

A's News Clips, Thursday, December 24, 2009

A's: Beane likes what Coco Crisp brings to A's

By Joe Stiglich, Bay Area News Group, 12/24/09

Outfielder Coco Crisp long has been a target of A's general manager Billy Beane.

So when the two started talking about Crisp finally joining the A's, the conversation turned to "... the AFC West?"

It turns out Crisp is a diehard Raiders fan going back to their days in Los Angeles, where Crisp grew up. Beane, who is from San Diego, likes the Chargers.

"His football team is kind of different from mine, which is kind of funny," Crisp said Wednesday.

Negotiations fell into place — NFL loyalties aside — and the A's completed a one-year, \$4.75 million contract with Crisp on Wednesday. The team holds a \$5.75 million club option for 2011, with a \$500,000 buyout.

All signs point to Crisp, 30, taking over as the everyday center fielder, Rajai Davis shifting from center to left and Ryan Sweeney remaining in right.

"He's been a player we've tried to acquire in the past," Beane said of Crisp. "We think he's one of the better center fielders in the game defensively. He's just a good player, and we need as many good players as we can get."

The move appears to leave Scott Hairston — who played left field after being acquired from San Diego — as a lame duck.

But the A's have used the disabled list 64 times over the past three seasons. Beane said he's not necessarily looking to trade any of his outfield surplus.

"You'd have to have dropped off the planet the last couple seasons not to see that, by May, we've had trouble patching a lineup together," he said.

Crisp said he's recovering well from surgery on both shoulders that ended his 2009 season, spent with the Kansas City Royals, in June.

Along with his defensive skills, Crisp could form a dangerous duo with Davis atop the order. Beane indicated the speedsters could be used in the 1-2 spots, but that manager Bob Geren would have the final say.

A third baseman is still on the A's offseason shopping list, in case Eric Chavez isn't healthy. Bolstering the starting rotation also remains a need, and the A's continue to have dialogue with Justin Duchscherer's camp.

Chavez rekindles spirit of holidays past

A's third baseman brings family together for Christmas

By Tom Singer / MLB.com

There is the lilt of a carol in Eric Chavez's voice as he recounts a recent family holiday reunion.

"As I was growing up, we had the whole big family gatherings. But as everyone gets older," Chavez said, "that family thing gets dormant. It becomes tougher to get everyone together. But lately I've been trying to bring back that whole spirit of Christmas, that point of view we had as kids."

And, so, last weekend, the Chavez clan from all points of the compass was drawn to Oklahoma, where Eric's brother, Chris, and sister, Brandy, reside. All 17 of them, warmed by the memories of Christmases past.

By the glow of the sparkle in the children's eyes -- three of them Eric's with his wife Alexa -- they swapped laughs, stories, gifts and formed new memories.

And, as always, Eric dredged a familiar whine out of mothballs.

"Growing up, our family didn't have tons of money and, as kids, we used to laugh about always getting socks and underwear as gifts," Chavez said. "And that's become an ongoing joke among us."

When the subject came up anew, that's when Chavez's mom, Ruby, handed over her present to him: Transformer socks and underwear.

"The whole deal," Chavez said, chortling. "Yeah, they had them in my size. It was funny. The kids also got them and they were trying to decide which was theirs and which was mine."

The moment was perfect, because if there is a circumstance that elicits from men more of the little boy than does baseball, it is Christmas.

"We've always had traditional family celebrations growing up," said Chavez, who hails from San Diego, where the only thing white on Christmas was the sand on some pristine beaches. "Heck, I've only been in snow about two, three times my whole life. We were kinda expecting a little snow in Oklahoma, but, no."

"Now I'm told it's supposed to snow there on Christmas. Maybe we should go back."

Actually, Eric's crew will remain home, hosting Alexa's parents from Seattle.

"Their family tradition was to go to Hawaii. We've gone there with them four, five times," Chavez said. "Guess they just wanted to get out of that Seattle weather."

"It really doesn't matter where you are as long as you are surrounded by family, and I've really tried to get back to that."

"Next year, we'll do it in San Diego. Last year, everyone came to my [Phoenix-area] house. My brother dressed up as Santa Claus, and the kids spotted him crossing the backyard and were so excited."

"For the kids, Santa Claus is still a big deal, and I want to keep traditions alive for them. I grew up close to many cousins and with my siblings, we had a big, tight family."

In Chavez's view, Christmas belongs to children's awe because the adult side -- the spiritual side -- shouldn't be a calendar event.

"I do try to keep that feeling with me the year round," he said, "not just on Christmas."

Chavez has his Transformer undies, but what he most wants is to be transformed back into a third baseman. That's a Christmas wish shared by Oakland A's fans.

Six months removed from his latest back surgery, a delicate microdiscectomy, Chavez is raring to go.

"I'm slowly starting to recover," he said. "I do feel the physical effect of five surgeries [within 27 months]. But I'm going to start full workouts, getting back into baseball activity, next week."

He has played only 31 games since July 2007. He just turned 32, young enough to recapture his Gold Glove glory -- even if a little too old to flash Transformer socks.

\$5.25 million deal reached with outfielder Crisp

[Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer](#) 12/24/09

Oakland added a center fielder Wednesday, officially signing free agent Coco Crisp, and the club is moving closer to re-signing one of its own free agents.

One team source told The Chronicle the A's are "optimistic" about coming to an agreement with two-time Oakland All-Star Justin Duchschere, who is also believed to be talking to at least two other clubs. A call to Duchschere's representative, Damon Lapa, was not returned.

Crisp, 30, will get \$4.75 million in 2010, and the team holds a \$5.75 million option for 2011 with a \$500,000 buyout. He's been an A's target before. A's general manager Billy Beane tried to get Crisp when he was with Cleveland and again when he was with Boston.

"He's been on our radar for a long time," Beane said. "We called pretty much the first day we could."

Crisp was enthusiastic about Oakland because he has numerous relatives in the East Bay, including his grandmother - and he's followed the Raiders since they played in Los Angeles.

"Bo Jackson, Marcus Allen. ... I'm a huge Raiders fan," he said.

The A's have a large stockpile of outfielders now, including incumbent center fielder Rajai Davis, who is coming off a career year, hitting a team-best .305 and stealing 41 bases. Beane said that he's sure Crisp will play "a lot" in center, and the expectation is that Davis will move to a corner spot.

Asked if Scott Hairston and Ryan Sweeney would platoon at the other spot, Beane said that the basic assumption is that not everyone will be healthy. The A's have been beset by injuries the past several years, so depth is something the club treasures.

Meanwhile, minor-league outfielder Michael Taylor, acquired last week, will be waiting, and Oakland can delay calling him up and get nearly an extra year of service time as a result.

Crisp had surgery on both shoulders this year, and while he said he should be ready for spring training, Beane said that the club probably will take it slowly with him during camp.

Crisp was batting .228 with the Royals when he had season-ending surgery in June, but Beane said there are better ways to judge his performance because he's among the top defensive center fielders in the game, he's a superb baserunner and he makes a lot of contact.

"We think we're adding a good player who should only help us," Beane said.

If the A's hang onto Davis and Crisp all season, they could put up some big stolen-base numbers.

"When you've got speed guys at first base and second base, it changes the whole dynamic of the game," Crisp said. "You get into the pitcher's head, the catcher's head, the manager's, they have to change defensive schemes, move outfielders in. With our legs, we can definitely put pressure on opponents."

So maybe the A's, who have little power, can outrun teams and not outmuscle them. The team hopes to continue talks with designated hitter Jack Cust, who was non-tendered last week.

A's finalize one-year deal with Coco Crisp

ASSOCIATED PRESS 12/24/09.

OAKLAND — Coco Crisp hopes to be speeding around the bases with Rajai Davis, helping the Oakland Athletics contend for their first AL West title since 2006.

"With our legs, we can definitely help put pressure on the opposing team, and hopefully that will cause errors and some mistakes that normally wouldn't happen," Crisp said Wednesday after finalizing a \$5.25 million, one-year contract.

The 30-year-old Crisp can play all three outfield positions but primarily is a center fielder. While the A's have been happy with Davis, he might wind up playing one of the corner spots to clear room for Crisp in center.

Crisp didn't play after June 12 last season because of surgery on both shoulders. He hit .228 with three home runs and 14 RBIs in 49 games for the Kansas City Royals, who declined an \$8 million option and paid a \$500,000 buyout.

Oakland gave him a \$4.75 million salary next year as part of a deal that includes a \$5.75 million club option for 2011 with a \$500,000 buyout.

"He's a great defender. He's a great baserunner, a good hitter, a good contact guy, a player we've always had interest in. So when we had the chance, we were going to try to be aggressive and get him," A's general manager Billy Beane said. "We tried to trade for him in his previous stops and weren't successful, so we weren't going to let this opportunity pass."

Crisp has a .277 career average in eight big league seasons with 59 homers, 327 RBIs and 137 steals for Cleveland, Boston and the Royals.

"I'm a guy that can steal some bases for the ballclub," he said. "You get into the pitcher's head, catchers, the manager's head. They have to change their defensive scheme slightly."

He hopes to be recovered from the surgeries and ready by opening day, if not the start of spring training.

"The main thing for me is just go out there and play hard, give it 100 percent, whether it's running the bases, defensively," he said. "I think I put the pressure on myself more in that fashion than in actual numbers."

Born in Los Angeles, he was happy to join a team in California.

He has a grandmother, aunt and cousins in the Bay Area.

"I'm an Oakland Raiders fan, so those are all huge, huge bonuses for me," he said. "I'm excited, though, to join the ballclub and hopefully help the team move up in the division and hopefully win the division. That would be nice."

To Crisp, Oakland has familial ring

Veteran signs for one year with club option for 2011 season

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com 12/23/09

Even though he grew up in Los Angeles, it'll still somewhat of a homecoming for Coco Crisp joining the Oakland A's.

After all, the center fielder, who signed a one-year deal with a club option for 2011 on Wednesday, has family in the Bay Area and even is a fan of the Oakland Raiders.

That's just a couple of reasons why it was an easy choice for Crisp to join the A's in his first taste of free agency.

"I'm excited," Crisp told reporters in a conference call. "I have a lot of family in Oakland. I'm an Oakland Raider fan, too. So I'm excited and would love to help the team move up in the division and hopefully win the division. That would be nice."

Crisp also said the decision was made easier after talking to general manager Billy Beane, who told Crisp he tried to acquire the speedy center fielder in the past.

"When I was playing in Cleveland they looked into acquiring me and even when I left the Red Sox for Kansas City," Crisp said. "But now the opportunity was there for me as a free agent and he told me he really wanted to me to be a part of the ballclub. So it's exciting to come over."

Crisp's deal is reportedly worth \$4.5 million and news of A's and Crisp nearing an agreement was originally reported on Sunday. Crisp, who had surgery on both shoulders this year, passed his physical on Tuesday to make the signing official.

The 30-year-old batted .228 with three home runs and 14 RBIs along with 13 stolen bases in 49 games with the Royals last year but had surgery on June 24 to repair the rotator cuff and labrum in his right shoulder before undergoing a similar operation on his left shoulder on July 21.

The Royals decided not to exercise their \$8 million club option on Crisp for 2010, making him a free agent.

Crisp said he expects to be ready for the start of Spring Training and is anticipating a healthy season in 2010.

"They're fine," Crisp said of his shoulders. "I'm looking forward to Spring Training. I'm just working toward a healthy spring and a healthy season."

Crisp will help create one of the best defensive outfielders in baseball with Rajai Davis expected to shift from center to left field and Ryan Sweeney to remain in right field.

Crisp said it's not set in stone that he'll play center field but did note it's his preferred position. But he also complimented Davis, who had a breakout year by batting .305 with three home runs, 48 RBIs and 41 stolen bases.

"He had one of the best second halves of any center fielder in all of baseball," Crisp said. "And I'm obviously coming off two shoulder surgeries, but hopefully I'll come in there and play center field."

Crisp also said he hasn't been told where he'll bat in the order, but he could be a candidate to lead off, especially because second baseman Adam Kennedy, who batted first in 94 games last year, is a free agent and not expected to return.

"Throughout my career I've hit everywhere in the lineup except fourth, so I'm comfortable leading off or batting second," Crisp said. "But I've also hit deeper in the lineup when I was coming off injuries in Boston. So wherever I hit I'll be fine."

One scenario could be to have Crisp lead off in front of Davis to form a potent top of the order with plenty of speed.

"It's part of our game to steal bases," Crisp said. "The dynamic of the game can change by getting into the pitcher's and manager's heads and can change the defensive scheme lightly. With us out there with our legs, we can hopefully put some pressure on opposing teams."

The odd man out in the outfield rotation appears to be Scott Hairston, who could see reduced playing time or be traded after batting .236 with seven home runs and 35 RBIs in 60 injury-plagued games with the A's after coming to Oakland via a trade with the Padres in July.

It also will make it difficult for recently acquired outfielder Michael Taylor to crack the starting lineup this season after the top prospect was acquired in a trade that sent Brett Wallace to the Blue Jays.

Crisp, a switch-hitter, has a .277 career average and .331 on-base percentage to go along with 59 homers, 327 RBIs and 137 steals in 832 games with the Indians, Red Sox and Royals.

The Padres, White Sox and Cubs also reportedly had interest in Crisp. With the signing, the A's 40-man roster is now at 40.

Oakland A's agree to terms with outfielder Coco Crisp

Oakland Tribune staff and wire services 12/23/09

The A's agreed to terms with outfielder Coco Crisp on a one-year contract for the 2010 season with a club option for 2011, the club announced Wednesday.

Earlier reports had Crisp getting \$4.5 million for the first year, not including other incentives.

Crisp's addition means the A's could potentially be looking at an outfield of Rajai Davis, Ryan Sweeney and Crisp, which would represent one of the better defensive outfielders in the major leagues.

Crisp batted .228 with 29 walks and 13 stolen bases in 49 games with Kansas City last year in a season that ended in mid-June due to injuries. He was tied for the Major League lead with five triples and tied for seventh in the American League in stolen bases when he was placed on the 15-day disabled list June 14 with a right rotator cuff strain.

The 30-year old switch-hitter had surgery to repair a torn labrum in his right shoulder June 24 and also had surgery on his left shoulder in July.

Crisp made his big league debut with Cleveland in 2002 and is a .277 career hitter in eight seasons with the Indians (2002-05), Red Sox (2006-08) and Royals (2009).

Crisp had his best season in 2005 with Cleveland when he posted career highs in nearly every category including batting (.300), doubles (42) and home runs (16). He stole a career high 28 bases with Boston in 2007 to help the Red Sox to the World Championship.

Coco Crisp comments on A's, his signing

By Joe Stiglich, Bay Area News Group blog, 12/23/09

Coco Crisp just got off the phone w/Bay Area media. Here's a few highlights:

–He's delighted to have signed with the A's, largely because he's got lots of family near Oakland. He's also a diehard Raider fan going back to their days in Los Angeles. That made for spirited conversation between Crisp and A's GM Billy Beane leading up to his signing. Beane is a big San Diego Chargers fan.

–Crisp said all the right things about just wanting to fit in and help the team. But he did say he hopes to play center field and bat near the top of the lineup. He looks forward to the possibility of being in the same lineup with speedy Rajai Davis, who could shift from center to left. "When you have speed guys (running) at first, it changes the whole dynamic of the game."

–He's recovering from surgery on both shoulders last June, but said he's aiming to be ready for the start of spring training. He typically doesn't start throwing and hitting until January anyway, so he's not necessarily behind yet.

I had never talked to Crisp before, but he comes off as a very media-friendly guy on first impression, so that's always a good sign in my book. Come April, we'll see what kind of impression he makes on the field ...

Coco Crisp is officially signed - updated with contract info

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle blog 12/23/09

UPDATE: The deal is for \$4.75 million in 2010, with a \$5.75 team option for 2011 and a buyout of \$500,000.

It's all done, Coco Crisp is a member of the A's; no details announced on figures, but it's somewhere between \$4-5 million with an option for 2011.

We're hoping to speak to Crisp on a conference call later this afternoon.

UPDATE: Crisp said on the call that he's a big Raiders fan and that he has a lot of relatives in the East Bay, including his grandmother.

He thinks his speed is best utilized if he's up near the top of the order, which could give the A's a pretty interesting duo of basestealers, with Rajai Davis and Crisp.

So... is that the new plan? Run past the opposition? If Matt Holliday can't hit the ball out at the Coliseum, no one can, so now the A's are all speed, no power?

I think it could be pretty fun to watch, especially after so many years of slow, station-to-station teams. But I also think the A's will add some power before the season starts, and I think that there's a good chance it will be Jack Cust again. That's my own speculation, but it seems like both sides have interest, so why not? There aren't many 25-30 homer guys out there in Cust's anticipated price range.

I do know the A's love Crisp's defense, and even if speed hasn't been a "Moneyball" kind of thing for Oakland in the past, their shift to defense a few years ago was an effort to take advantage of some market disparities. And with so many young starters and relievers, Oakland believes a strong up-the-middle defense is extra important.

Crisp definitely fits that mold, but does shortstop Cliff Pennington? Is that an area the A's need to upgrade defensively or was he adequate there last year as a rookie?

Crisp signs 1-year, \$5.25M deal with A's

ESPN.com news services 12/23/09

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Athletics have finalized a \$5.25 million, one-year contract with free agent outfielder Coco Crisp. The deal announced Wednesday pays Crisp \$4.75 million next year and includes a \$5.75 million club option for 2011 with a \$500,000 buyout.

"With our legs, we can definitely help put pressure on the opposing team, and hopefully that will cause errors and some mistakes that normally wouldn't happen," Crisp said Wednesday.

The 30-year-old Crisp can play all three outfield positions but primarily is a center fielder. While the A's have been happy with current center fielder Rajai Davis, he might wind up playing one of the corner spots to clear room for Crisp in center. Crisp didn't play after June 12 last season because of surgery on both shoulders. He hit .228 with three home runs and 14 RBIs in 49 games for the Kansas City Royals, who declined an \$8 million option and paid a \$500,000 buyout.

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Bay Area Full of Dysfunction

By Art Spander 12/23/09

SAN FRANCISCO -- That the San Francisco 49ers are telling us they could play in Oakland, while the Oakland Athletics are more than hinting they want to play in San Jose might not make sense to people back in the rust belt. Yet it's perfectly logical to us demented folk along the Pacific.

We've never looked at things as others have. After all, California was settled by Spaniards who then got conquered by people who rode covered wagons across deserts and 7,500-foot mountains thinking they would get rich.

What they got was buckboard splinters in their fannies. And some said, mush in the brains.

Rudyard Kipling, the author, went through these parts roughly a century ago and stayed long enough to decide, "San Francisco is a mad city, inhabited for the most part by perfectly insane people."

And that was before Al Davis drafted JaMarcus Russell.

Davis, you may be aware, once moved the Oakland Raiders to Los Angeles and then in a fit of pique in 1995 moved them back to Oakland, where in the 2002 season they made it to the Super Bowl and haven't done anything since.

Nor have the 49ers, who not very long ago, the 1980s and early 1990s, were the benchmark of pro football success.

Now they are the benchmark of mediocrity, although their coach, Mike Singletary, refuses to acknowledge such reality, saying he likes his players. As if he could say anything else.

Both the Raiders and Niners had the first pick in the draft within the last five years, and both selected quarterbacks, neither of whom has done much except make people wonder who could have been taken instead.

JaMarcus Russell of the Raiders moved the meter from "Hopeless" to "How did this Happen?" when Sunday he got off the bench where he had been placed three games before and led the winning drive against Denver.

The same afternoon, Alex Smith of the 49ers, No. 1 in '05, who had been making progress, threw three interceptions against Philly, ending any thoughts he would be another Joe Montana.

The Niners do have a chance not to have their first losing season in seven years, but they must win their final two games, and since those games are against the two teams with the worst records in the NFL, in order the Detroit Lions and the St. Louis Rams, the odds are good.

Sport in Northern California is a mess these days, particularly on the far side of the Bay Bridge, the area the late Herb Caen pejoratively labeled "The mysterious East Bay."

Of the six pro franchises in the region, only the San Jose Sharks - they play hockey, if you care - and San Francisco Giants have reached a level of competency. And the three teams who perform either indoors or outdoors at the Oakland-Alameda Coliseum Complex, the Raiders, Athletics the Golden State Warriors are notably ineffective. Nowhere else in America is there such a large collective degree of dysfunction on such a small plot of land.

To persuade the Raiders to return to Oakland, government officials had the Coliseum, at the time a functional baseball park if not a particularly memorable one, expanded and redesigned for football.

That made the A's unhappy, because the place was too big. First they put tarps on the third deck and then they began a campaign for a new ballpark. In Fremont, which is about 20 miles south of Oakland and halfway to nowhere.

Now the A's want to shift to San Jose, another 35 miles down the Interstate. But the Giants insist they hold the territorial rights to San Jose, and are demanding the A's and San Jose knock it off.

Meanwhile, in Santa Clara, next to San Jose, the 49ers are hustling a new stadium of their own, the probability of which is improbable, as also is the thought the Niners might construct a new home next to their decaying old one, Candlestick Park.

So, Jed York, who replaced his father John as Niners president, then steps forward and says his team would share a new stadium in Oakland with the Raiders, if one is built next to the current Coliseum.

"Oakland has the location and the infrastructure," was the justification of Jed York. "It's right on the freeway and has BART (rapid transit) access. It just makes more sense."

If something makes sense in Northern California it isn't going to happen.