

A's News Clips, Wednesday, November 17, 2010

Oakland Planning Commission to unveil plans for new A's ballpark

By Angela Woodall_Oakland Tribune

OAKLAND -- The City of Oakland is moving forward with plans to build a new 39,000-seat ballpark and has solidified the choice for where it should be built: a waterfront parcel east of Fallon Street. The site has since been dubbed Victory Court after the street running through the area.

The city also is taking another major step toward the Victory Court plan by launching the environmental impact report process and is requesting public input. Comments should be directed to Peterson Vollman in the Oakland Community and Economic Development Agency by 4:30 p.m. Dec. 9.

Once the report is completed, Oakland will be neck-and-neck with San Jose, where A's owners Lew Wolff and John Fisher want to relocate the team. A completed report would deprive San Jose of one of its arguments for putting the A's in Santa Clara County. Their battle to move the A's to San Jose is further complicated by the fact that the San Francisco Giants have territorial rights in the South Bay.

The public will have a chance to weigh in on the plans Dec. 1 at an Oakland Planning Commission meeting. Those plans also include a retail, office and residential units along with 2,500 off-site parking places adjacent to the ballpark.

The plan is favored by Mayor-Elect Jean Quan. She announced her support during her mayoral campaign, saying that the city could rely on redevelopment money for the project. Those funds could be used to pay for the environmental impact report.

The Oakland Planning Commission meeting begins at 6 p.m. in Hearing Room One, City Hall, One Frank Ogawa Plaza. Info: www.oaklandnet.com.

Chin Music: Chris Carter, winter league updates, plus other A's food for thought

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 11/16/2010 4:17PM

Here's some random tidbits from what's been a busy start to the A's offseason. We'll begin with updates on some noteworthy prospects playing ball this winter ...

–The plan is for Chris Carter to gain more outfield experience playing in the Venezuelan Winter League. But the A's top prospect has yet to leave for Venezuela as he's still recovering from a left thumb injury that cost him games late in the regular season. A's assistant GM David Forst said Carter was scheduled to see a doctor this week, and only after being fully cleared will he head to Venezuela and suit up for Tiburones de La Guaira. Despite the delay, Forst stressed that Carter hasn't suffered any setbacks in his recovery.

The A's trade for David DeJesus indicates the team might feel Carter needs more minor league seasoning. Do the A's view him more as a DH now? I keep remembering back to what GM Billy Beane told me during the regular season: The A's aren't crazy about relegating Carter to full-time DH duty at such a young age. Perhaps that view will change given the surplus of outfielders right now. At any rate, the A's don't have to make that decision until Carter proves he's ready to be a productive everyday hitter in the majors.

–The Arizona Fall League regular season wraps up Thursday, and outfielder Michael Taylor has gotten steady playing time for the Phoenix Desert Dogs. Through Monday, he was hitting .278 with two HRs, eight doubles, 15 RBIs, 16 walks and 16 strikeouts in 97 at-bats. Taylor's a long shot to make the big league team out of spring training, but the A's surely would like to see a major step forward in his second season at Triple-A.

–Shortstop Grant Green is another of the seven A's prospects playing in the AFL. Green was slated to be the team's representative in the Rising Stars Game – the AFL's All-Star showcase – but was held out as a precaution. He'd played just 12 games as of Monday because of some calf soreness, but he returned to action a few days ago and Forst said the calf issue isn't serious.

Third baseman Stephen Parker, who, like Green, enjoyed a big 2010 season for Single-A Stockton, was hitting .318 with one homer and six RBIs in 88 at-bats for the Desert Dogs. Check out the full winter league stats for A's prospects.

—Enrique Rojas of ESPN Deportes says the A's are once again pursuing free agent third baseman Adrian Beltre. Oakland made a serious run at this guy last winter, but Beltre turned down their reported offer of three years and \$24 million. At the time, Beltre was coming off a poor season with Seattle and had something to prove. He opted for a one-year, \$9 million deal with Boston and enjoyed a fantastic season that boosted his value once again. He'll have no shortage of suitors, and he'd have to undergo a serious about-face in his thinking to consider the A's this time around. But Oakland has a nice selling point with its strong pitching staff, which has the A's in position to contend if some offense can be acquired.

The team already has two third basemen in the fold with Kevin Kouzmanoff and recently acquired Edwin Encarnacion, but obviously Beltre would be a colossal upgrade. Either Kouzmanoff or Encarnacion figures to be non-tendered or traded even if Beltre isn't signed. And based on what I'm hearing, I'd say Encarnacion stands the better chance of being retained of the two.

What's your guess on whether the A's keep Encarnacion, Kouzmanoff or both?

BREAKING NEWS: Oakland Picks Site for New A's Ballpark

Robert Gammon, East Bay Express, 11/16/2010

The City of Oakland has selected a waterfront site in the Jack London Square area for a new A's ballpark. The so-called Victory Court site is near the Lake Merritt Channel, along the Oakland Estuary. It's also the favored site of Mayor-elect Jean Quan. "I think it's the best site," Quan said. "It could really kick start the area."

The city has decided to conduct an environmental impact report for the Victory Court site and has informed Major League Baseball of its decision. Quan said she called MLB the day after she won the election. "I wanted to let them know that I won, and that I would be fighting to keep the A's," Quan said. "And I wanted to make sure they knew that I would be doing everything possible to keep the negotiations going."

The city has been negotiating with a blue ribbon committee appointed by Major League Baseball to determine whether the A's should stay in Oakland or move to San Jose. The team's owners, Lew Wolff and John Fisher, have been determined to move the team to San Jose. Last month, they donated \$25,000 to a group that was backing Don Perata's bid for mayor after the ex-state senator said he would not attempt to block the A's planned move.

City Administrator Dan Lindheim, who has been leading the city's negotiations with Major League Baseball, said the city decided to go ahead with the environmental impact report process, because the league wants to have a new stadium for the A's in place by Opening Day 2015. Lindheim also said that the league clearly would prefer that the city pick a downtown-waterfront site like the San Francisco Giants did with their ballpark. "Baseball has this vision of downtown-waterfront ballpark, and this site is downtown and it's on the waterfront," he said, referring to the Victory Court site.

The Victory Court site was one of four that the city had been considering, and was one of two new sites that Oakland unveiled as possibilities earlier this year. There were two more sites in Jack London Square, plus the coliseum parking lot. The city will begin accepting public comment on the ballpark EIR at the December 1 Planning Commission meeting.

Update 2:57 p.m.: Quan said she believes a ballpark at the Victory Court site will jumpstart both Jack London Square and the planned Oak-to-Ninth housing development. The ballpark would be built between the two. Ironically, the newly

built Jack London Square development and the Oak-to-Ninth project are owned by two of Perata's best donors, Jim Falaschi and Michael Ghielmetti. Both have expressed support for a new A's ballpark next to their developments.

Update 3:02 p.m.: The city will pay for the environmental impact report with redevelopment funds. Both Quan and outgoing Mayor Ron Dellums have said they would use redevelopment funds to try to keep the A's in Oakland — but not general fund money. City general funds are typically earmarked for police, fire, libraries, parks, and other basic city services. Redevelopment funds are used to revitalize blighted areas. San Jose plans to use redevelopment funds to attract the A's. San Francisco used redevelopment funds to help the Giants build AT&T Park.

Update 3:13 p.m.: Quan said she also believes a new ballpark at Victory Court will help businesses in closeby Chinatown and could provide the impetus for a new hotel/convention center.

Update 3:17 p.m.: Lindheim said he thinks a ballpark at the Victory Court site, coupled with the reworking of 12th Street and the renovation of the lakefront, could revitalize the city's waterfront.

Update 3:22 p.m.: Quan believes that the only way Major League Baseball would turn down Wolff and Fisher's request to move the team to San Jose is if the City of Oakland shows that it has a viable plan for a new A's ballpark and that city leadership is committed to making it happen.

Q&A with A's director of player personnel

Owens offers insight on prospects to watch for Oakland

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

As the A's director of player personnel, Billy Owens has watched countless prospects go through Oakland's farm system. His responsibilities include, but are not limited to, providing input for potential trades and free-agent signings, as well as evaluating players in the area of amateur scouting. On Tuesday, MLB.com caught up with Owens via phone from Phoenix, where he is currently stationed for Arizona Fall League action and graciously provided info on several big-name A's prospects.

MLB.com: What have been your impressions of Michael Taylor in the Fall League, and what improvements and adjustments have you seen him make since the start of the year?

Owens: Michael is a very bright kid. He was coming into a new environment with so many expectations at the start of the season, basically hearing his name and Chris Carter's name synonymously going to the big leagues right away. Initially, he put too much pressure on himself internally, trying to hit a home run every time up instead of staying within himself and trusting his approach. His second-half numbers were much better than the ones we saw in the first half, and I think that was a product of his environment, him getting more comfortable of his surroundings, wearing the white spikes every day, hearing his name with the green and gold, not putting too much pressure on himself.

In the Fall League, he's been working on various things, seeing how pitchers are attacking him. Once you get to the Triple-A and Major League level, pitchers are able to exploit certain things, and so he's been going through an adjustment period. Overall, it's been a beneficial year for Michael. But I think, starting in 2011, you'll see the talented Michael Taylor everyone talks about.

MLB.com: There have been lots of questions about Michael's ability to hit for power. He hit just six home runs in nearly 470 at-bats at Triple-A Sacramento. Will we see more power from him in the coming years?

Owens: I think he's a multi-faceted player. One thing I don't hear enough is how strong of a defender he is. His throwing arm is remarkable. He led the [Pacific Coast League] in assists this year. He's very good in left field and right field, and he actually played 30 games in center field. He steals bases and his defense doesn't get enough attention. Through about 500 at-bats this year the power wasn't reminiscent of what he's done prior in his career. But as we learned across the

Bay this year, Cody Ross' power numbers weren't equivalent to what he did in October. So I fully expect Michael to have his numbers next year.

MLB.com: There's already a crowded outfield in Oakland. Do you think Michael has a serious shot at breaking camp with the big league club?

Owens: It's hard to put together a roster on Nov. 16. I think we've all seen how things can change from day to day, but I can say that if he does what he's capable of doing, all of that will work itself out.

MLB.com: You mentioned Chris Carter. You've been watching him a long time and witnessed his ups and downs this year, in the Minors and then finally in the Majors in the last month of the season. How do you see him building upon what he started in Oakland?

Owens: Chris Carter can hit the baseball out of Yellowstone Park. He has as much power as anybody playing baseball in the Major Leagues or Minor Leagues. I think the Oakland fans got a taste of that, and those people at the 580 Interstate corridor between Stockton and Sacramento, they've seen how majestic and explosive his home runs can be. Unequivocally, without a doubt, he will be a monster in the Major Leagues. It's just a matter of time.

MLB.com: Grant Green seemed to make quite an impression in his first full professional season. He then dealt with a calf injury for awhile, but what have you seen from him in Arizona?

Owens: He was banged up a little bit with a sore calf, but he had a long year. Grant is a Michael Youngesque-type hitter. He has a certain knack for hitting that's advanced beyond his years. He can hit the baseball with authority to all fields, especially right-center. He's very offensive in his approach, and he knows what he's doing at the plate. Defensively, he's made strides this year. He's improved with his footwork, and his coaches have worked on getting him more cohesive with his throwing motion, using his legs, keeping his feet moving. He's definitely more advanced offensively than defensively, but I see him making big strides on defense.

MLB.com: Is the plan to keep Grant at shortstop, or could he be groomed into a second or third baseman given Cliff Pennington's progress in Oakland?

Owens: That's the beauty of the Draft. A lot of guys are drafted at a certain position, but as they matriculate through the system, some stay the same or change. But there's no harm in starting in the middle where Grant is, and we'll see where it goes.

MLB.com: Another infielder, Jemile Weeks, is expected to be a big part of Oakland's future, but he's dealt with countless injuries. How is he doing, and what were your impressions of his playing days when healthy this year?

Owens: Right now, he's healthy, and hopefully he remains that way throughout the offseason. I feel like health these days is another tool, and that's been true for 100 years of baseball. With Jemile, somehow we gotta find a cure for those nagging injuries to keep him on the field healthy and playing a whole season. He's definitely still a very talented kid at second base in a Ray Durham mold. He can be an offensive catalyst, and I think he improved his defense this year to a point where his defense isn't really an issue. He can turn a double play well, and his range has improved this year, so the ability is there. We all want things to happen quickly. He's still only just completed his second full season in professional baseball, and the biggest thing that needs improvement with him is staying on the field. If he can do that, the talent will manifest.

MLB.com: How is Adrian Cardenas doing? We seem to hear his name along with Weeks' in discussions about infield prospects, and many expected him to already be knocking on the big league door.

Owens: Adrian a natural-born hitter. He's an over-.300 career Minor League hitter, and his impact of the baseball improved this year. The way the ball sounded coming off his bat was definitely a different sound, and I think those are signs of maturity, getting stronger. He's a young kid. Adrian will have a strong Major League career. I think, as he matures, the home run numbers will keep on creeping up. The way he controls the strike zone at upper levels is remarkable. Defensively, he's dependable but he needs to still be diligent about working on the nuances and agility. But we forget that he's only 22 years old, he's an accomplished hitter at Double-A and he's held his own at Triple-A now. I believe he's right on time.

MLB.com: Speaking of the infield, third baseman Stephen Parker seems to be forming a fan base. What do you like about him, and what can we expect from him as he continues to progress?

Owens: Stephen has a very short, efficient swing -- the type of swing that's going to translate to a higher level. It's very effortless, compact. He's capable of driving the ball in the gaps. He hit 20 home runs this year at Stockton. I can see him

duplicating his numbers at the higher levels. Defensively, he's aggressive, he's alert, he has good hands. He needs to lengthen his throwing arm and continue to work in long toss to improve his range down the road, but he's definitely a talented kid.

MLB.com: The biggest name of them all in recent years has been Michael Ynoa. How is his recovery from Tommy John going?

Owens: Before the surgery, he was up to 95 mph and definitely displayed the same attributes that made him the most sought-after international prospect. It's disappointing he had to have Tommy John surgery, but his talent level is still immense, and hopefully he'll be able to showcase it when he's healthy. We're not sure when he'll be back on the mound yet.

MLB.com: How about Tyson Ross? He was shut down with elbow issues late in the season, but he's expected to compete for the fifth spot in the rotation next season.

Owens: He's back on track. Before he went down with that injury, he was electric. I personally saw him pitch in Tacoma, where he was consistently throwing 96-98 mph for six innings. He was throwing to all parts of the strike zone, his slider was crisp and nasty, his changeup was close to a plus pitch and he attacked the zone. It was nice that he got a feel for the Major Leagues as a reliever, but I envision him being a viable starter for us down the road.

MLB.com: Right now, it seems we don't talk too much about pitching prospects because of the talent that's already in Oakland, but is there a pitcher who fans should keep an eye on next year?

Owens: Ian Krol, without a doubt. He led the Midwest League in ERA this year as a teenager. He has a tremendous feel for pitching. He can throw a fastball anywhere from 85 to 92 mph by design. He can add and subtract and manipulate his fastball and an assortment of pitches as well or better than any teenager I've seen. His curveball is definitely a viable Major League pitch. His changeup is improving and some day, possibly, will eclipse his curveball in effectiveness. But the key with Ian, and the reason why he led his league in ERA, is his advanced feel for pitching. He's a tremendous athlete with a flowing delivery. I see him making great progress in 2011 and building upon this season. This kid has the chance to be the real deal.

Urban: A's Shopping List A Short One -- Power

Mychael Urban, CSNBayArea.com

SAN FRANCISCO -- Heading into the offseason every year, every big-league baseball team puts together a list of priorities.

As connected as we are here at CSNBayArea.com, we're not so connected that we're privy to what exactly is on the A's list, but here's an informed/educated guess of what the list might look like:

"Add power."

Short list, right?

Of course. But really, it is power and power alone that separates the A's from their current status as an improving young team on the rise and their desired status as legitimate championship contenders.

On the strength of a supremely gifted starting rotation and above-average defense, Oakland managed to play meaningful baseball all the way through late summer despite having a pop-gun offense that featured as its leading home run hitter third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff, who went deep all of 16 times.

Kurt Suzuki, a solid hitter but far from a frightening long-ball threat (career high: 15 homers), batted third, fourth or fifth all year.

Kouzmanoff, whose career high in homers is 23 but seems unlikely to match that in the spacious Oakland Coliseum, was the primary cleanup hitter.

The primary designated hitter, Jack Cust, started the season in the minors and never quite got his power stroke untracked; his 13 home runs in 112 games for the A's represented a 15-homer dropoff from his average during the previous three seasons.

It's simply, really. The A's need to revamp the middle of their lineup, and they can't afford to count of help from within. Chris Carter might very well be a 30-homer man in the making, but he's not that man right now, and fellow top prospect Michael Taylor is even further behind and has less power potential.

Recent pickups David DeJesus and Edwin Encarnacion, quality big-league hitters both, didn't address the power problem, either.

So what do the A's need to do between now and the start of spring training? The answer is obvious. What *can* they do? That's not at clear, but here are a two options they're all but certain to explore:

Upgrade at third base

Kouzmanoff wasn't nearly as good defensively for the A's (12 errors, .968 fielding percentage) as he was for the Padres in 2009 (three E's, .990), and his .247 batting average, .283 on-base percentage and .396 slugging percentage scream for change at the hot corner.

Encarnacion, picked up on waivers last week, hit 21 homers in 91 games for Toronto last season, but his batting average, OBP and OPS are unimpressive as well – not nearly enough to make up for being below-average defensively. He and Kouzmanoff are both eligible for arbitration, so it's likely that at least one of them will not be tendered a contract for 2011 and allowed to explore free agency.

Who might the A's pursue, then? Adrian Beltre. Believe it. He's been on team's radar for years, and while his Gold Glove days are behind him, he's still solid defensively, and he's exactly the kind of middle-of-the-order threat (.321/28 HRs/102 RBIs/.918 OPS with Boston in 2010) that's needed.

He'll be pricey, having made a reported \$9 million last season, but that doesn't scare Oakland, which thinks he might be more willing to seriously consider a return to the AL West (and the West Coast in general) now that the A's have shown baseball that they have the pitching required to contend.

Trading for Dan Uggla? Highly unlikely. The A's are wary of converting a lifelong second baseman whose no great shakes as his proven position as it is.

Upgrade at DH

Cust was a better all-around hitter in 2010 than he was in his previous three seasons, and he's well-liked and respected in the clubhouse. That's not enough. The Cust era needs to end, and again, Carter can't be viewed as a lock to fill his shoes.

The A's aren't going to be able to compete with the deep-pocketed teams in baseball for top-tier free agents, and they know it. But they've had decent success over the years in convincing slightly older DH-types to give Oakland a whirl, and it'll be easier to do so this offseason now with the memory of the pitching-rich Giants' run to the world championship fresh in everyone's mind.

Thus, A's general manager Billy Beane figures to make a spirited run at 36-year-old Hideki Matsui (.274/21/84/.820 OPS with the Angels in 2010). Failing that, 34-year-old Lance Berkman (.248/14/58/.781 OPS with Astros and Yankees) is also an option because Oakland thinks he might have a bounce-back season in him, and they'll be monitoring the health of oft-injured Nick Johnson, who was limited to 24 games with the Yankees last season but has long been one of the apples of Beane's eye.

Vlad Guerrero? He's expected to re-sign with the Rangers, but if he doesn't, he could be a possibility as well.

Anything else?

Beane always has a trick or two up his sleeve, and he's always looking to add depth to his bullpen. Don't rule that out. But the bullpen, should Joey Devine indeed be ready to contribute after missing all of 2010 following elbow surgery, is solid as is. Versatility among position players will be an emphasis again, too, as it helped the A's remain competitive despite the annual torrent of injuries. And the search continues for a new head athletic trainer.

But for the most part, there are plenty of pieces in place. The missing ingredient is clear, and the shopping season is about to start in earnest.

Cust, Loney lead secondary market that will test skills of GMs

This is the time of year when general managers earn their money. They do it not so much by writing huge checks to free agents, but by making moves on the margins that are more about evaluations than expenditures. Everybody wants to find the next Matt Capps, John Buck or Kelly Johnson, all of whom were non-tendered by their previous club last winter, or Andres Torres, signed as a 31-year-old minor league free agent in 2009, or Colby Lewis, who was signed out of Japan, or Rafael Soriano, who was obtained in a trade for Jesse Chavez.

Oakland manager Billy Beane got a jump on the secondary market by acquiring three players already: outfielder David DeJesus, third baseman Edwin Encarnacion and pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma (though Iwakuma still needs to sign a contract with the Athletics.)

In the next two weeks, the secondary trade market will simmer because teams will look to acquire something for players they otherwise would non-tender. (The non-tender deadline is Dec. 2, 10 days earlier than it was last year.) This was not an especially robust market last year, as such proactive trades included Mark Teahen, J.J. Hardy, Jeremy Hermida and Akinori Iwamura. Ho-hum. And the "big names" who were non-tendered didn't amount to much: Garrett Atkins, Chien Ming Wang, Ryan Garko and Scott Olsen.

Free agents such as Cliff Lee, Carl Crawford and Jayson Werth will dominate the offseason coverage, but those involve huge deals and protracted negotiations. The secondary market already has begun to take shape. Whether through trades, non-tenders or international signings, here are players on the secondary market who could bring the biggest impact for 2011, listed alphabetically:

1. Jack Cust. This may come as a surprise, given his lack of security with Oakland, but Cust ranks among the best hitters in the AL over the past four seasons: first in walks (377), fifth in OBP (.381) and ninth in adjusted OPS (125) -- all while playing in a park that depresses offense.

There should be a strong market for such a hitter, assuming the Athletics make him available. In the past 11 months, Oakland has non-tendered him, designated him for assignment just before Opening Day, kept him in the minors for more than a month, traded for DeJesus and talked about needing to add power. Athletics outfielders Cust, Conor Jackson, Rajai Davis and Travis Buck are all arbitration eligible -- and none of them are listed ahead of Ryan Sweeney, Coco Crisp and DeJesus (combined 2010 home runs: 14) as the Athletics' starting outfielders. So not all will be back, which makes a trade or non-tender possible.

Cust is a rare impact bat because he provides on-base percentage and power cheaply -- two commodities that have grown to be expensive in the industry.

Back in 1999, Cust and Werth were drafted eight picks apart in the first round. While Werth is clearly the superior defender and baserunner, his edge at the plate is not as great as you might think. Looking at the past four seasons, check out the similarities between Cust and Werth, as well as other established well-paid outfielders Jason Bay, Nick Swisher and DeJesus (age is as of 2011 Opening Day):

2007-10								
Player	Age	PA	HRs	RBIs	BA/OBP/SLG	OPS	OPS+	
Werth	31	2114	95	300	.282/.380/.506	.885	131	
Cust	32	2142	97	281	.247/.381/.457	.839	125	
Bay	32	2323	94	351	.266/.359/.477	.836	118	
Swisher	30	2489	104	318	.256/.362/.470	.831	118	
DeJesus	31	2301	37	239	.288/.359/.422	.781	108	

Sure, defense is important, and you wouldn't want Cust roaming rightfield at Petco Park in San Diego. But look at the leftfielders for the NL playoff teams: Pat Burrell, Raul Ibanez, Jonny Gomes and Matt Diaz -- nothing close to a Gold Glover in the bunch. Cust would seem to be a good pickup for the Cardinals, Rays, Braves, Nationals or Tigers.

2. James Loney. The Dodgers' ownership situation has so complicated the team's planning that there is some talk Loney might be non-tendered. I doubt it. Loney has enough value that either he will go to arbitration and command about \$6 million, or the Dodgers will trade him.

Loney represents a good example of the chance to buy low on a player. His batting average, slugging and OPS have dropped three straight years. Teams generally like to see more power out of first base; Loney never has hit more than 15 home runs in a season. But Loney will be just 26 on Opening Day this year and is a veteran of almost 2,500 major league plate appearances.

Here's what so encouraging about the thought of getting Loney out of Dodger Stadium and experiencing a breakout season: He hit 41 doubles last year and has been a much better hitter in his career on the road (.307 with a .854 OPS) than at home (.268 with a .711 OPS). He should interest the Rays, Jays, Nationals and Diamondbacks.

3. Shaun Marcum. All the way back from Tommy John surgery, Marcum threw 195 1/3 innings last year out of the AL East with a 3.64 ERA. Do you know how many other guys in their 20s managed to do that over the previous three seasons? Just four. Here is the complete list:

1. CC Sabathia (2009-10)
2. Jon Lester (2008-10)
3. James Shields (2008)
4. David Price (2010)
5. Shaun Marcum (2010)

I like young pitchers who have done it in the AL East, the Camp Lejeune of pitching. But Marcum remains a big part of Toronto's immediate future, and it would likely take a blockbuster deal (Zach Greinke?) to pry him loose.

4. Tsuyoshi Nishioka. The shortstop for the NPB champion Chiba Lotte Marines has been posted for MLB bidding. The upside? He's only 26 years old, is experienced in big games, can play either middle infield position, switch hits, is regarded as an above-average defender and gets on base enough to possibly hit at the top of an order (.364 career OBP, 121 runs in 144 games this year). Nishioka had 206 hits this year, joining Ichiro Suzuki as the only Pacific League players to exceed 200.

The down side? He must make the transition from turf to grass (remember Kaz Matsui with the Mets?) and how his numbers translate to MLB, especially without a power quotient, involves some guesswork. Potential fits include the Dodgers, Giants, Mariners, Diamondbacks, Angels, Cardinals and Orioles.

5. James Shields. The Rays love his work ethic, leadership and reliability. Shields is one of only three pitchers to throw 200 innings in each of the past four seasons in the AL; the others are Justin Verlander and Mark Buehrle. But as Oakland did, the Rays have an inventory of starting pitchers that allows them to trade him. Shields is coming off a tough year (5.18 ERA) in which he gave up too many home runs and struggled with fastball command in the rough and tumble AL East. The guy is a breakout waiting to happen in the NL under a reasonable contract (\$4.25 million in 2011, plus three option years).

The Rays made early exits with Scott Kazmir and Edwin Jackson, turning them into young (and cheaper) hitters Sean Rodriguez and Matt Joyce, and they could follow the same formula here. Possible suitors include the Rockies, Nationals, Pirates and Mets.

6. Dan Uggla. Good luck trying to find reliable righthanded power. Here is a rare such commodity. Over the past five seasons, Albert Pujols is the only NL righthanded hitter to hit more home runs than Uggla. And in those five seasons Uggla has hit between 27 and 33 homers, driven in between 88 and 105 runs and played between 146 and 159 games every year.

Here are the major league home run leaders from 2006-10 among righthanded hitters:

Rank	Player	HRs
1	Albert Pujols	207
2	Alex Rodriguez	184
3	Miguel Cabrera	169
4	Paul Konerko	155
5	Dan Uggla	154

Uggla can bolt as a free agent after next season and already rejected a four-year, \$48 million extension, thus the trade talk. I believe the Marlins are close enough to contending that they should keep Uggla at least through July to see where they stand. But they will take offers now on a guy who could remain at second base or, as some clubs project, slide to third or the outfield -- which is why he is a fit for many clubs.

7. Chris Young. The righthanded pitcher already is a free agent, with the Padres choosing not to pick up his \$8.5 million option. The Padres would like to have him back, and why not? Young is the perfect pitcher for Petco Park: an extreme flyball pitcher. The problem is that the Padres don't like incentive-based deals, but that's exactly what Young should command after making only 36 starts over the past three seasons.

Young did make it back from shoulder trouble to pitch well for the Padres in pennant-race games down the stretch: 2-0 with a 0.90 ERA in four starts. He is a savvy veteran who has such a unique style -- throwing "uphill" from a 6-foot-10

frame -- that he is the perfect complement for the middle or back of a rotation. Young needs the right team and ballpark for his style, and among the fits are the Padres, Mets, Mariners and Dodgers.

Tuesday's Arizona Fall League roundup

Tigers' Iorg knocks in five as Rafters romp over Solar Sox

By MLB.com

Rafters 7, Solar Sox 2

Tigers prospect Cale Iorg slugged a grand slam and plated another run with a single to lead Surprise with a season-high five RBIs. Iorg finished with three hits and scored twice for the Rafters, while Johnny Giavotella (Royals) knocked in two runs with his ninth double. Adron Chambers (Cardinals) and Davis Stoneburner (Rangers) tallied a pair of runs in support of Brian Broderick (Cardinals), who earned his third win after allowing two hits over five shutout innings. **Game story | Box score**

Javelinas 15, Saguaros 2

Former pitcher Adam Loewen (Blue Jays) homered twice and knocked in four runs as Peoria clinched a spot in Saturday's AFL Championship Game against Scottsdale. Former second overall pick Dustin Ackley (Mariners) doubled twice, drove in two runs and scored twice, while Astros farmhand Brandon Barnes homered and had four RBIs. Cord Phelps also went yard and collected three hits. Marc Rzepczynski (Blue Jays) fanned seven for his fourth win. **Game story | Box score**

Desert Dogs 2, Scorpions 1

Dodgers prospect Jerry Sands hit a pair of solo homers to provide all of the offense for Phoenix. Sands also doubled and Stephen Parker (Athletics) hit a two-bagger for the Desert Dogs' only other hit. Diamondbacks farmhand Marc Krauss went yard in a losing effort for Scottsdale, and Michael Lombardozzi (Nationals) had two hits. Manny Banuelos (Yankees) didn't get a decision after allowing a run on five hits over five frames for the Dogs.

Dusty Coleman To Host 3rd Annual Baseball Clinic

By Derek Olson, keloland.com, 11/17/2010

SIOUX FALLS, SD - With the temperatures dropping and snow starting to fly in parts of Keloland, some young athletes are getting ready to work on their baseball skills.

The third annual DC Baseball Development Clinic is scheduled for the end of November. As well as helping kids hone their talents the clinic's host, O'Gorman grad and Oakland Athletics prospect Dusty Coleman also wants to promote off-season training in the area.

"I've noticed being around baseball more is that people who work hard in the winter and who work on their skills achieve the most and show the most improvement in the summer. So I want to show people that even though it's freezing out here that they can still get stuff done and enjoy the game of baseball," Coleman said.

Coleman's clinic, which features fundamental and advanced training, is open to kids ages 6-18 and will be held at Augustana College in Sioux Falls on Saturday November 27.