 as a starter with the Ports, but he struck-out 81 and allowed California League hitters to bat .248 against him in 56.1 innings. The A's moved Hornbeck into the bullpen in late July to keep his innings-pitched totals down for the year and he was nearly unhittable out of the bullpen, posting a 1.33 ERA and striking out 30 while holding opposing batters to a .149 average in 20.1 innings.

While all of Hornbeck's numbers for 2009 were pretty solid (he finished the year with a 9-5 record and a 3.17 ERA in 116.1 innings for Kane County, Stockton and Double-A Midland — he made one emergency start for the Rockhounds), it was his strike-out total that really stood out. Despite pitching out of the bullpen for the final six weeks of the season, Hornbeck finished tied for seventh among all minor leaguers in strike-outs with 159. He averaged more than 12 strike-outs per nine innings for the season.

Although Hornbeck racked up prodigious strike-out totals, he isn't a classic strike-out pitcher in that his fastball is not his best pitch. His best pitch is a change-up that he describes as being "a Vulcan change-up." It is a swing-and-miss pitch for Hornbeck and he can throw it in any count. His fastball sat in the 86-90 MPH range this season, which was roughly a seven MPH jump from his velocity at the time he was drafted out of K-State. Much of that added velocity came after a change in Hornbeck's throwing motion, when A's coaches lowered his arm angle from straight over the top to a more 10 o'clock release point. He also features a breaking ball and has been working with A's Minor League Pitching Coordinator Gil Patterson on developing a cut-fastball.

Although Hornbeck split his time between the starting rotation and the bullpen this season, he is expected to remain a starting pitcher going into next year. Hornbeck is 6'5", but he weighs only about 180 pounds, so it remains a question as to whether he can maintain the stamina to throw 180+ innings in a season. With his build and outstanding change-up, Hornbeck has drawn loose comparisons to Philadelphia Phillies' ace Cole Hamels from Patterson. Scouts have compared Hornbeck's stuff and his competitive nature on the mound to current A's starter Dallas Braden.

Hornbeck will be tested in 2010 when he moves up to Double-A Midland. He was knocked around in his one Double-A appearance in 2009, although that appearance came in an emergency capacity. Hornbeck will need to prove that he can continue to induce swings-and-misses from upper level hitters despite not possessing a big fastball. If he can and the A's keep him in the starting rotation all season, it will be interesting to see what kind of strike-out totals Hornbeck can put up. He was on-pace to strike-out more than 200 batters if he had thrown 160 innings. He will be 22 at the start of the 2010 season.

36. Jeremy Barfield

It was an up-and-down 2009 season for Barfield. The 6'5" outfielder showed flashes of his power potential, but a poor second half of the season left him with only average overall numbers. Barfield, the A's 2008 eighth round pick, spent the entire season with the Low-A Kane County Cougars. He appeared in 116 games and hit .262 with eight homers, 52 RBIs and a 732 OPS.

At the All-Star break, it appeared that Barfield was on his way towards a much different season. In 49 pre-break games, Barfield hit .302 with six homers and an 848 OPS. That production included a three-homer game. He made the Midwest League All-Star team and was invited to participate in the game's homerun derby. However, he scuffled during the second half of the season, batting only .234 with two homeruns and a 649 OPS.

There were a number of factors behind Barfield's late season struggles. According to Kane County manager Steve Scarsone, Barfield had some trouble with his swing mechanics and had to make a number of in-season adjustments. Barfield also had to deal with the weather elements and the pitcher-friendly nature of the Midwest League.

"He is a guy who has some work to do to better his offensive progress. He has had to make a lot of adjustments with his swing to be quicker to the ball and hit good pitching," Scarsone said.

"When you are facing better pitching everyday and you have weather concerns – cold days and cold nights and ballparks where the ball doesn't carry much – there is a lot of things on the table there that make it tough for him. The Midwest League is tough enough when you've got everything going in the right direction, and when you have to make some adjustments and try something new and you have to go out there and compete in a pitcher's league-type situation, that can be a lot working against him just going in."

The Houston native had some unusual splits in 2009, which were reflective of the inconsistent nature of his season. In addition to the pre- and post-All-Star break splits, Barfield hit significantly better against right-handers (751 OPS) than left-handers (667 OPS), better on the road (793 OPS) than at home (666 OPS) and better during the day (927 OPS) than at night (678 OPS).

Barfield also had to deal with a number of nagging leg injuries throughout the season. He pulled a hamstring during spring training that set him back at the start of the year. Barfield then had to deal with right knee soreness during the season that led to soreness in both knees during the A's Instructional League camp. He had off-season surgery to correct the problem. Although his time at Instructs was cut short by the knee injury, Barfield was able to make some progress on improving his swing during camp, according to Scarsone.

Barfield has all of the tools to be a profile corner outfielder. His build is similar to that of former AL All-Star Joe Carter and he has the ability to hit the ball out to all fields. He also has a strong throwing arm, something he likely inherited from his father Jesse, another former AL All-Star. Although he isn't a burner, Barfield does have enough speed to cover a lot of ground in the outfield.

The 2010 season will be a big one for Barfield, who will need to start producing the numbers commiserate with his talent. He should have the opportunity to hit in a much more friendly atmosphere for power-hitters, the California League. He will be 21 until mid-July.

A's Holiday Caravan kicks off Thursday

Davis, Ziegler to take part in parade, tree-lighting ceremony

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

OAKLAND -- Being in demand is old hat for A's reliever Brad Ziegler, whose offseason calendar was filled with public appearances on the heels of his record-setting rookie year in 2008.

Teammate Rajai Davis, on the other hand, is fairly new to the winter spotlight. He's getting his first real taste of it now, thanks to a breakout 2009 season.

Ziegler and Davis will be the main attractions later this week as the A's 2009 Holiday Caravan kicks off with a parade and tree-lighting ceremony in Walnut Creek, Calif., about 20 miles east of Oakland.

"I guess it's something that comes with playing well," Davis told MLB.com by phone Tuesday from his offseason home in Connecticut. "I've done a little bit in the past, but it does seem like there's more of it now. I'm not complaining, that's for sure."

A charismatic center fielder blessed with tremendous speed and an equally quick smile, Davis began the season as Oakland's fourth outfielder but played himself into a starting role and ended up batting a team-high .305 in 125 games.

He ranked fifth in the American League with a career-high 41 stolen bases, becoming the ninth player in Oakland history to steal 40 bases in a season and the first to do it since Rickey Henderson had 66 in 1998.

"I've been extremely blessed," said Davis, who will fly into Oakland on Thursday morning and participate in eight events over four days in the area. "Part of that blessing is being able to give back, and that's what we're doing [with the caravan]."

Ziegler made his big league debut last season and burst onto the scene, setting a modern Major League record by starting his career with a 39-inning scoreless streak. He was slowed by an illness early this season but rallied to put together another strong campaign, posting a 3.07 ERA with seven saves and 14 holds over 69 appearances.

One of many A's players who regularly participate in community events, Ziegler will join Davis in spreading holiday cheer throughout the East Bay through Sunday.

"It's a lot of fun, spending time not just with kids but with fans in general," Ziegler said by phone from Phoenix, where he's representing the A's players at the union's annual meetings. "It takes me back to when I was a kid, when even a player waving at you was a big deal. I've always tried to remember that feeling and get out there and [connect] with kids and fans as much as I can."

Davis, who turned 29 last month, always makes himself available for autographs before every A's home game and seems to genuinely enjoy interacting with fans. The caravan, which includes a shopping spree for disadvantaged children, a visit to a local substance abuse treatment center, autograph sessions and mall appearances, is right up his alley.

"I get along with everyone, but I especially like being with kids," Davis said. "The older you are, the more your behaviors -- good and bad -- are ingrained, so when you're dealing with children, your message about making the right choices is really heard, and you have a chance to make more of an impact. I'm really looking forward to it."

The 2009 A's Holiday Caravan schedule is as follows:

THURSDAY, DEC. 3

Walnut Creek Holiday Parade of Lights and Tree Lighting, 6-9 p.m.: Davis, Ziegler and Stomper, the A's mascot, will ride in the parade down Broadway Plaza Street, after which they'll be at the A's ticket information table, signing autographs and taking photos with fans. The event also features a merchant open house, live holiday entertainment, caroling and a community tree lighting led by Santa Claus.

FRIDAY, DEC. 4

- Davis and Ziegler take Oakland children holiday shopping at Stoneridge Mall in Pleasanton, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.: The A's Community Fund and Stoneridge Shopping Center will treat 10 children from the Henry Robinson Multi-Service Center in Oakland to a shopping event. Five boys and five girls from the shelter will each receive a \$200 gift card to Stoneridge Shopping Center to purchase items of their choice off their "Santa's wish lists" from any store in the mall. Children will be escorted by the A's players and Stomper in their shopping experience. Each child will also receive a \$50 gift card to purchase an item (or items) for a family member or person of their choice. After the shopping event, each child will be treated to lunch courtesy of P.F. Changs, where they will receive autographs and take photos with the players.

- The Henry Robinson Multi-Service Center is a transitional housing program that serves 54 homeless families for up to two years. The children from this center were chosen to receive this special experience by the Lend A Hand Foundation, a foundation that offers youth in transition (shelters, foster care, and other low income youth) the opportunity to experience educational, sporting, and cultural activities not otherwise available to them. This event is closed to the public.

- Davis and Ziegler sign autographs at Kelly-Moore Paints store in San Ramon, 2-3 p.m.: The players will pose for photographs and sign autographs for shoppers who make a donation to the Oakland A's Community Fund. The A's Community Fund supports charitable organizations in improving the quality of life for people throughout the Bay Area. Specifically, the Fund supports endeavors to improve educational programs, aid the underprivileged, assist in crime and drug prevention, promote health awareness, and champion children and senior welfare.

SATURDAY, DEC. 5

- Davis and Ziegler visit with kids at Alta Bates Summit Medical Center's adolescent substance abuse treatment center in Oakland, 10:30-11:30 a.m.: The players will sign autographs and pose for photos with kids and staff at Alta Bates Summit Medical Center's adolescent substance abuse treatment center, Thunder Road.

- Thunder Road is a nationally-recognized non-profit program has specialized in substance abuse treatment since 1987, supporting more than 6,000 young people and their families through the challenges they face (many of whom have no insurance and are unable to pay for care). It is the only program of its kind in Northern California. Most of the young people in this program are without role models or career paths so the support, self-esteem building and life skills training skills received are invaluable. This event is closed to the public.

- Davis and Ziegler sign autographs at Verizon Wireless store in Emeryville to promote Hopeline Program, 2-3 p.m.: The players will pose for photographs and sign autograph for shoppers. Exclusive to Verizon Wireless, Hopeline puts the nation's most reliable and largest 3G network to work in communities by turning no-longer-used wireless phones into support for victims of domestic violence, and helps protect the environment by disposing of wireless phones in an environmentally sound way.

- Davis, Ziegler and Stomper meet with shoppers at Stoneridge Mall in Pleasanton, 4-6 p.m.: The players will pose for photographs and sign autographs at the Santa set in Grand Court for shoppers who make a donation of \$5 or more to the Simon Youth Foundation. The Simon Youth Foundation fosters and improves educational opportunities, career development, and life skills for at-risk youth through focused programs and initiatives. Stomper will also be on hand to pose for photos and hand out candy canes to shoppers.

SUNDAY, DEC. 6

- Stomper to make appearance at Mrs. Claus' Breakfast Nook Prior to San Jose Holiday Parade, 7-8:30 a.m.: At the Tech Museum (Venture Hall) at 201 South Market Street, the mascot will take photos with kids at a special meet-and-greet at the Mrs. Claus' Breakfast Nook, which kicks off the 28th Annual San Jose Holiday Parade.

- Davis, Ziegler and Stomper will ride in the 28th Annual San Jose Holiday Parade, 8:30-11 a.m.: From HP Pavilion to Plaza de Cesar Chavez, the trio will ride along in the largest parade of its kind in Northern California and one of the largest in the state. The 28th Annual San Jose Holiday Parade will showcase approximately 90 entries with 5,000 marchers, including giant soaring helium balloons, top marching bands, colorful floats, drill teams, equestrians, clowns and special guest celebrities.

- Davis and Ziegler autograph session at San Jose Holiday ParadeFest, 11-11:30 a.m.: At Plaza de Cesar Chavez, the players will sign autographs for fans at Christmas in the Park. For more information on all of the events associated with the parade, visit www.sanjoseholidayparade.com.

FRIDAY, DEC. 11

- Vida Blue, Tyson Ross and Stomper to attend A's Community Fund Party at Oakland Zoo, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.: The A's Community Fund, Round Table Pizza and the Oakland Zoo will host a holiday party for up to 200 children from kindergarten through fifth grades from Civicorps Elementary School. Children attending this holiday party are being rewarded for reaching attendance goals set by Civicorps administrators.

- Blue, a former American League Cy Young winner and MVP with the A's, and Ross, an Oakland native who played college ball at Cal and was a second-round pick of the A's in the 2008 First-Year Player Draft, will sign autographs, take pictures with the students and each child will receive a wrapped gift, compliments of the Good Tidings Foundation. The A's holiday party will include an animal presentation in the Wildlife Theater by the Oakland Zoo, lunch for the children courtesy of Round Table Pizza, plus face painters, arts and crafts. This event is closed to the public.

A's offer righty Duchscherer arbitration

Team would get sandwich pick if two-time All-Star leaves

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

OAKLAND -- The A's on Tuesday offered arbitration to free-agent right-hander Justin Duchscherer, a formality that ensures the team will receive a compensatory pick in the 2010 First-Year Player Draft should Duchscherer sign with another team.

Duchscherer, 32, made a reported \$3.9 million from the A's in 2009 despite missing the season with shoulder and back injuries and a bout with clinical depression.

Because he is ranked as a Type B free agent -- rankings are based on a player's performance over the previous two seasons -- the A's will receive a sandwich pick between the first and second rounds of the Draft next June if Duchscherer declines the arbitration offer by 11:59 p.m. ET on Monday and ends up signing elsewhere.

It's highly unlikely that Duchscherer, a two-time All-Star who made the American League team as a reliever in 2005 and as a starter in 2008, will accept Oakland's offer because he'd run the risk of taking a pay cut. In arbitration, the A's can propose up to a 20-percent decrease on his 2009 salary.

Duchscherer, whose agent has been contacted by several teams (including the A's), likely will get a raise on the open market, but given his injury history -- his 2007 and 2008 seasons were cut short by hip injuries that required surgery -- he'll probably have to accept a contract that features incentive clauses based on how much he pitches.

None of Oakland's other free agents -- righty Brett Tomko and infielders Nomar Garciaparra, Bobby Crosby and Adam Kennedy -- are ranked, so the A's needn't offer them arbitration. Kennedy is the only one among them in whom Oakland has much interest in bringing back.