

A's News Clips, Tuesday, November 16, 2010

Power moves: A's target big bat in free agency

Acquisitions of DeJesus, Encarnacion also provide trade bait

By Jane Lee / MLB.com 11/16/2010

The A's last week jump-started the Hot Stove season by moving quickly in directions unforeseen. As a result, they're suddenly -- and surprisingly -- equipped with an additional outfielder and an extra third baseman. Oh, and they're in the process of negotiating with a starting pitcher.

Yet none of these moves -- involving David DeJesus, Edwin Encarnacion and Hisashi Iwakuma, respectively -- fit the blueprint for an offseason map many assumed would be drawn out in Oakland this winter. This is a team loaded with glamorous pitching and defense, seemingly lacking nothing more than a couple big bats, after all. So has general manager Billy Beane simply started a game of dominoes?

When the A's won bidding rights to negotiate with Iwakuma, a righty from Japan, the thought was that the hurler would lend the team a surplus of pitching that would allow it flexibility when trading for a needed power bat. Two days later, the A's shipped some of that pitching (Vin Mazzaro and Justin Marks) for DeJesus, who is a quality outfielder but lacks that mentioned power.

Fast-forward another two days, and the A's decided to pick up Encarnacion off waivers from Toronto. He surely can hit, but his glove is susceptible to error, and his presence means above-average defender Kevin Kouzmanoff's status is in limbo. There's a chance Encarnacion could DH or at least share those duties with a player to be named later, but there's also a chance Oakland is just a pit stop for him this winter.

The same can be said of DeJesus, as both new acquisitions could merely represent nothing more than upgraded trade bait and subsequently be flipped. So what does this all mean for the A's? Offseason maneuvering has just begun, and it's far from done.

Beane is set to add run producers, and it's a safe bet he'll be chatting up trade possibilities and ponder free-agent signings with his peers at the annual General Managers Meetings in Orlando this week in an effort to do so. The A's GM has a long-standing policy of not discussing free agents, but it's no secret there are a handful that would be attractive to the A's. Here's a look at possible targets:

Lance Berkman, DH: Berkman's name has already been linked to the A's, who are on the hunt for a productive DH. He's a switch-hitter with obvious power, and he's expected to come at a reasonable price. But he's also shown struggles from the right side in recent years and has battled consistency. The A's won't be able to be as picky as high-earning teams, meaning Berkman may be a real possibility. But can he bounce back from a forgettable 2010 season?

Hideki Matsui, DH: Matsui will be advertised as is -- a veteran who can help a team in need of a left-handed DH with power. He's a selective hitter who can still drive in runs with the best of 'em, and he can also play some left field if need be. Sounds like an upgrade to Jack Cust, which wouldn't be a bad thing for this team. Iwakuma's pending presence could also help lure him to Oakland.

Vladimir Guerrero, DH: How sweet it would be if Guerrero decided to continue his tour with the American League West in Oakland next year? He proved last season he still represents a true power threat, and the A's would gladly put his bat to use. But Texas wants him back, and it's hard to imagine either party going in a different direction.

Adam Dunn, 1B/DH: Dunn would prefer to play first base or even the outfield, but his shaky defense would likely lead the A's to use him in the DH spot and keep Daric Barton on the bag. Then again, if the A's are given any shot with Dunn, who is expected to get several hefty offers, they'd have to at least entertain the idea of playing him on the field. Money talks, and the A's might not have enough of it for this one.

Adrian Beltre, 3B: Never mind that the A's attempts at bringing Beltre to Oakland failed last year. Expect them to try again, even if nearly a dozen other teams will be making bids as well. Beltre, with help from another bat -- likely in the DH form -- has the power, by many definitions, to help the A's become a serious contender. He's pricey but considered to be worth every penny.

Outfielder Jayson Werth and first baseman Paul Konerko are also dreamy options, but considering each player's wish list of years and salaries, both fall under the long-shot category. Nevertheless, stay tuned.

Monday's Arizona Fall League roundup

Yankees prospect Laird slugs monster homer for Desert Dogs

By MLB.com

Desert Dogs 5, Solar Sox 5

Yankees prospect Brandon Laird slugged a mammoth home run for Phoenix that left Mesa's HoHoKam Park. The blast, a two-run shot, was his fourth of the fall, tops on the Desert Dogs. Michael Taylor (Athletics) was 2-for-4 with a double and two runs scored, while Dodgers prospect Jerry Sands singled in a run for Phoenix. Pirates farmhand Jordy Mercer hit his first AFL homer and scored twice for Mesa. Marlins Minor Leaguer Steve Cishek fanned two over 1 1/3 hitless innings out of the Desert Dogs' bullpen.

Scorpions 9, Saguaros 4

Conor Gillaspie (Giants) went yard for the second straight game and smacked a pair of doubles for Scottsdale, which already has clinched a spot in Saturday's Championship Game. The former first-round pick drove in four runs, while Nationals prospect Michael Burgess homered and tripled for the Scorpions. Giants farmhand Brandon Belt fell a homer shy of the cycle while collecting his eighth mult-hit performance in 10 games. David Bromberg (Twins) fanned eight and allowed a run over four innings in his finest AFL start for the Sags.

Rafters 2, Javelinas 1

Rangers right-hander Eric Hurley allowed three hits while extending his scoreless streak to 20 innings for Surprise. The reigning AFL Pitcher of the Week is third in the league with a 1.82 ERA. Adron Chambers (Cardinals) was 2-for-3 with a double and a run scored, while Joey Butler (Rangers) had the other RBI for the Rafters. Indians farmhand Cord Phelps slugged a solo homer in the ninth for the first-place Javelinas.

The Smallest With the Biggest Impression

Ed Randall, Huffington Post, 11/16/2010

Craig Breslow is a 30-year-old left-handed relief pitcher for the Oakland Athletics by way of the Milwaukee Brewers, San Diego Padres, Boston Red Sox and Minnesota Twins. And let's not forget New Jersey of the independent Northeast League.

He is the first pitcher in the Major Leagues from Yale since Ron Darling, now of television fame and the first from Yale with a major in molecular biophysics and biochemistry, just like countless others in the Major Leagues.

He had a good season: just 53 hits allowed in almost 75 innings and opposition hitters batted just .194 against him. Four wins, five saves.

But Craig Breslow's biggest save is not on the baseball field but in the field of cancer.

When he was 12 years old, his 14-year-old sister, Lesley, was stricken with thyroid cancer. She survived but, 18 years later, her battle continues to resonate, making an indelible mark on her brother's life.

He started the Strike 3 Foundation in 2008, dedicated to supporting and raising funds to benefit pediatric cancer research in hopes of heightening awareness and mobilizing support for childhood cancer research at pediatric oncology research and treatment institutions in his native Connecticut.

For his work, Breslow was selected as Oakland's 2010 nominee for baseball's Roberto Clemente Award, given annually to a player whose service to the community is deemed extraordinary.

When the A's were on the road in New York in September, Breslow held a luncheon at a Yankee Stadium restaurant that hosted many of his teammates, including closer Andrew Bailey, who is so enamored with the organization's mission that he serves as its Director of Development.

On Saturday night in Stamford, Connecticut, the Strike 3 Foundation held its Third Annual First Pitch Celebrity Gala. John Stuper, the head baseball coach at Yale for the past 19 years, donated his players as volunteers for the event. As a rookie

pitcher on October 19, 1982, Stuper kept the Cardinals alive in the World Series with a 13-1 victory in Game Six against Milwaukee (attention kids: the Brewers played at the time in the American League) that allowed St. Louis to complete its comeback the following night.

But the star of the show was not Breslow, Bailey, outfielder Rajai Davis, former teammates Kevin Slowey, Boof Bonser and Vin Mazzaro or co-host Bobby Valentine, but the winner of the Isaias Valentin Courage Award. Isaias passed away just four days before his 10th birthday.

His mother presented the award to 11-year-old Daniel Trainor. Three years ago, Daniel was diagnosed with a brain tumor. This year alone, he has endured eight operations.

Can you imagine?

With the help of his mother and two canes, Daniel was helped to the podium. He kept the audience spellbound as he described himself as no one special. His spirit for life, humor, resilience and optimism was evident and stunning and triggered memories for me.

You see, when I began my treatments for prostate cancer, I was sentenced to 23 consecutive days of radiation in the oncology department in the bowels of the St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center in Manhattan.

To the right of the entrance was a pediatric playroom. For all the days I showed up for treatment and the many others for consultations with my oncologist, the fabulous Dr. Paul Gliedman, I had the great good fortune to notice that not once was that pediatric playroom occupied.

Thank God.

If ever there was an impulse to feel sorry for myself, it would have been extinguished instantaneously had I seen anyone in there.

I thought of that as I welled up with tears as little Daniel struggled for breath to deliver his remarks.

We thank Craig Breslow for his great and important and selfless work and for putting Daniel on stage to inspire us lucky enough to be the room.

We pray for him.

Adding wouldn't subtract **Some GMs back bigger playoffs**

By Nick Cafardo, Boston Globe, 11/16/2010

The GMs are expected to hear from Commissioner Bud Selig and baseball's owners, who also will be here this week, about their ideas on expansion of the playoffs.

The Brewers' Doug Melvin, the Reds' Walt Jocketty, the Diamondbacks' Kevin Towers, and the Cubs' Jim Hendry all were early arrivers to the event, and the GMs gave thumbs up to the thought of adding a wild-card team in each league and having the two wild-card teams in each circuit play a best-of-three series. It doesn't appear that a one-game playoff would garner much support.

"Sure I'd be in favor it," Hendry said about extra wild cards. "It would be good for the game and good for the fans. It's worked well for the other sports and our wild card has proven to be a tremendous success. I wouldn't want it to be more than two out of three games, though."

One issue might be the wait for the division winners while the wild-card round is contested. There's also the possibility of the spring training schedule having to be readjusted to perhaps start the regular season a little sooner, though it's doubtful teams would forgo spring training revenue.

"That's why you'd have to limit it to best-of-three series," said Melvin. "Players are pretty adaptable to wait for that period. Anything longer might be difficult."

Towers said, "I'm absolutely in favor of it. Besides, it helps keep a handful of cities' interest up all year. I think a best-of-three first round would be perfect."

"It'll be interesting to see what the exact proposal is," said Jockey, "but in a perfect world, it'll be exciting for the fans."

The GMs, including the Red Sox' Theo Epstein, checked in last night and will begin meeting today. Already, there have been a couple of deals ahead of the meetings, including A's GM Billy Beane acquiring David DeJesus from the Royals for Vin Mazzaro and Justin Marks, a lefthanded prospect.

Melvin was on the phone constantly putting together a coaching staff for new manager Ron Roenicke, which included the firing of pitching coach Rick Peterson and the hiring of former Orioles pitching coach Rick Kranitz. Melvin is hoping to add two starting pitchers, and is taking offers for Prince Fielder.

Melvin said he'd prefer to keep Fielder, but that doesn't appear to be in the cards. He also scoffed at speculation that outfielder Ryan Braun might be available and he texted Braun to ask, "Who are we getting back from the Red Sox for you?"

Fielder was also in play last season, though, and Melvin couldn't get enough for him. Any team dealing for the powerful lefthanded hitter likely would have to work out a new contract for the 26-year-old first baseman with agent Scott Boras, and that could be a major sticking point.

Another interesting scenario is in Arizona, where Towers has been surprised at the interest teams have expressed in shortstop Stephen Drew and outfielder Justin Upton. Towers said he would have to be overwhelmed with an offer for either player to make it happen. He also said he'd fielded calls on a number of his players.

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The Yankees' Brian Cashman arrived late yesterday afternoon but will hold off on his search for a new pitching coach until he gets back to New York, so manager Joe Girardi can be involved in the process. Cashman also said his offseason should be fairly predictable in that "we know we have to get the shortstop [Derek Jeter] and the closer [Mariano Rivera] done, and after that there are some things we'd like to get done. It's not like two years ago, where we needed to secure certain things for our future. I think our future is good either way."

Cashman was asked when lefthander Andy Pettitte would decide whether he was returning, and he said, "If we haven't made any moves or spent any money then he can take all the time he wants. I spoke to him before the end of the season and he goes through the same process every year."

New Mets general manager Sandy Alderson checked in a day after his father was struck and killed by a jeep in St. Petersburg, Fla. Alderson said he came to keep his appointment with Cardinals bench coach Jose Oquendo, whom he was interviewing for the Mets' managing job. At one point Alderson teared up and left, but he may conduct another round of interviews to be as thorough as he can be.

Hendry wished Ryne Sandberg well and denied there were any ill feelings after he gave the Cubs' managing job to interim Mike Quade, who did a nice job replacing Lou Piniella.

Sandberg, the Hall of Fame former Cubs second baseman, yesterday took a Triple A managing job with the Phillies' Lehigh Valley IronPigs and indicated during a conference call that he also had been interviewed by the Red Sox for their vacant job in Pawtucket.

Sandberg came up in the Phillies organization before being dealt to the Cubs, and he said, "If it were between the Phillies and another organization, I'd pick the Phillies because of my ties with the Philadelphia organization."

Saturday's Arizona Fall League roundup

Indians' Kipnis registers fourth consecutive multi-hit game

By MLB.com

Javelinas 8, Solar Sox 7

Jason Kipnis was 4-for-4 with three doubles and three RBIs to lead first-place Peoria. The Indians prospect has recorded four straight multi-hit games, with RBIs in three of them. Mike McDade (Blue Jays) went 3-for-5 with three runs scored and Mariners Minor Leaguer Nate Tenbrink drove in a pair of runs for the Javelinas. Blue Jays farmhand John Tolisano knocked in three runs in a losing effort for Mesa.

Rafters 4, Scorpions 3

Cale Iorg (Tigers) had three hits, including a double, to keep Surprise alive in the race for a berth in the Championship Game. Iorg is 10-for-19 over his last five games. Brewers prospect Michael Fiers fanned five and allowed a run on three hits over five innings to earn his second win. Zack Cox (Cardinals) slugged a solo homer and scored twice for the Rafters, while former first-round pick Conor Gillaspie (Giants) went deep and plated a pair of runs for Scottsdale.

Desert Dogs 8, Saguaros 1 (7 innings)

Yankees Minor Leaguer Craig Heyer allowed one hit over four shutout innings to pick up his first victory for Phoenix. Two days ahead of his 25th birthday, the right-hander retired the final seven batters he faced. Stephen Parker (Athletics) homered and drove in three runs, while Dodgers prospect Jerry Sands slugged a two-run blast for the Desert Dogs. Reds farmhand Kris Negron hit a solo shot for the Saguaros, who have lost four straight.