

## A's News Clips, Wednesday, December 8, 2010

### A's, Giants notebook: Giants' Freddy Sanchez undergoes surgery on his left shoulder

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune, 12/8/2010

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. -- The Giants had no signings or trades Tuesday at the winter meetings, but they nonetheless dropped some big news. Second baseman Freddy Sanchez had surgery on his left shoulder earlier in the day and is facing an eight-week recovery.

Sanchez had arthroscopic surgery on his left shoulder in Scottsdale, Ariz., to correct problems he began incurring near the end of the regular season and during the postseason. The Giants thought the issues could be corrected through rest and rehabilitation, but the improvement wasn't fast enough for either Sanchez or the Giants to head into the 2011 season, so Sanchez elected to have the surgery.

Sanchez had a biceps tenotomy, which provided more relief from pain. It's essentially the surgical equivalent of what Edgar Renteria did during the playoffs against Atlanta, when he tore his bicep away from the tendon taking a swing during a game.

"We tried to rehab for three to four weeks to avoid this, but after several different opinions we decided -- especially with the calendar -- to go ahead and scope the shoulder," said Giants trainer Dave Groeschner. "Basically, they cut his bicep tendon and cleaned up the back of his shoulder. He had no repairs or anything.

"I think he'll be behind in spring training because he'll be rehabbing, but I think all the doctors he saw agreed that he should be back pretty quickly from there and he'll be able to play baseball games in March, for sure."

Sanchez had three different opinions on the shoulder, including two orthopedists the Giants employ and an independent one in Los Angeles. The Giants' orthopedist in Arizona, Dr. Gary Waslewski (son of the former major league pitcher by the same name), performed the 30-minute procedure.

"It's always a concern when you have to do surgery for a second time on the same body part, but I think talking with the doctor after the surgery, he was pretty pleased with the results," said Groeschner.

Had the Giants not played all the way through the World Series, Sanchez might have avoided the surgery.

"If we had more time and we didn't play the whole month of (October) we could have given him some more time for treatment and rehab," Groeschner said. "But we don't, so we had to do something, and Freddy was on board. He just wants to get better and be ready for the start of the season."

The Giants aren't sure how the injury might have occurred.

"It's just something that got worse the last couple weeks of the postseason. We were kind of hoping with some rest and rehab it would get better, but it just never got to that point," Groeschner said. "It was feeling better, but if you put a bat in your hand and make a thousand swings every week, we weren't comfortable and he wasn't comfortable of wanting to go into spring training that way. He wants to be healthy and feel good so he can play at a high level."

Sanchez's right shoulder also was bothering him at the end of the year, but rehab has successfully corrected those issues.

"That's doing well," Groeschner said. "Honestly, we had that checked out well and that's doing fine. He did injure his shoulder, but it's something that healed up and it's doing well."

General manager Brian Sabean didn't seem concerned that the surgery would cause much of a setback to the club. Besides believing Sanchez will be ready, he'll have Mark De Rosa and Mike Fontenot as options at the position. "We have enough protection," Sabean said.

A's: Veteran outfielder/DH Hideki Matsui has become the team's No. 1 target as general manager Billy Beane reportedly held discussions with Arn Tellem, the player's agent. Matsui is drawing interest from other teams as well, including the Seattle Mariners.

Oakland also is increasing its efforts to acquire a fifth starter after failing to sign Japanese pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma before Monday's negotiating deadline. ESPN reported that the A's made an offer to free-agent pitcher Brandon McCarthy, who was 7-4 with a 4.62 ERA in 17 starts with Texas in 2010 but was non-tendered by the Rangers.

Assistant David Forst would not confirm the report, as the A's do not comment on free agents they're pursuing.

"I think we've learned a lot today about some of our options, but realistically, we were put in a new position 12-plus hours ago," Forst said. "But the things we set up for today and (Wednesday) were certainly not a reaction to last night. These are things we talked about all month."

## **Chin Music: A's shift gears in search of power, more pitching**

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune, 12/7/2010 1:06PM

Carl Steward here at the MLB winter meetings in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., subbing for Joe Stiglich ...

I wish there was something more than hot talk to report on the A's today. Obviously, they have shifted their focus after losing out on free-agent hitter Lance Berkman as well as Japanese pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma.

The focus from the hitting standpoint has shifted to another Japanese player, Hideki Matsui, who fits the bill for Oakland as a DH who could also play in the field during interleague games, as Matsui did last year for the Angels. Sources have confirmed that A's general manager Billy Beane conversed with Matsui's agent Arn Tellem Monday, and it's at least rumored that Matsui may be interested in Oakland.

Matsui made \$6 million with the Angels last year and even though he will turn 37 in June, that would seem a reasonable sum for the A's to pay to land him, perhaps even a shade more. The question is whether Matsui might want a second year, or at least some sort of option, considering that there may be other teams interested in his services as well, notably the Seattle Mariners.

While there are warts on most of the remaining free-agent DH candidates, Matsui would be an upgrade over Jack Cust if for no other reason than he puts the ball in play much more often. He struck out 98 times last year in 554 plate appearances, which was actually the second-highest total in his seven ML seasons. Of course, he hit .274 with 21 homers and 84 RBIs for the Angels, solid numbers on the surface. I talked to a writer who saw a lot of the Angels last year, however, and he said Matsui struggled early on being "the RBI guy" in the middle the LA lineup. He said Matsui picked it up later in the season, but by that time, the Angels had fallen off the pace behind Texas. To wit, he .252 in the first half, .309 in the second.

The other negative: With Matsui as their DH, the A's might be a bit vulnerable against left-handed pitching considering that after switch-hitting leadoff man Coco Crisp, prospective 2-3-4 hitters Daric Barton, David DeJesus and Matsui would all be left-handed. Ryan Sweeney, wherever he bats, is also a lefty swinger. For Matsui's part, he's definitely better against right-handers. He hit just .236 against left-handed pitching last year.

At this point, though, it may not matter to the A's. They are almost begging somebody of reasonable quality to take their money and become a middle-of-the-order threat.

Don't know much about Matsui personally, but the same writer who characterized his season last year also attested that he is a terrific guy and would fit fine in Oakland. How much competition might Seattle be? Good question. The Mariners need hitters even more than the A's, and might make an offer that's tough to refuse. But a Seattle source indicated Matsui might not want to play in the shadow of Ichiro on the Mariners.

So we'll see on Matsui. Something could break on him here, but with Beane having already returned to the Bay Area to attend to a personal concern, the logistics of concluding a deal may make it difficult, although assistant David Forst is still here and perfectly capable of conducting business with Tellem in Beane's stead.

On another front, it appears the A's are still pursuing starting pitchers after the Iwakuma deal fell through. ESPN's Buster Olney reported that the team had even extended an offer to free agent right-handed pitcher Brandon McCarthy, who pitched for Texas last year and posted a 7-4 record with a 4.62 ERA in 17 starts but was non-tendered. A number of teams are reportedly interested in McCarthy. Another report indicated the A's may actually make another go-round with Justin Duchscherer despite the severe hip issues he has incurred the past three years. Hey, if he could just stay out there somehow, it would be a good move, because Duchscherer can pitch. But the medical history makes it so dubious.

One can understand the A's wanting to add more starting depth even though they have four solid starters and some solid candidates for the fifth. An injury to any of the Big Four — Brett Anderson, Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez or Dallas Braden — and the A's could be in the soup. Of course, both Anderson and Braden missed extended time last year. Josh Outman may be the leading candidate for the No. 5 spot on paper, but he's coming off Tommy John elbow surgery and may need time to work his way into the rotation. So the McCarthy rumor makes complete sense.

At least the A's appear to be zeroing in quickly on targets after losing out on Berkman and Iwakuma and pulling their offer for Adrian Beltre.

Now here's a novel thought: Gary Sheffield, who did not play at all in 2010, was in the Dolphin hotel lobby Tuesday telling all who wanted to listen that he's not ready to retire, is still working out and hitting, and is waiting for the phone to ring. If Matsui falls through, would the A's even consider Sheffield as an option? He's 42, but it's nonetheless intriguing. He looked to be in terrific shape.

Bud Selig turned up in the media room to choreograph a ceremony for outgoing managers Joe Torre, Cito Gaston, Lou Piniella and Bobby Cox, but the commissioner once again stonewalled questions about when we might see the blue-ribbon panel report on the future fate of the A's, waving off attempts with a no comment and adding that he wouldn't be available to speak on that or any other subject. Thanks, Bud.

More later ...

## **Drumbeat: Tuesday rumors and rumblings from the winter meetings**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Orlando, Fla. 12/7/2010 1:37PM

The A's DH search won't be limited to Hideki Matsui at this point, but he's certainly the top candidate among the remaining free agents who aren't expected to return to their previous clubs. If, however, someone such as Paul Konerko - considered at one point a cinch to go back to the White Sox - became available, expect that the A's would jump in, along with many other teams. Oakland did put in a call on Konerko early in the process, but the assumption has been that he'd go back to Chicago, Jim Thome would return to the Twins and Vladimir Guerrero would return to the Rangers.

There were some reports linking the A's with Guerrero today; I'd mentioned a few days ago that Oakland had made a call on him but expected him to go back to Texas, and my understanding is that Guerrero's agents are telling teams that he'd accept a one-year deal with the Rangers but three years anywhere else. The A's need a big bat in the middle of the order, but three years for creaky Guerrero, who did not have a strong finish to the season, might be a tall order even for a team with needs like the A's.

Matsui was happy to go to Anaheim on a one-year deal last year; the A's offered Lance Berkman two years at \$8 mill per, and while I don't think they'd go that high with Matsui, maybe they'd do two years, or a year and an option, at a somewhat lesser salary. That is my own speculation only; the A's don't talk about free agents and offers.

Matsui's agent, Arn Tellem, confirmed that there is more than one team interested in Matsui and he's hoping to get a clear picture of the potential offers while here and maybe get something done soon, in the next 10 days if possible. The only thing that might complicate that is if Matsui has to wait to see where players like Guerrero and Konerko land. Among the possible teams competing for Matsui: Seattle, Baltimore, and, if Guerrero leaves, Texas. I'm told that Seattle does not have the payroll flexibility of the A's, and many in the Japanese media believe that Matsui and Ichiro Suzuki would not wish to play on the same team because they have a rivalry that dates back years.

Tellem mentioned playing time as a factor, and with Milton Bradley likely to get lots of DH at-bats in Seattle, that would not be as good a situation as Oakland in that respect, either. Tellem also mentioned that Matsui wants to play for a good team; Baltimore might not be quite at that level yet. But Texas, without Guerrero, would have to be an attractive option for any DH-type.

The A's were linked with pitcher Brandon McCarthy today; a member of the organization had confirmed Oakland's interest in him to me a while back, and general manager Billy Beane said yesterday that, after obtaining a bat, the club would look at some fourth- or fifth-starter types. Justin Duchscherer could be one, now that he has recovered from his second hip surgery. Both hips have had congenital trouble fixed, which should eliminate the kind of hip and back injuries that had sidelined Duchscherer over the past several years.

There were suggestions out of New York today that the A's might be interested in dealing for Mets outfielder Carlos Beltran if New York picked up a chunk of his \$18 million for this year. Oakland has been pretty upfront on the emphasis on free agents; the team doesn't want to move any more young assets unless it's a real no-brainer. I'm not sure this one would qualify and one national reporter pointed out that Beltre probably wouldn't waive his no-trade to come to pitcher-friendly Oakland in a contract year.

I tried to ask Commissioner Bud Selig about the stadium committee's report today, but got sort of a rushed, "Nothing today," as Selig was hustled to a meeting. When I asked if there is a timetable or anything imminent, Selig said he had nothing more to say, and another baseball official told me later that nothing is expected this week. That's what team owner Lew Wolff told me last week, so it's not a surprise, but I would like Selig to explain the delay or to provide at least a rough idea about when the report will be released.

## **Guerrero becomes greater possibility**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Hideki Matsui remains at the top of the A's lengthy list of possibilities to fill the designated-hitter spot, but The Chronicle learned Tuesday that obtaining Vladimir Guerrero has become a more viable possibility than previously thought.

The A's had put in a call about Guerrero early in the process, but it was thought he would return to Texas; indications were that though Guerrero, 35, might consider a one-year deal from the Rangers, he'd want three years elsewhere. Guerrero, however, is now willing to talk to all four AL West teams about a one-year contract with an option, according to a major-league source.

Such terms would pique the A's interest, but two sources within the Oakland organization cautioned that the team is exploring all options and will not rush any decision.

Matsui's agent, Arn Tellem, confirmed that other teams are interested besides the A's; those clubs are believed to include Seattle, Baltimore and, if Guerrero leaves, Texas. Tellem described Matsui's priorities as playing time and the quality of the team.

DH-first baseman Nick Johnson, 32, is also on the list, and his agent, Rex Gary, said that Johnson is working out twice a day in Phoenix and he has recovered fully from wrist surgery.

The A's are exploring fourth- or fifth-starter options after talks ended with Japanese pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma. Brandon McCarthy, back from a shoulder injury, is a possibility, and so is Justin Duchscherer, recovered from hip surgery.

Though Oakland was rumored in some trade scenarios (Carlos Beltran, Josh Willingham), assistant general manager David Forst said the team's preference remains to fill holes through free agency.

Matsui is a particularly intriguing possibility because of his enormous popularity in Japan, where all his games are on television. Any team that signs him would enjoy an instant uptick in visibility in Japan and in the local Asian community.

According to Angels vice president of communications Tim Mead, the team added seven figures in corporate sponsorship last season by signing Matsui. Mead called Matsui's presence - and that of the dozens of Japanese journalists who follow him - "a great experience. I can't say enough good things."

Former Yankees teammate Gary Sheffield said Matsui, 36, is a consummate professional and would be a valuable addition for any team, particularly one with young players who could learn from him.

"He was the best," Sheffield said. "I know his work ethic, and he's not slowing down at all. He's got a year of being a DH under his belt, so he'll be better at that role. And Matsui will always make the guy hitting in front of him better, and the guy hitting behind him."

Asked in general about the potential benefits of signing any big-name Japanese player, A's owner Lew Wolff said via e-mail, "I believe a Japanese super player would add value beyond his on-field skills, especially in the Bay Area and especially in a modern and exciting venue."

The A's are still waiting for baseball's stadium committee to release its findings. Commissioner Bud Selig told The Chronicle that there would be no news Tuesday and that he had nothing more to say about the matter. Another baseball official said that no announcement is imminent.

## **A's showing a strong interest in Matsui**

### **Oakland not the only team considering veteran lefty slugger**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. -- Hideki Matsui may not be seen as the most attractive free agent on the market, but looks are in the eye of the beholder. Or, at least the pursuer.

The A's have shown a strong level of interest in acquiring the 36-year-old slugger, whose presence would immediately fill Oakland's vacancy at designated hitter. General manager Billy Beane met with Matsui's agent, Arn Tellem, on Monday at the Winter Meetings, but Tellem refused to divulge any information about the gathering while addressing a group of reporters on Tuesday.

"They are private meetings," Tellem said, "and it's not really my style to comment until I really have something to say."

According to Tellem, Oakland isn't the only team in on his client. In fact, "several" clubs have expressed interest in his bat, and Tellem expects to hear from even more.

Matsui, who made \$6 million this past year, finished the 2010 campaign with a .274 average and .820 OPS to go along with 21 homers and 84 RBIs. The latter numbers would represent a large upgrade for Oakland, as Kevin Kouzmanoff and Kurt Suzuki led the A's this season with 71 RBIs in 551 and 495 at-bats, respectively. Kouzmanoff also led the team in homers with 16.

Tellem was rather vague when speaking about Matsui's contract wishes, but he did lay out what the Japanese veteran values most.

"I think he wants to play on a regular basis and contribute to a team, and be on a team with a chance to be competitive in the race and looking for the support of a positive environment," he said. "I believe we'll find one of those."

Oakland seemingly fits that mold, as the club believes it boasts the pitching staff and -- hopefully by offseason's end -- just enough added elements necessary to fight for a postseason berth. Matsui would figure to receive the everyday DH job, with possible intermittent stints in the outfield if needed.

Tellem added that, at this point, Matsui does not have a location preference and is open to listening to all teams.

"I think we'll have a better sense after I go through all the meetings this week," he said.

## **Urban: Sizing up A's options at DH**

Mychael Urban, CSNBayArea.com

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. -- When the offseason started in earnest, the A's had a best-case-scenario list of free agents they'd like to land.

The three names at the top of the list, in order of attractiveness, were Adrian Beltre, Hideki Matsui and Lance Berkman. Nick Johnson was a distant No. 4, and while Vladimir Guerrero was on the list, too, Oakland was pretty sure Guerrero was destined to re-sign with the Rangers.

Berkman is the only one of the five off the board, having signed a deal with the Cardinals for one year and \$8 million instead of taking the two years and \$16 million the A's reportedly offered.

Here's what's up with the other four, plus a name that's surfaced recently:

**Beltre:** The A's are said to have offered him four years and \$64 million. He said, "Puhshaw." The A's, who were spurned by Beltre last winter, too, said, "No soup for you," and pulled the offer back after waiting for something more mature than "Puhshaw." Word out of the Winter Meetings, which wrap up Thursday with the increasingly irrelevant Rule 5 draft, is that Beltre's agent, Scott Boras, is looking to land a deal in the neighborhood of five years and \$85 million. That's \$17 mil a season for a guy with a history of playing his best only in the walk year of his previous deals, and given the way he's treated the A's with something akin to disdain, the chances of him donning white spikes next season are slim and no-flipping-way.

**Matsui:** Somehow Matsui's name has been largely left off the rumor mill this winter, and perhaps that's a credit to his agent, Arn Tellem, a well-respected representative who doesn't traffic in some of the phony nonsense other agents use on their clients' behalf. The A's met with Tellem here Monday, and the talks went well. If you want to feel good about Oakland's pursuit of a free agent, feel good about this one. Just don't expect to hear a ton about it until they either sign him or he signs elsewhere.

**Johnson:** Why anyone is seriously interested in this guy is a mystery. He literally has not played an injury free season since he signed his first professional contract, and his career high in games played as a big leaguer came in 2006 (147), but late that season he broke his leg in an on-field collision and missed the 2007 season entirely. He made his big-league debut in 2001 and has played in more than 98 games four times. Last year he signed a one-year, \$5.5 million deal with the Yankees, played 24 games and batted .167 with 23 strikeouts in 24 games before wrist surgery ended his season in May.

**Guerrero:** The longer he goes unsigned, the more hope A's fans are allowed to have. The Rangers remain the frontrunner, but the Orioles also are interested. Guerrero's inability to play a passable outfield, as evidenced by his World Series performance at AT&T Park, doesn't quite mesh with Oakland's desire to have their DH be somewhat versatile in terms of being able to grab a glove when interleague play rolls around, but the man can still hit.

**Derrek Lee:** Formerly of the Cubs and Braves, is fairly new name on the list, and he does have Northern California ties. He's 35, so he might be open to being a DH, as well as a deal similar to the one-year, \$10 million deal that Carlos Pena signed with the Cubs late Tuesday.

Lee makes the most sense. Move him to the top of the list.

## **Baseball: Iwakuma's agent says A's 'disrespectful'**

Mainichi Daily News 12/8/2010

SENDAI (Kyodo) -- Hisashi Iwakuma's agent has hit back at the Oakland Athletics, saying they were insincere in their efforts to sign the Rakuten Eagles right-hander on Wednesday.

"Their offer was low, and they weren't sincere," Don Nomura said, a day after the 30-day negotiating period with Oakland came to an unfruitful end. "They thought we would just cave in at the end, but we didn't want to set a bad precedent for the next player who goes."

Rakuten will get back the 29-year-old Iwakuma for next season, while Oakland gets back the \$19.1 million posting fee. Iwakuma qualifies for free agency next year.

Nomura said the Athletics never really strayed from their first offer of \$15.25 million over four years, which he took as a sign of disrespect and a lack of desire to bring Iwakuma on board.

And Nomura said because Iwakuma could become a free agent next year, Oakland did not appear to be that bothered whether a deal could be reached or not.

"There wasn't a massive difference to what they offered initially," Nomura said of the Athletics' final offer, which he did not divulge. "They knew he was just one year away from free agency, and they never showed any respect."

The Eagles, who are trying to return to the postseason in 2011 under new skipper Senichi Hoshino, said they were glad to have Iwakuma back, but felt sorry for the pitcher that things did not work out.

"It's sad because it was his dream," team representative Jun Yoneda said. "On the other hand, it's huge for us because he's been a big part of our plans. In the end, it's nice that he's staying."

"We didn't post him for the money anyway. That's not an issue for us whatsoever."

Meanwhile, former Oakland pitcher Keiichi Yabu, who has been released by Rakuten, said at the winter meetings in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., that he is ending his playing career to become a pitching coach for the Hanshin Tigers' farmhand.

"When I get back to Japan, we'll iron everything out," said Yabu, who played for the Athletics in 2005 and the San Francisco Giants in 2008. "I do want to keep playing, but I think that will go away once I sign on as a coach."

The 42-year-old Yabu had an 84-106 record in 11 seasons with Hanshin. He joined Rakuten in July, making 11 appearances without being involved in any decisions.