

A's News Clips, Tuesday, November 30, 2010

Chin Music: A's announce spring training schedule

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Athletics, 11/29/2010 4:52PM

The A's released their 2011 spring training schedule today. [Check it out...](#)

Season tickets and weekend packages for home games at Phoenix Muni are on sale now at www.oaklandathletics.com/spring, while single-game tickets go on sale Dec. 13. The A's open Cactus League play Feb. 27 against the Chicago Cubs in Mesa, Ariz. There's just two games against the Giants in Arizona — March 5 in Phoenix and March 20 in Scottsdale. And if you're used to booking a spring training trip in late March, you better do it earlier. The regular season schedule is being moved up, with the A's Opening Night set for April 1 at the Coliseum (a Friday) against Seattle. Their final exhibition in Arizona is March 27, a road game against the Rockies. Then they return to the Bay Area for the annual Bay Bridge Series against the Giants, March 28-30. That series runs Monday through Wednesday, which just seems weird after seeing these teams play over the weekend for so many years.

DIGEST

Texas signs Torrealba; A's pursuing Berkman

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle, 11/30/2010

Free-agent catcher Yorvit Torrealba agreed Monday to a \$6.25 million, two-year contract with the Texas Rangers, following another former Giant, Bengie Molina, behind the plate for the AL champions.

Texas also agreed to a \$1.2 million, one-year contract with right-hander Mark Lowe, the reliever acquired from Seattle with Cliff Lee.

Torrealba hit .271 with seven homers and 37 RBIs in 95 games with San Diego last season. He started 89 games, and the Padres' pitchers had a 3.14 ERA in those games.

-- The A's will meet with free-agent Lance Berkman today, according to a major-league source. Berkman previously had mentioned Oakland as one of eight teams to express interest in him. A former 45-homer hitter, Berkman, 34, is a potential designated hitter for the A's.

- *Susan Slusser*

-- Suspected steroid users Rafael Palmeiro and Juan Gonzalez are on baseball's Hall of Fame ballot for the first time and join Bert Blyleven and Roberto Alomar, both having fallen just short in last year's vote. MVPs Jeff Bagwell and Larry Walker and Rookies of the Year Benito Santiago and Raul Mondesi also will be on the 33-man ballot, the Baseball Writers' Association of America said. Other players under consideration include Mark McGwire, Dave Parker, Lee Smith, Dale Murphy and Kirk Rueter.

-- Gil McDougald, an All-Star infielder and 1951 AL Rookie of the Year who helped the Yankees win five World Series during the 1950s, died Sunday of prostate cancer in Wall Township, N.J., the team said in a statement. He was 82.

-- Victor Martinez will make \$12 million next year in the first season of his \$50 million, four-year contract with the Tigers. Martinez's deal to leave the Red Sox and sign with Detroit as a free agent was finalized Friday. ... Pitcher Javier Vazquez and the Marlins reached a preliminary agreement on a \$7 million, one-year contract, according to a source.

Athletics set to meet with Berkman

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

Free-agent slugger Lance Berkman is set to meet with Oakland representatives on Tuesday, according to multiple reports.

The Athletics have not confirmed the report.

The 34-year-old Berkman told FOX Sports last week that the A's, looking to add a dose of power this offseason, have been the "most aggressive" in pursuing him thus far.

Berkman, a switch-hitter, would likely be utilized in the designated hitter's role, which in recent years has been occupied by Jack Cust -- a probable non-tender candidate. Berkman hit .248 with 14 home runs and 58 RBIs this season with the Astros and Yankees. The Bronx Bombers declined to exercise his \$15 million option for the 2011 season.

Berkman can also play the outfield, where he spent extensive time during his previous 12 Major League seasons, as well as first base. He told FOX Sports that he has fully recovered from arthroscopic left knee surgery that hindered him throughout 2010 and that he considers himself able to play either position.

However, the A's have a steady outfield group and are pleased with Daric Barton's progress at first base, thus signaling that a full-time DH role -- with intermittent stints in the field -- could be in the works if they were to sign Berkman.

A's likely to be observers at Winter Meetings

GM Beane will focus on continuing ongoing talks

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

While the Giants were still enjoying leftovers from their World Series celebration, the A's were busy across the Bay snacking on fresh ideas -- many of which have already led to an action-packed Hot Stove season in Oakland.

The month of November brought about new acquisitions David DeJesus, Edwin Encarnacion and Minor League hurlers Trystan Magnuson and Danny Farquhar -- along with a possible pitching addition in Japanese right-hander Hisashi Iwakuma, with whom the A's have until Dec. 7 to negotiate a contract.

Yet, none of the wheeling and dealing, which sent righty Vin Mazzaro and outfielder Rajai Davis eastward, came particularly close to fulfilling Oakland's most glaring offseason need: power.

A's general manager Billy Beane is aware that, despite his early efforts to shake up the roster, he's still without the right dosage of offensive help to match his thriving young pitching staff. At the same time, he's also aware that a few days spent near the hectic confines of Walt Disney World won't fix all.

That said, don't expect Beane to walk away from next week's Winter Meetings, to be held Dec. 6-9 in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., with an abundance of check marks splashed across his wish list. Rather, Beane is mostly content with letting all the frenzy play out without his active participation.

"The Winter Meetings are a great thing," Beane said. "The focus on baseball during that week is fun for the fans. But from a club's perspective, it can be a little bit distracting because, when you go down there, you end up finding yourself being tugged in so many ways from a media standpoint. That being said, I understand their value, but the work environment is not necessarily ideal."

It wasn't always that way, though. Beane, in the middle of his 14th offseason as the club's general manager, remembers the days when whispers with his colleagues didn't turn into breaking news stories within seconds.

"Years ago, you had far more hallway conversations and lobby conversations," he said. "But it's become such a big event, that it's become almost impossible to have those conversations because of the size of it -- and because there's not that privacy anymore."

Beane, slated to arrive in Florida early on Saturday and depart on Tuesday, plans to use his time to do nothing more than continue ongoing talks -- likely more so with his own staff than with other teams, considering trade is no longer a probable option, given the moves already made.

"Our focus has really been on the free-agent market," he said. "Being at the Winter Meetings, that doesn't necessarily give you an advantage. The advantage of them is that they bring the clubs together, which helps you get trades done. But from a free agent standpoint, you don't necessarily need 29 other clubs. We still have the outstanding situation with Iwakuma, but our focus right now is to try to find some bats."

The A's have already been linked to free-agent sluggers Lance Berkman and Hideki Matsui, along with high-profile third baseman Adrian Beltre -- all of whom Beane will not discuss as part of his longstanding free-agent policy. But in assessing the free-agent market this week, Beane was quick to say there are some "reasonably good options for us."

"We prefer, from this point forward, to not have to give up a player to acquire players -- which is one of the reasons the free-agent market is attractive," he said. "I think there are some options out there for us. They can quickly change if some come off the board in the next two weeks. I think, right now, we have a decent field to choose from."

"We're looking for the best hitter we can get. Power would be a nice addition, but we really want to get the best offensive player we can find. If he comes in the form of a position player, we have to make sure it doesn't take away from the team defensively, which is one of our strengths. So I don't think we want to just add a bat without a particularly good defender. We can't expect to get better by taking one step forward and two steps back."

Thus, the A's are expected to add by way of a designated hitter, only further making Jack Cust's non-tender candidacy -- to be decided by Thursday's deadline -- all the more likely. The latter part will be finalized by the time Beane boards his flight on Saturday. The rest, though, won't be in place nearly as soon.

"Long before the Winter Meetings happen, we set our winter agenda pretty early," Beane said. "The things that we want to get done, we've either gotten them done or have started working on them long before we get down there. We've never used the meetings as a platform for getting something done because we've already started on them."

A's release Spring Training schedule

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- With pitchers and catchers slated to report in less than 80 days, the A's released their official Spring Training schedule for the 2011 Cactus League season on Monday.

The club will open the season on Feb. 27 against the Chicago Cubs in Mesa, Ariz., and play 32 games in the desert before returning to Northern California for the traditional three-game Bay Bridge Series against the Giants from March 28-30.

Half of the team's 32 contests will represent home games at Phoenix Municipal Stadium, beginning with the opener on March 1 against the Reds. The A's will take on the Cubs four times, the Brewers and Rockies three times and all other Cactus League clubs, including San Francisco, twice. In addition, the club's schedule calls for four split-squad dates throughout the month of March.

Other spring highlights include Oakland's first appearance at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick, the new shared home of the D-backs and Rockies in North Scottsdale. The A's visit Arizona on March 24 and then play guests to Colorado on March 27.

Season tickets and special "Weekend 2-Packs" for A's Spring Training home games at Phoenix Municipal Stadium are now on sale at www.oaklandathletics.com/spring. Single-game tickets will be on sale at the same place on Dec. 13.

A's pitchers and catchers report to the Phoenix facilities on Feb. 15, with first workouts scheduled for the next day. Position players are slated to report by Feb. 20, as the first full-squad workout will take place Feb. 21.

A's set to meet with free agent Lance Berkman

By JANIE McCAULEY, AP Baseball Writer

The Oakland Athletics, searching this winter for a big bat for the middle of their order, are set to meet with free agent Lance Berkman on Tuesday.

The A's certainly could use the 34-year-old switch-hitter, who batted .248 with 14 home runs and 58 RBIs this season between Houston and the New York Yankees.

In late October, New York declined to exercise a \$15 million contract option for Berkman, most recently a first baseman-designated hitter who also has played extensively in the outfield during 12 major league seasons. Berkman received a \$2 million buyout.

One of A's general manager Billy Beane's priorities this offseason is to find a reliable hitter who can help the club score more runs for its talented pitching staff.

The A's stayed in the AL West chase until late in the season — losing out to the AL champion Texas Rangers — and finished 81-81 for second place in the division. That was despite using the disabled list 23 times, two shy of the franchise record set in 2008.

Source: A's to Meet with Berkman on Tuesday

Mychael Urban, *CSNBayArea.com*

Lance Berkman will meet with the Oakland A's on Tuesday, a league source confirmed with CSNBayArea.com.

Berkman and the A's have had multiple discussions in the past, but the talks never made it as far as an actual meeting.

Berkman, 34, spent his first eleven and a half seasons with the Astros before the Yankees acquired him last year. He is a career .296 hitter with 327 home runs, but hit just .248 in 122 games with Houston and New York last season.

Berkman has expressed that he would like to stay in the National League because he still sees himself as a first baseman/outfielder, not a designated hitter.

Texas League Baseball: Hoppel named executive of the year

BY BEN MAKI, *Odessa.com*, 11/29/2010

The Midland RockHounds may have missed out on earning back-to-back Texas League Championships this season, but a member of the team's front office has earned an award that might be more difficult to achieve.

RockHounds General Manager Monty Hoppel has been named Baseball America's 2010 Minor League Executive of the Year.

"The Executive of the Year Award, presented by the bible of our industry, Baseball America, is perhaps the most coveted honor our industry bestows," RockHounds co-owner Bob Richmond said in a news release. "We have more than 170 franchises in Minor League Baseball, each employing many individuals, yet just one person receives this award annually. It's a remarkable honor, and we're so proud of Monty for his achievement. To receive national recognition for both Monty and the franchise is all the more rewarding."

Hoppel has been the general manager of the franchise for 22 years. He declined to take full credit for the award, saying his staff deserves it just as much as he does.

Hoppel added this has been the hardest his staff has worked since he arrived.

The RockHounds played host to the Texas League All-Star game, which included appearances by seven-time Cy Young award winner Roger Clemens and Hall of Famer Nolan Ryan, owner of seven no-hitters. Oakland Athletics General Manager Billy Beane also made an appearance.

As a part of the all-star game festivities, the RockHounds conducted a golf tournament and a sports banquet, which combined to raise \$40,000 for charity.

They also brought in country music artist Josh Turner, a Texas Tech baseball game and a baseball camp for children.

"We take pride in all the things we do," Hoppel said. "We strive to do as much as we can. We put in a lot of hours. The all-star game takes a lot of time in itself.

"We knew we had a pretty good year. There's only one minor league executive of year in the country. We take pride in what we're doing day-in and day-out. We don't think we're going to get an award like this."

Hoppel said there's only one thing he and his staff can do to try to top this year.

"The fact that we got an award like this feels good," he said. "People saw that we've been doing some good things. We want to prove year-in, year-out that we can live up to an award like this."

Hoppel has won four Texas League Executive of the Year awards, including last season.

In 2007, the RockHounds were selected by Minor League Baseball as the top minor league franchise in the country.