

A's News Clips, Tuesday, December 15, 2009

A's ballpark could be game changer for Dellums

Chip Johnson, San Francisco Chronicle, 12/15/09

If you build it, they will come.

That's the latest pitch from Oakland city officials who last week identified three new sites - and one old one - in a bid to keep the Oakland Athletics from leaving town.

The city's proposal was made in the midst of A's managing partner Lew Wolff's efforts to shoehorn a deal that would allow the team to relocate in San Jose.

It's a complete turnabout for Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums who in early 2007, shortly after taking office, dismissed any notions that the team would remain.

"Oakland and baseball are synonymous," Dellums said at a news conference last week announcing the city's latest bid to keep the team.

Whether city officials realize it or not, they now have a prime opportunity - and a plan - to offer to Major League Baseball and team owners.

With new housing in downtown Oakland and the planned expansion of Jack London Square as a major retail destination, building a ballpark at the site of the Howard Terminal at the Port of Oakland could be a boon to the city's retail redevelopment efforts.

And because Wolff is almost sure to want housing and retail space as part of the deal, a new stadium could do for Oakland's Embarcadero what AT&T Park did for Second and King streets in an underutilized section of downtown San Francisco.

And with BART rail lines, easy freeway access and ferry service to Jack London Square, transportation to the site is already secured.

While the city's proposal is subject to approval of Major League Baseball, the chances that Wolff and San Jose city officials will prevail in their attempts to move the team are slim. League officials have said time and again that San Jose falls inside the geographical sphere of the San Francisco Giants and it seems unlikely the National League team would surrender more than 1 million fans to another professional baseball team.

It's ironic that one of the first issues dismissed by Dellums as mayor now holds the promise of salvation for a term of office that has been a disappointment, if not a complete bust.

Before he took office, one of Dellums' closest friends advised him to grab hold of a single issue and use it to define his term in office. After waffling on development and dealing with consecutive years of budget shortfalls, the A's deal offers Dellums the chance to do exactly that.

Under the deal offered by Oakland, the city would be responsible for acquiring the 50-acre site and prepping it for construction. The team would be responsible for providing the funds to build the stadium.

Wolff's vision of a ballpark village in Fremont fell apart last year, but the plan to spend as much as \$500 million on a new stadium, with adjoining retail and residential developments, remains a priority for team owners.

When you consider the Athletics' history since moving from Kansas City 42 years ago, they have a tradition as rich and proud as any sports franchise. With three consecutive World Series Championships in the early 1970s and a powerhouse team in the late 1980s, they have been more successful than their roommates at the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum.

Every mayor that has preceded Dellums has grasped onto a project that came to define his term in office.

For Elihu Harris, it was the construction of Oakland City Center, and the establishment of federal and state offices that helped revitalize downtown Oakland in the aftermath of the Loma Prieta earthquake.

For Jerry Brown, now the state attorney general and leading Democratic candidate in the 2010 governor's race, it was his plan to build 10,000 new housing units and redevelop the city's downtown districts.

To date, Dellums has never identified a key issue and run with it from start to finish, but the ballpark issue is a chance to reinvent himself once more and salvage a victory from three years under a recession that began soon after he took office.

A's to see Chapman today; Chavez, Doolittle updates

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 12/14/09

There's an A's-related item in today's baseball notes, but in case it got lost in the shuffle with so much else going on in the majors, assistant GM David Forst is in Houston to see Aroldis Chapman, the hard-throwing Cuban left-hander today. Joining Forst are A's director of player personnel Billy Owens and coordinator of international operations Dan Kantrovitz.

Chapman might seem to be a stretch budget-wise for the A's; although many believe his price has been dropping of late, the Red Sox have reportedly made a \$15.5 million offer. Oakland hasn't signed any major free agents this winter, however, and it's quite possible the A's have more spending freedom than some other teams in this hunt. With Boston and the Yankees around, you never know, but the A's did outbid everyone for Michael Ynoa.

In addition, Forst told me that Sean Doolittle is not on the list of minor-league invitees to camp in order to give the first baseman a few more weeks to recover from his knee injuries. Doolittle is expected to be ready for the start of minor-league camp and it's likely the A's will then borrow him often over at big-league camp. He's still seen as one of the team's most promising prospects.

Forst said that Eric Chavez has no pain in his twice-repaired back and he is expected to start throwing at the beginning of January. The A's were very happy with the report on Chavez. Which is always good to get the conversation going below....start!

Stassi gets Spring Training invite

Appeal-Democrat 12/15/09

For Max Stassi, baseball season begins on Feb. 18. And it can't come soon enough.

On that day, the former Yuba City High baseball standout will begin attending Spring Training with the Oakland Athletics in Phoenix.

"I'm going to a big league camp and hang out for a week or two," said Stassi. "I'm going to catch bullpen (sessions) and soak up all I can from the big leaguers."

A fourth-round selection by the A's, Stassi signed for first-round money to the tune of a \$1.5 million signing bonus. While negotiating the seven-figure sum, a provision was also put into place to allow the 2009 Honkers alumnus the opportunity to attend camp with the MLB players before heading off to minor league spring training, he said.

"That was negotiated into my contract, that I have an invite for this year," he said.

Stassi was one of 19 players invited to spring training, according to MLB.com. The announcement was released Monday, and Stassi is one of four catchers among that contingent, which will join the rest of the Oakland roster.

Regardless of being contractually obligated to show him the welcome mat, it still conveys the interest the A's have in developing Stassi, said Max's father and former high school coach Jim Stassi.

"It says a lot about the organization and what they think of (Max) to even consider him, said Jim Stassi, a former AAA-level catcher who himself never made it to a major league-level spring training. "That whole process prepares him to open the season."

After signing with Oakland in August, Stassi played short season A-ball with the Vancouver Canadians, batting .280 and impressing the staff with his leadership, according to MLB.com.

Currently Stassi is spending his offseason with his family while working on his conditioning. Four days a week he makes the trek to Sacramento to work out at Results Physical Therapy and Training Center, he said.

A's invite 19 players to Spring Training

McPherson, Desme among group given Minor League deals

By Tom Singer / MLB.com 12/15/09

Arizona Fall League sensation Grant Desme, former Angels third baseman Dallas McPherson and ex-Reds reliever Marcus McBeth are among 19 players extended invitations to Spring Training on Monday by the A's.

McPherson, 29, missed all of the 2009 season with back problems, but he has the most extensive Major League experience of the six free agents among the 19 signed to Minor League contracts by Oakland.

In parts of four seasons with the Angels, McPherson hit 18 homers and drove in 45 runs while batting .245 in 371 at-bats. Most of that production came in 2005, when, while making 55 starts at third base, McPherson hit a solid .295 with eight home runs and 26 RBIs in 205 at-bats.

McBeth made 23 relief appearances for Cincinnati in 2007 after being dealt by the A's to the Reds in a trade involving Chris Denorfia. He returns to Oakland after a solid year in Triple-A, with a 2.69 ERA and .189 opponents average in 67 innings for Pawtucket in the Boston organization.

Others recently signed to Minor League contracts and invited to Spring Training are pitchers Cedric Bowers, Fernando Hernandez and Matt Wright, and infielder Matt Whitney.

The other 13 invitations went to players already within the A's organization: right-handers Sam Demel and Tyson Ross; catchers Josh Donaldson, Joel Galarraga, Anthony Recker and Max Stassi; infielders Adrian Cardenas, Grant Green, Brett Wallace and Jemile Weeks; and outfielders Matt Carson, Corey Wimberly and Desme.

Desme was recently named MVP in the Arizona Fall League, which he'd lit up with 11 homers and 27 RBIs for the Phoenix Desert Dogs. He split the 2009 Minor League season between Class A Kane County of the Midwest League, and high Class A Stockton of the California League, combining at the two stops for 31 homers and 40 stolen bases -- ranking as the Minors' lone 30-40 man.