

## A's News Clips, Tuesday, December 7, 2010

### Oakland A's end pursuit of Japanese pitcher

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. -- Japanese pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma won't be joining the A's rotation.

A midnight EST deadline passed Monday after a month in which the two sides never appeared to get close to a contract despite the A's paying a hefty \$19.1 million posting fee for exclusive negotiating rights with the 29-year-old right-hander.

The A's and Iwakuma's agent, Don Nomura, did not talk at all on Monday. The A's officially declared their pursuit of Iwakuma dead 90 minutes before the 30-day negotiating period ended.

"We regret that an agreement could not be reached by today's deadline," general manager Billy Beane said in a statement. "In this instance, the player was in a unique position, being only one year away from free agency, and we fully respect and understand his position."

Signing Iwakuma was a long shot almost from the point the A's began negotiating with the star pitcher from the Rakuten Golden Eagles of Japan's Pacific League. Iwakuma reportedly wanted a minimum of \$12 million per season over four years, but the A's offered much less -- originally, four years for a total of \$15.25 million.

Earlier, manager Bob Geren declined to discuss Iwakuma but did say he would be satisfied going into the 2011 season with the starting pitchers the A's already have under contract.

"Sure, very much so," Geren said. "If we added more depth in that department, it would just make us better, but I'm comfortable with the four we have, and we have plenty of good candidates for the fifth."

Bobby Cramer, Josh Outman and Tyson Ross are the leading candidates to fill the spot Iwakuma was supposed to assume.

Oakland will recover its posting fee for Iwakuma, which may help the team land a free-agent hitter.

Beane acknowledged Monday that the A's made a competitive offer to veteran Lance Berkman that was rejected in a favor of a one-year, \$8 million deal with St. Louis. He would not comment on the A's reported withdrawal of a five-year, \$64 million offer to free-agent third baseman Adrian Beltre.

Asked if he has been frustrated that free agents have spurned Oakland offers in the past few years, Beane said, "It was concern the last two years. It just seems to be becoming more and more challenging. It's challenging enough financially just given the market relative to some of our peers, but other parts of the equation are becoming more challenging."

Such as?

"The facility (the Oakland Coliseum) is a hurdle," he said. "It's a fact."

Beane will leave the meetings today to return to the Bay Area for personal reasons. Assistant David Forst will remain to explore Pan B possibilities.

"There aren't a lot of 30- to 40-home run guys out there," Beane said. "But there are probably some 20- to 30-homer guys, which is still an upgrade from where we were (in 2010)."

Giants: The Giants conducted what general manager Brian Sabean termed a mini-organizational meeting, during which the club looked at the needs of the other 29 teams to try to determine if there might be a match from their own roster.

"Tomorrow we'll pore back over the short list of free-agent names," Sabean said. "We want to do that so we can be specific as we contact clubs with specific ideas and names."

Whatever the Giants do, it will be budget-conscious -- Sabean said the Giants expect their 2011 payroll to soar to the \$120 million range, a significant jump from the slightly more than \$100 million payroll they had at the end of the 2010 season.

"Ownership stepped up -- they could have screwed things down, but they didn't," Sabean said. "That (\$120 million) is not a ceiling, that's the sky. It was well north of what we all thought we were capable of doing budget-wise."

As a result, any further offseason moves the Giants make will require creativity that doesn't exceed the current projected payroll.

"The wiggle room would come if we were able to move salary," Sabean said.

## **Chin Music: Iwakuma deal sounding all but dead**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 12/6/2010 5:34PM

Carl Steward here, subbing for Joe Stiglich at the MLB winter meetings ...

The A's still had roughly five hours of deadline to go when Billy Beane and his staff met with the Bay Area media Monday to discuss the status of negotiations with Japanese pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma. But things were sounding grim and grimmer that the two sides would make some sort of last-minute deal. For starters, they didn't talk the entire day Monday.

Beane said it "would be a surprise" if the two sides were to make what he termed "an 11th-hour deal."

A news report out of Japan earlier in the day declared that Iwakuma had already nixed the A's and that he would hold a press conference Tuesday to announce that he was staying with the Rakuten Golden Eagles of Japan's Pacific League. Beane wouldn't go that far, but he sounded like he was preparing to allow the 12 a.m. EST deadline expire.

The only good news is that the A's will recover the \$19.1 million posting fee they made to acquire exclusive negotiating rights with the 30-year-old right-handed pitcher. Beane wouldn't talk about the negotiations, but indications are that the two sides were never close. The A's reportedly offered roughly \$9 million per season with the posting fee included while Iwakuma and his agent Don Nomura were looking for much more.

## **Iwakuma bows out, so Beane focuses on Matsui**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Another day, another deal not done.

On Monday, the A's failed to come to terms with Japanese pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma by the deadline. Oakland will get back the \$19.1 million posting fee paid to his team, the Rakuten Golden Eagles, which perhaps can be applied to the hunt for a designated hitter, and that very well might be another Japanese player.

The A's are focusing their efforts on former Yankees All-Star Hideki Matsui, and two sources confirmed that Oakland general manager Billy Beane met with Matsui's agent, Arn Tellem, on Monday. Unlike other A's targets this winter, Matsui is believed to have strong interest in signing with Oakland.

The A's were disappointed not to land Iwakuma, the 2008 Pacific League MVP in Japan. Iwakuma was looking for \$12 million per season. Oakland was offering less than \$10 million per year, with the posting fee factored into a four-year deal. The A's were unwilling to go over a total of \$36 million in total package for Iwakuma, two sources told The Chronicle, posting fee included, but the team did improve upon its original offer of four years, \$15.1 million.

"Both sides were anxious to get something done, but we couldn't find common ground to do it," said A's assistant general manager David Forst, who said the team will have interest in Iwakuma next year when he is a free agent (and would not need a posting fee).

The A's were optimistic enough about signing Iwakuma early in the process that they traded fifth-starter candidate Vin Mazzaro to Kansas City for outfielder David DeJesus. Oakland has several possibilities to fill the rotation, but Beane said the team also might explore the free-agent market for a fourth- or fifth-starter type after concentrating on adding another bat.

A day earlier, the team withdrew an offer of at least \$64 million to free-agent third baseman Adrian Beltre, who for a second year in a row made it clear that he has no interest in coming to Oakland. The focus is now Matsui, with Nick Johnson and Derrek Lee among the other potential options.

To date, the A's only significant offseason addition is DeJesus, via trade. Four free agents - Rafael Furcal in 2009, Beltre and Marco Scutaro before last season and Lance Berkman this weekend - have turned down better offers from Oakland. That is now a clear issue.

"It's becoming more and more of a challenge," Beane said.

Beane noted that each of the free agents who has turned the A's down has had different reasons. Berkman rejected a two-year, \$16 million offer from the A's for one year at \$8 million from St. Louis, but he'll be much closer to his home in Houston.

A major consideration: The Coliseum, weighed against the many smaller, state-of-the-art stadiums, is not considered an attractive destination. It is not a hitter-friendly park, it is in less than optimal condition and the stands are seldom packed.

"The facility is a hurdle," Beane said. "That's a fact."

## **Drumbeat: Beane says Iwakuma signing would be "a surprise"**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the winter meetings 12/6/2010 4:22PM

A's general manager Billy Beane said that signing Japanese pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma now "would be a surprise," and said that it would take an "11th hour deal."

With four-plus hours to go before the deadline to sign Iwakuma, that's looking pretty unlikely; Beane said the sides have not talked today. A source in Japan told me this morning that talks continued - and technically, that was correct, because when the sides last talked, it was today, Monday, in Japan. Now it's Tuesday morning there, and no sign that Iwakuma and his agent, Don Nomura, are backing off their desire for \$12 million per year; the A's are offering around \$9 million with the posting fee included.

It's starting to look even more as if the A's will get their \$19.1 million posting fee back, possibly to apply to another Japanese player - free-agent target Hideki Matsui.

Matsui's agent, Arn Tellem, got to the winter meetings this afternoon, and Beane is heading back to the Bay Area for family reasons, but Beane has said numerous times in the past week or two that it isn't necessary to be at the winter meetings to get business done anymore. He mentioned, for instance, that Yankees GM Brian Cashman, a close friend, is several doors away here at the Dolphin hotel, but he and Beane have only spoken by phone. Face-to-face meetings just aren't needed with the immediacy of texts and e-mails.

In addition, assistant GM David Forst remains here with many other top team officials. We'll be checking in with Forst later about the conclusion of the Iwakuma adventure; the deadline is midnight, but if Forst calls it a night before then, and he will, the talks are at an end.

Beane spoke briefly about the difficulties of getting top free-agents to come to Oakland - "the last several years," he noted. There are numerous reasons for various individual's decisions; for instance, geography. Lance Berkman turned down an extra year from the A's in order to go to St. Louis, much closer to his Houston home, for one season.

But the fact remains, the A's now have made better offers to four free agents in the past three years and lost out to teams offering fewer years, less money or both. The facility is not helping, Beane said today, and there's no doubt that's true. ESPN's Buster Olney wrote about the sewage seepage issue at the clubhouse level, and that's true - it gets pretty unpleasant on some days, and at least one visiting team's trainer last year was worried about e-coli in the clubhouse. Not really a fine selling point.

Second random former A's player sighting of the day, and a Japanese pitcher, to boot: I ran into Keiichi Yabu in the lobby. He's a pitching coach for the Hanshin Tigers in Japan, but he wanted to check out the scene at the winter meetings. He said Iwakuma is very, very good and he was sorry to hear it doesn't appear that things will work out with his countryman and the A's.

## **Drumbeat: Still waiting on official Iwakuma news and more**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Winter Meetings 12/6/2010 2:26PM

This morning, I heard from one source close to the Hiasahi Iwakuma talks that they were still ongoing, and while it is unclear if that is actually true - and Japanese sites are reporting that Iwakuma will announce his return to Rakuten later today - there are still another 6 1/2 hours before anything is official.

As I tweeted earlier today, if Iwakuma really wants to come to the US, this could get done at the last second. Indications in Japan a week or two ago were that he does want to play here, but maybe not for \$4-5 million per season. (That goes up to \$9 million or so with the posting fee factored in, which is how the A's are figuring things, as per the usual when signing Japanese players).

Bob Geren just addressed the media here, and he had loads of Japanese reporters peppering him with questions about Iwakuma and the A's new free-agent target Hideki Matsui. He declined to answer numerous times, no matter how the questions were rephrased, and it was all very polite, but no new information.

Geren did say that Coco Crisp remains the leadoff man, with David DeJesus possible for No. 3 with Daric Barton possibly sliding to third. He's also OK with Chris Carter DH-ing, if it comes to that; he said he'd be comfortable with Carter in that role.

All the A's players coming off surgeries are doing well, and outfielder Ryan Sweeney is running already. Everyone is on track for the regular season.

Former A's outfielder Bobby Kielty is here, healthy after a knee injury and hoping to latch on with a club. He's not pitching anymore, he's concentrating on hitting and playing the outfield, and mostly he'd be looked at as a right-handed bat if teams do consider him. I hope he gets a shot somewhere; he looks to be in great shape, he's got a great love for the game, and he's a smart guy. If he doesn't land a playing spot, I hope someone sticks him in their front office - he's a wiz with numbers. He said two years out of the game has really made him realize his passion for baseball.

## **Iwakuma, A's can't reach deal**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. -- Oakland's unsuccessful attempts at luring in available players has officially extended to the international realm.

Having already watched targets Lance Berkman and Adam Dunn head elsewhere, not to mention Adrian Beltre spurning a hefty offer to come to Oakland for a second straight year, the A's on Monday night announced that they could not reach a deal with Japanese right-hander Hisashi Iwakuma, who will return to the Tohoku Rakuten Golden Eagles of the Pacific League.

"We would like to express our appreciation to the Tohoku Rakuten Golden Eagles for the opportunity to negotiate with Mr. Iwakuma, and we regret that an agreement could not be reached by today's deadline," A's general manager Billy Beane said in a statement. "In this instance, the player was in a unique situation, being only one year away from free agency, and we fully respect and understand his position."

Thus, Oakland will get back its \$19.1 million posting fee, which gave the club a 30-day negotiating period with the hurler. The result of Monday's deadline day, which came in the midst of the annual Winter Meetings, was more or less expected. Talks between the two sides stalled midway through the process by way of large financial differences, and they never appeared to amount to anything close to a done deal.

At one point during the negotiations, Iwakuma's agent, Don Nomura, suggested via his Twitter account that the A's had only placed a bid to block other teams, such as division foes Texas and Seattle, from landing the pitcher. Multiple media outlets subsequently proposed the same idea, but A's assistant general manager David Forst called the reports "entirely incorrect."

"This was a player we scouted in the World Baseball Classic in Japan this year," Forst said. "Our intentions were genuine from the beginning. To this day, we probably don't know all of the other bids and at what level they were at. This was about us wanting the player. There was no gamesmanship there."

Forst mentioned Beane spoke to Nomura on the phone about the Twitter comments in a light-hearted nature, and that they never affected discussions. Rather, failure to see eye to eye on salary figures proved to be the determining factor.

"The talks were very cordial," Forst said. "Don has a lot of experience in this market in general. Both sides were very anxious to get something done. We just ultimately couldn't find enough common ground to do it. More than anything, we're disappointed. We were excited we won the posting and were looking forward to the possibility of having Hisashi on our club."

Iwakuma and Nomura were reportedly asking for a contract that would average \$12 million per season over three years - - numbers that reflect the earnings of fellow Japanese pitchers Hiroki Kuroda (three years, \$35.3 million) and Daisuke Matsuzaka (six years, \$52 million).

However, the A's were said to have offered \$15.25 million over four years -- factoring in the posting fee cost -- as a "take it or leave it" approach. By leaving it, Iwakuma will stay in Japan and become a free agent at the end of the 2011 season -- a status which ultimately affected the process with Oakland.

"That was a legitimate point of conversation for him," Forst said. "Compared to Daisuke or some of the other guys who came over, he knew he only had to come back for one more year. Those other guys had two or three years and were in a different bargaining position. We understood that from the beginning. We knew it was going to be an obstacle we had to overcome if we were going to get something done."

Another roadblock came in the form of the posting fee, which Iwakuma believed shouldn't be included in his contract. The A's, on the other hand, thought otherwise after having laid out a specific budget for the entire process.

"It was our first time dealing within the structure of the posting process, and you find out quickly that people interpret it different ways," Forst said. "No fault to the player -- he doesn't consider the money paid for posting as part of his compensation. Obviously, from our standpoint, it's one package."

"Once we got down to the details in salary, we knew we were going to have a bridge to gap. We felt like both sides were motivated to do something. Once it came down to the details, we couldn't quite get there."

Still, Forst made it clear that, despite the results, the A's would not shy away from the same type of process in the future. Nor will Oakland discount Iwakuma when he becomes a free agent. In fact, the club relayed to Nomura that it would be interested in revisiting a contract at that time, hoping said interest is "mutual."

"It's not a perfect process, but it's obviously worked a number of times to have players come over here," Forst said. "If there was a player we liked, we certainly wouldn't hesitate to jump back in."

Now, the A's could potentially reach out to the open market for a fifth starter, a notion that was confirmed by Beane. They also already have several in-house candidates for the final rotation spot, including Tyson Ross, Josh Outman and Bobby Cramer.

The club is also presumably primed to use its remaining funds to bring in free agents in an ongoing effort to bolster the offense, making shopping for an extra pitcher a secondary priority. With Beltre out of the picture, the A's are destined to turn their focus toward other available hitters -- a group that could potentially include Hideki Matsui, Carlos Pena, Derrek Lee and Nick Johnson.

## **Beane trying to sell free agents on A's**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. -- A's general manager Billy Beane has perhaps one of the most intriguing selling points to offer the free-agent market. He also has one of the least intriguing homes to advertise.

Making the former point -- playing with one of the American League's best pitching staffs -- seems more significant than the latter -- playing in a rundown Oakland Coliseum -- is a challenge.

Beane hit on both points Monday when speaking of the club's unsuccessful pursuit of several free agents -- a market in which the A's are tuned into throughout this week's Winter Meetings.

"Most of our focus has been on free agents," said Beane, addressing reporters on Day 1 of the annual Meetings in his suite. "Our conversations have been with agents more so than with teams."

In speaking with agents and their clients, Beane has emphasized the positives that come with dressing in green and gold.

"Players, even in the National League, know about our young pitching," he said. "It is a good selling point for some of these guys. Most of the guys who are free agents at this point do want to be a part of a team that can be successful. It's one of the first things they mention, one of the positives -- the young pitching staff, and the fact that it can get better and it's good enough to probably compete for a division if the right pieces are around."

Sometimes, that's not enough, though. The A's have already lost out on potential power additions Adam Dunn and Lance Berkman, the latter to whom Beane confirmed he offered a formal proposal that was "certainly competitive."

Furthermore, the team has reportedly rescinded its hefty offer to free-agent third baseman Adrian Beltre, who has indirectly expressed to play elsewhere.

It marks the second straight year in which Beltre turned down an offer from Oakland, where an old, concrete building otherwise known as the A's home sits and inspires little from outsiders.

"Honestly, for three years, it's been a concern," Beane said. "It seems to be becoming more and more of a challenge. It's challenging enough financially given the market we're in relative to some of our peers, but there's other parts of the equation that are becoming more challenging. The facility's a hurdle. It's a fact."

Still, Beane insisted there are "still some guys available that can help us," even if all of the 30- to 40-homer guys have been taken off the board. As Beane noted, there are players available who are capable of tallying 20 to 30 long balls -- numbers that reflect a higher total than the team-leading 16 home runs Kevin Kouzmanoff posted this season. Newly formed targets could include the likes of Hideki Matsui, Carlos Pena, Derrek Lee and Nick Johnson, though Beane wouldn't discuss specific players per club policy.

Any offensive addition would presumably fill the DH role, as Beane admitted "that certainly would be an area we're focusing on." However, the A's are mindful of their strong defense and would prefer to steer clear from messing with a notable team advantage.

"It's always nice, even if your DH is primarily a DH, if he can go out there on the field if needed -- especially when you play the National League," he said. "You don't want him to be relegated to the bench."

"One of our strengths is our defense. It's one of the best in the game. You have to be careful with plugging in an X amount of homers and not realizing the impact his defense will play on the team."

Beane will be flying back to the Bay Area on Tuesday morning to tend to his ill twin children, but assistant manager David Forst will be around until the Meetings conclude Thursday and, like Beane, will address the media nightly. The speed at which the club moves quickly on free agents remains to be seen.

"A lot of it is somewhat a function of how the market itself is, regards to other teams' aggressiveness," Beane said. "It can change rapidly overnight or it can take a while to play itself out, so it's hard to say."

## **Geren says A's going in right direction**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. -- A's manager Bob Geren is never short of opportunistic words. He's a glass-half-full guy by nature, a trait that seemingly always carries over into his meetings with the media.

So it was only fitting that Geren, when speaking with reporters in his manager availability session at the Winter Meetings on Monday, spoke enthusiastically about his club's offseason progress and its potential for more.

"I think that we had a very good finish to our season, very strong," Geren said. "We just needed a few extra pieces to get us right into contention, and we're on our way to doing that."

The largest addition thus far came in the form of trade product David DeJesus, who not only adds stability to the outfield but promise to a lackluster lineup. Though DeJesus often found himself at the top of the lineup while with the Royals, Geren said he'd like to keep speedster Coco Crisp in that slot and would consider DeJesus and Daric Barton as interchangeable options in the Nos. 3 and 4 holes.

"With DeJesus, that's adding another top-of-the-lineup, middle-lineup-type hitter to our team that is fundamentally a sound player on every phase of the game, which is important to us," Geren said. "Our defense was so good last year, that it really solidified our pitching staff. So when we have players to be able to do what he can do defensively, along with the added offense, and good baserunning, we've got an all-around well-rounded player to add to our lineup."

Further additions, preferably in the form of a designated hitter, are expected for a team that still lacks the offense necessary to allow Oakland to be more than a one-dimensional pitching team. Chris Carter, brought to the Majors at the end of the 2010 season, offers the A's the most potential in that DH spot as the team stands now. But he's only 23, so there's speculation surrounding his readiness for such a role.

"We need somebody in that spot that's going to create some power, and he's a good hitter," Geren said. "If he lands in that spot, that's a possibility. But having some flexibility where he can play the outfield first and do some DH'ing just makes his opportunities greater."

General manager Billy Beane, when broached of the topic later in the day, appears to want to take the cautious route with Carter -- mindful of all of the youngster's growing abilities.

"Ideally, a kid that age, you wouldn't like to put him in a DH spot," Beane said. "And he's a good athlete, which is one of the reasons we're sort of looking at other options. It's nice to have a talent like that, but I don't know that if you put him in there at that age you're fully taking advantage of him as a prospect. He still has some things he needs to work on, certainly defensively."

Finding room in the outfield may be rather difficult, though, as Ryan Sweeney is expected to join DeJesus and Crisp. Conor Jackson is also in the mix, leaving Carter's status for the coming season up in the air.

"He just has to kind of create his own spot, come in and show that he's ready and create something," Geren said.

Part of that readiness is being healthy, something the A's as a whole have struggled to accomplish in recent years. Following a season in which the club utilized the disabled list 23 times, a new trainer was recently brought in to aid in the process of ridding itself of the injury bug.

"I really believe that we're going in the right direction with the players," Geren said. "Their offseason conditioning and different followup visits that we're getting, we're staying on top of things to the point where we're giving them every opportunity to be as strong and healthy as possible."

To that end, Geren noted that Sweeney (right knee), Andrew Bailey (right elbow), Josh Outman (left elbow), Joey Devine (right elbow) and Cliff Pennington (left shoulder) are all coming along well with their respective rehab programs. Pennington, who had surgery following the conclusion of the season, may be limited in activity at the start of Spring Training, but should be at full strength by Opening Day.

"We've had some unfortunate luck with injuries the last few years," Geren said. "Every team goes through them. We've been on the high end, so hopefully we'll be on the low end next year and you'll see a difference in the win-loss column because of it."

"The health costs us some wins, without a doubt, so if we are a healthier group going forward, and we had a little bit more offense to keep pace with how well our pitching did, it would make a big difference, sure. "

## **Major Lee-ague: A's, Iwakuma fail to reach deal**

Jane Lee, mlb.com 12/6/2010 7:29PM

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Now, the A's could potentially reach out to the open market for a fifth starter, likely of the middle-aged veteran type. They also already have several in-house candidates for the final rotation spot, including Tyson Ross, Josh Outman and Bobby Cramer.

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## **Winter Meetings Roundup: Monday**

FanHouse Staff, provided by

*The FanHouse staff has all the bases covered at baseball's Winter Meetings. Check back here all day for the latest updates from Lake Buena Vista, Fla., including Twitter updates from all of FanHouse's writers below:*



- o. **2:56 p.m.:** The Orioles are interested in first baseman Carlos Pena despite the imminent acquisition of Mark Reynolds. Baltimore wants to boost its power after finishing 10th in the American League in home runs last year. Pena, who hit 28 homers last year for the Rays, would do just that. The Orioles had the fifth fewest strikeouts in the AL last year, so they are less concerned about adding high-strikeout players than most teams. -- *Steve Phillips*
- o. **2:30 p.m.:** The Yankees have interest in free-agent outfielder Matt Diaz as a right-handed alternative to Brett Gardner and Curtis Granderson. -- *Ed Price*
- o. **2:15 p.m.:** The Diamondbacks moved quickly to replace Mark Reynolds, agreeing to a one-year deal with free agent Melvin Mora. -- *Jeff Fletcher*
- o. **1:48 p.m.:** The Yankees and Rangers aren't the only teams interested in Cliff Lee, the pitcher's agent said today. -- *Marc Lancaster*
- o. **1:25 p.m.:** The Padres aren't giving up on 2011 and aren't planning to trade closer Heath Bell this winter, said general manager Jed Hoyer. -- *Jeff Fletcher*
- o. **1:00 p.m.:** Free agent reliever Dan Wheeler is drawing interest from the Diamondbacks, Cubs, Red Sox and Mets. -- *Steve Phillips*
- o. **12:46 p.m.:** Marvin Miller slammed the Hall of Fame after he once again failed to secure election -- this time by a single vote. -- *Andrew Johnson*
- o. **11:44 a.m.:** The Orioles' talks with the Diamondbacks in an effort to acquire third baseman Mark Reynolds are nearly complete, according to a source. -- *Jeff Fletcher*
- o. **11:07 a.m.:** After watching their neighbors across the bay celebrate a World Series championship, the A's are still trying to find a new home, whether it be in Oakland, San Jose or elsewhere. -- *John Hickey*
- o. **10:39 a.m.:** Still cutting payroll, the Astros are looking to move reliever Matt Lindstrom and infielder Jeff Keppinger. -- *Ed Price*
- o. **10:18 a.m.:** Longtime baseball executive Pat Gillick was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame by the Expansion Era Committee. Former players' union head Marvin Miller fell one vote short of election. -- *Andrew Johnson*
- o. **10:08 a.m.:** The Brewers already have worked out a trade for Shaun Marcum, but they're still seeking pitching and center fielder Lorenzo Cain could be their top chip to move. -- *Ed Price*

## **Urban: A's having trouble attracting top talent**

[Mychael Urban](#), CSNBayArea.com

LAKE BUENTA VISTA, Fla. -- Barring what general manager Billy Beane called "literally an 11th-hour deal," the A's will wake up Tuesday with an opening in their starting rotation.

Four of the five spots are locked down, and the fifth was tentatively reserved for Hisashi Iwakuma of Japan. Iwakuma and his agent, however, have turned down what they feel is a below-market offer for the right-hander, and the midnight (ET) Monday deadline was expected to pass without a deal.

"It would be a surprise if it happened," Beane said while holding court in his hotel suite.

The A's put up a reported \$19.1 million for the rights to a 30-day negotiating window with Iwakuma but will not lose the money unless they sign him.

### **[RELATED: A's, Iwakuma face Dec. 7 deadline]**

Internal fifth starter candidates include Josh Outman, who missed last season after undergoing Tommy John surgery during the 2009 season; Bobby Cramer, who finished the 2010 season in the No. 5 spot, and Cal product Tyson Ross, who was enjoying a solid rookie season before an elbow strain sidelined him.

A's manager Bob Geren said he's gotten strong reports on Outman's recovery, but Oakland is expected to scour the free-agent market in search of intensifying the competition come spring training.

**Trouble attracting talent:** Free-agent third baseman Adrian Beltre's apparent lack of interest in Oakland's reported five-year, \$65 million offer marks the second consecutive winter he's scoffed at a lucrative offer from the team, which is said to have withdrawn the offer in recent days.

**[URBAN: Bay Ball, Hot Stove edition]**

The A's have a policy against discussing free agents, but a source indicated that there remains a sliver of hope about landing Beltre, who batted .321 with 28 homers and 102 RBI last season.

Lance Berkman, another one of Oakland's targets in its search for more power -- Beane said the team made Berkman a formal offer but didn't disclose terms -- signed with the Cardinals for one year and \$8 million, prompting Beane to answer questions about the team's inability to attract top talent.

**[RELATED: Berkman signs with Cardinals]**

"It seems to be becoming more and more of a challenge," he said. "It's challenging enough financially, but there are other parts of the equation."

Asked if one of those was the dated Oakland Coliseum, Beane offered, "The facilities are a hurdle for us. That's a fact."

Asked if he'd heard that from free-agent targets, he said, "Yes. ... And players talk to players."

**Sandy Alderson may want to take a shot and try dealing Carlos Beltran to old Oakland pal Billy Beane**

John Harper, New York Daily News, 12/7/2010

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. - Watching the Padres and Red Sox pull off the Adrian Gonzalez trade, and knowing the respective GMs involved formerly worked in the same front office, you couldn't help but wonder if Sandy Alderson saw a similar opportunity to make his first big move with the Mets.

After all, the man he mentored, A's GM Billy Beane, has developed the best young pitching staff in the American League, but desperately needs an impact hitter to be a legitimate contender again in the AL West.

Carlos Beltran might just be that guy, especially considering that Beane needs to get creative after losing out on free agents Lance Berkman and - it appears - Adrian Beltre. Meanwhile, the A's could offer the type of high-ceiling prospect or two that would be enticing to the Mets' front-office regime, which privately is looking past 2011.

If only it were that easy.

In reality, Beltran's \$18.5 million salary next season and the uncertainty that still surrounds his arthritic knee are hurdles that make such a deal improbable at best, even if the Mets were willing to eat a lot of the money.

However, one rival executive who knows Beane well thought the A's GM would be "intrigued by the idea of trying to catch lightning in a bottle" with Beltran. But he also said Beane probably wouldn't be willing to give up much in return, knowing the Mets' center fielder would be a free agent after next season.

In addition, Beane got burned last year taking a chance on injury-prone Ben Sheets, paying him \$10 million to head up his young staff, only to see Sheets go down with an elbow injury.

"But you never know with Billy," the baseball executive said. "He took a shot trading for (Matt) Holliday a couple of years ago, knowing he could trade him at the deadline (which he did) if the A's weren't going anywhere."

You have to believe Alderson has checked in with Beane, as well as others, regarding Beltran, who has said he'll waive his no-trade clause.

The problem is that, whatever the money, a deal would only make sense if the Mets could get at least one highly touted prospect. Otherwise Alderson might as well see how Beltran plays in a contract year, with another several months to heal from last year's knee surgery, and hope that he shows enough to bring more value at the July 31 trading deadline.

Then again, there is always the possibility that if Beltran did find his old form, and the Mets got lucky finding some low-risk pitching this winter, they could be a surprise contender in 2011.

Such a scenario seems unlikely, especially since Alderson has made it clear he's going to be spending very little money this winter. In his press session Monday night, in fact, he said the price of the "second-tier" pitching market has been discouraging, indicating the Mets are more likely to do their shopping in January when the remaining free agents are forced to lower their prices.

"There's no guarantee that the players available today are going to be better than the ones in a month," was the way he put it.

All of this leaves the Mets in something of a dilemma regarding Beltran, and to some extent, [Jose Reyes](#) as well. Ideally, Alderson might like to trade both of them as he looks to clear the books of a ton of salary by next winter and construct a team with his own philosophy and vision.

In the case of Reyes, there's a chance he plays his way into a new, multiyear contract to remain a Met. Not so with Beltran, yet he obviously will play a pivotal role in 2011 as long as he's on the club.

As such manager [Terry Collins](#) was talking him up Monday, saying he had spoken to him on the phone recently for 40 minutes, telling him he'll get the chance to show that his knee has recovered enough to allow him to play an acceptable center field.

Collins also said that whatever decision is made, it will be permanent so that Beltran and [Angel Pagan](#) aren't moving back and forth between center and right.

"We're not going to take one of the best players in the game and dangle him around from position to position to see where he fits best," Collins said. "We know when he's comfortable, he's a productive player."

Even so, it seems inevitable that at some point Beltran will be somebody else's player. July seems more likely than right now, but if Alderson surprises everyone and makes a big trade this week, don't count out his Oakland connection.

## **2010 Year In Review: Vancouver Hitters**

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Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Dec 6, 2010

Our 2010 Year in Review series continues, with a move from the mound to the plate. We take a look at the hitters for the 2010 Vancouver Canadians.

## Vancouver Canadians

**Team Batting Average:** .250 (6th out of 8 teams)

**Team OBP:** .330 (4th)

**Team OPS:** .679 (5th)

**HRs:** 34 (6th) **Runs Scored:** 317 (6th)

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*Note: Only players with at least 90 at-bats were covered in this article*

In what ultimately turned out to be the Oakland A's last season in Vancouver, the Canadians put together a huge second half and raced to the playoffs with a 42-34 record. As was the case through most of the A's tenure in Vancouver, pitching led the way for the C's, as the team finished second in the league in team ERA while finishing in the bottom three for most offensive categories.

The C's offense would have really been moribund if it hadn't been for the efforts of sluggers [A.J. Kirby-Jones](#) and [Michael Choice](#). Kirby-Jones, the A's ninth round pick this season, was a Northwest League All-Star and the team's offensive MVP. After getting off to a slow start in June (729 OPS), Kirby-Jones improved as the season went on, posting OPSs of 895, 923 and 1074 in July, August and September, respectively. He led all team regulars in homeruns (14), RBIs (42), walks (61), OBP (.417) and was fourth in the league among qualified batters with an OPS of 887. Kirby-Jones' season was especially impressive when one considers that for much of the season, teams were refusing to pitch to the burly first-baseman. He will certainly be moving on to full-season ball in 2011 and could make the jump all the way to High-A Stockton if there is an opening.

Kirby-Jones may have seen more pitches to hit if Michael Choice had been in the line-up with him for the entire season. Choice, the A's top pick in 2010, didn't sign until late July and didn't make his playing debut until early August. Once he was on the field, he didn't disappoint. The right-handed outfielder collected 19 extra-base hits in only 102 at-bats, seven of those being homeruns. He also drove-in 26, scored 20 runs, stole six bases in seven chances and walked 15 times in 27 games. The only flaw in Choice's game was a high strike-out total (43), but he made up for that deficit with maximum productivity when he connected. Choice is likely to start his 2011 season in Stockton, where he will be in a much more friendly offensive environment and could put up huge numbers.

Outfielder [Douglas Landaeta](#) put together a solid season for Vancouver. The lanky right-hander posted a career-best .293 average in his first season at the short-season A level. He also connected for his first two professional homeruns and drove-in 32 runs, good for second on the team. Landaeta's 709 OPS was also a career-best. His power numbers should improve in a better hitting environment. He needs to improve his base-running (five stolen bases in 14 chances) and continue to improve his plate discipline. The Venezuelan, who just turned 22 in late November, should have an opportunity at the Low-A level in Burlington next season.

Landaeta tied with shortstop [Wade Kirkland](#) for the most number of at-bats by a C's player in 2010. Kirkland, the A's 11th round pick out of Florida Southern, hit for decent average (.271), but showed little plate discipline, walking only nine times and collecting 59 strike-outs. He also committed 24 errors in 68 games. Kirkland came into professional baseball with a good reputation, especially with the glove, so improvements in 2011 would not be surprising.

[Jeff Bercume](#), an undrafted free agent signing, came in third on the team with 254 at-bats. The 5'8" outfielder didn't hit for much power (.343 SLG), but he amassed a .280 BA and a .345 OBP. He also stole 10 bases and hit three triples. Bercume's best months came in July and August after a slow start in June.

[Tony Thompson](#), the A's sixth-round pick, came into the 2010 season with some fanfare after he won the Big 12 Triple Crown in 2009. Thompson had a knee injury early in his campaign with the University of Kansas and slipped in the draft a bit to where the A's took in the sixth round. He signed quickly and had 236 at-bats with Vancouver. Thompson had an uneven professional debut season. In June and August he hit under .200 with an OPS near 500. However, in July, he hit .360/.418/.483. The A's believe in Thompson's bat and he will look to put together a strong first full season, likely in Low-A Burlington, in 2011.

**Josh Whitaker** is another A's 2010 draft pick who struggled to hit in the pitcher-friendly Northwest League, but who the A's see having big potential at the plate. The outfielder got off to a frigid start for Vancouver, batting only .179/.262/.179 in 56 at-bats in July. He picked it up in August, however, batting .299/.368/.519 in 77 at-bats. Whitaker hit four homeruns in August, which was good for third on the team for the entire season. He then went on to play well in the A's Fall Instructional League camp.

Bay Area native and USF grad [Ryan Lipkin](#) was so popular with the A's scouting department, he was drafted twice – first in the 43rd round in 2009 and then, after he didn't sign in 2009, again in the 24th round in 2010. Lipkin was a quick sign

in 2010 and got the bulk of the playing time behind the plate for Vancouver. Lipkin got off to a slow start for Vancouver, posting a sub-600 OPS for June and July. However, he helped to carry the C's into the playoffs with a .338/.423/.397 line in August and a .333/.368/.389 line in September. He's a solid defensive catcher, so if he can also produce at the plate like he did in August, he'll move up the chain steadily.

Two years ago, Nino Leyja was considered a surprise rising prospect after he put up a .315/.383/.479 line as a 17-year-old with the Arizona Rookie League A's. Leyja was supposed to spend all of the 2009 season with Vancouver, but injuries on the Low-A Kane County roster forced the A's to move Leyja up to Kane County early. He struggled with injuries himself with the Couagars and hit a disappointing .231/.306/.347. Leyja got another chance with Kane County in 2010, but he struggled even more, batting only .224 with a 511 OPS in 125 at-bats. He was sent back to Vancouver at the start of the short-season and hit only .220/.289/.277 in 141 at-bats. Leyja just turned 20 in October, so it is too early to give up on the middle infielder, but he will need to put together a good season at the plate in 2011 to maintain any sort of prospect status.

Ryan Pineda was taken by the A's in the 28th round out of Cal-State, Northridge after a monster campaign during which he hit a Big West Conference-leading 16 homeruns. Pineda wasn't expected to be a huge power hitter in the pros, however, and he didn't hit any homeruns in 95 at-bats with the C's. He did post a solid 17:20 BB:K ratio, an indication that he could develop into a good top-of-the-order threat. Pineda had a long layoff between the end of his college season and when he signed with the A's, so it was no surprise that he got off to a slow start. He hit .250/.376/.355 in August and played well in the Fall Instructional League, however.

Like Pineda, **Michael Fabiaschi** was a player who did a good job of getting on-base, but didn't show much power in his first taste of pro ball. The James Madison alum had an excellent .374 OBP despite batting only .234 in 94 at-bats. He is a solid defender at second base and should move on to full-season baseball in 2011.

## **Oakland A's 2011 Top-50 Prospect List**

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Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Dec 3, 2010

After much deliberation, we are releasing our 2011 Oakland A's top-50 prospects list. Inside, subscribers get a sneak preview of the list, which we will unveil to the general public in early 2011. Over the next several weeks, subscribers will also receive in-depth scouting reports on each of the 50 prospects listed. Click inside for the full list...

Below is our 2011 Oakland A's top-50 prospects list. As we have done for the past two years, we are unveiling the entire list to our subscribers first before we release the scouting reports on each of these players. The scouting reports will be released five players at a time. At the end of the scouting reports series, we will make the full list available to all readers. Until that time, we ask that you please not post this list to any messageboards or other websites. If the A's wind-up making a number of trades this off-season that impact this prospect list, we will release a revised version before the start of spring training.

This is the sixth year that we have released a top-50 prospects list and we have found that determining this list has become more and more difficult each year, in part because the A's system has added more and more depth over the past few years and also because injuries have impacted the status of so many prospects in the A's system. We strongly considered more than 80 players for this list and, undoubtedly, there will be players who just missed this list who will make us look foolish next season for leaving them off. At the end of our scouting report series, we will release a list of players who just missed making this ranking.

We are often asked about our methodology in choosing these prospects and their ranking order. It is, without question, the most difficult task we undertake each year. Guessing the future value of a player is a subjective and unscientific proposition, at best. That being said, it is something that we take very seriously and put a lot of time and effort into.

We base our evaluations on the following criteria: 1) talent/ceiling (does this player have an unusual set of talents that, should he reach his maximum potential, would allow him to be a star?); 2) chances of having a big league career (is this player a future major league regular?); 3) projection (is this player likely to reach his maximum potential, whatever that potential may be?); 4) results on the field (did this player produce numbers that indicate he will have future success?); 5) age relative to level (did this player compete against age-appropriate competition last season and is he still young enough to have a long career in the big leagues?); 6) make-up (does this player project the temperament, intelligence and work ethic to succeed on a big stage?); 7) position (a middle infielder, centerfielder or catcher might be considered more valuable in the long run than a corner outfielder or infielder; same goes for a potential starting pitcher as opposed to a reliever).

Our assessments for all of these players are borne out of discussions throughout the season with baseball executives, scouts, players and other media members, as well as our staff's own personal observations of the players being analyzed, where we have had opportunities to watch them play on numerous occasions.

We recognize that these rankings will be controversial and we welcome your feedback. Next Monday at 11 am PST, we will have a subscriber-only live chat on this site where we invite you to discuss these rankings with us, as well as any questions about the upcoming scouting reports.

And without further ado, we present to you our 2011 top-50 Oakland A's prospects list...

### **Oakland A's 2011 Top-50 Prospects**

1. [Chris Carter](#)
2. [Grant Green](#)
3. [Michael Choice](#)
4. [Michael Taylor](#)
5. [Corey Brown](#)
6. [Adrian Cardenas](#)
7. [Ian Krol](#)
8. [Stephen Parker](#)
9. [Jemile Weeks](#)
10. [Max Stassi](#)
11. [Eric Sogard](#)
12. [Josh Donaldson](#)
13. [Michael Ynoa](#)
14. [Sean Doolittle](#)
15. [Fautino De Los Santos](#)
16. [Rashun Dixon](#)
17. [Clayton Mortensen](#)
18. [Travis Banwart](#)
19. [Daniel Farquhar](#)
20. [James Simmons](#)
21. [Yordy Cabrera](#)
22. [Aaron Shipman](#)
23. [Steven Tolleson](#)
24. [Matt Thomson](#)
25. [Tyler Vail](#)
26. [Wilfredo Solano](#)
27. [Brad Kilby](#)
28. [Chad Lewis](#)
29. [Ryan Ortiz](#)
30. [Trystan Magnuson](#)
31. [Argenis Paez](#)
32. [Paul Smyth](#)
33. [A.J. Griffin](#)
34. [A.J. Kirby-Jones](#)
35. [Zhi Fang Pan](#)
36. [Omar Duran](#)
37. [Anthony Capra](#)
38. [Andrew Carignan](#)
39. [Pedro Figueroa](#)
40. [Jeremy Barfield](#)
41. [Royce Consigli](#)
42. [Connor Hoehn](#)
43. [Tyler Ladendorf](#)
44. [Shawn Haviland](#)
45. [Michael Spina](#)
46. [Jake Brown](#)
47. [Conner Crumbliss](#)
48. [Trey Barham](#)
49. [Josh Whitaker](#)
50. [Josh Horton](#)