

Oakland A's won't pursue outfielder Grady Sizemore

San Francisco Chronicle

-- The A's have no interest in pursuing free-agent outfielder Grady Sizemore, a source with knowledge of the team's thinking told The Chronicle on Monday.

The team has been linked to the former Cleveland All-Star in recent reports, but the A's are not looking to commit significant payroll dollars without more clarity on their stadium situation, and Sizemore, who is seeking a one-year deal to prove his health, would not fit into Oakland's long-term plans, anyway.

Oakland is not expected to actively pursue high-profile Cuban defector Yoenis Cespedes, despite scouting the outfielder thoroughly, because high-payroll clubs are likely to bid much more than the A's would.

-- Starter Brett Anderson, throwing for the first time since his July 15 elbow ligament-replacement surgery, made 25 throws at a distance of 45 feet and told The Chronicle it went fine. ... The A's pitchers and catchers will report to spring training on Feb. 18 and the rest of the position players Feb. 24, with the first full-squad workout the following day. ... Among the promotions Oakland plans for 2012: bobbleheads for Gio Gonzalez (June 17) and Scott Hatteberg (Aug. 18) and events honoring the 1972 championship team (April 21) and the 10-year anniversary of the record 20-game winning streak (Aug. 18-19).

Rookie honors presented: Atlanta Braves closer Craig Kimbrel became the NL Rookie of the Year in a unanimous vote, and Tampa Bay pitcher Jeremy Hellickson was a clear winner for the AL award.

Kimbrel, who set a major-league record for saves by a rookie with 46, earned all 32 first-place votes in balloting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America to outpoint teammate Freddie Freeman.

Hellickson went 13-10 with a 2.95 ERA in helping the Rays win the AL wild-card spot. He drew 17 of 28 first-place votes and finished well ahead of Los Angeles Angels first baseman Mark Trumbo, who drew five first-place votes and 63 points.

Kidnapping aftermath: Venezuelan police said that two more suspects have been arrested in the kidnapping of Nationals catcher Wilson Ramos and that authorities are searching for several others.

The two men, a Colombian and a Venezuelan, were detained in the town of Moron, not far from where Ramos was held captive, national investigative police chief Humberto Ramirez said.

Ramirez said the Colombian, Alexander Moreno Bolanos, 26, is "linked with paramilitary groups."

Briefly: ESPN and the Los Angeles Times reported that Dodgers center fielder Matt Kemp is close to signing an eight-year, \$160 million contract. ... Second baseman Aaron Hill reached an agreement to re-sign with the Diamondbacks, two people familiar with the two-year, \$11 million deal told the Associated Press. ... Players and owners have moved closer to an agreement on a five-year labor contract, a person familiar with the negotiations told the Associated Press. The agreement would add thresholds for spending by a team each year on selections in the June amateur draft, as well make changes to the luxury tax and revenue sharing.

Drumbeat: A look at the rumor mill, Sizemore and Cespedes: plus spring dates

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 11/14/2011 1:41pm

I was mostly on vacation last week, but there were some developments in the A's rumor mill: First of all, the annual "Billy Beane will listen on all his players" stories, which is an oldie but a goodie. Of course he'll listen on all his players, he always does. He figures there's a match for any player – if the price is met. The key thing to remember: These stories never mean Beane is shopping any of the A's. He's just listening. That's not new, it's standard operating procedure.

That said, there are two A's pitchers I do believe could be traded this year, were Beane to get a substantial return: Gio Gonzalez and Andrew Bailey. Both are arbitration-eligible, neither is signed long term. Gonzalez is coveted by many contenders, with the Yankees at the head of the pack, and he'd be at peak value right now, coming off a career year and with an excellent health record.

Bailey's value might not be at an all-time high, considering he missed the first half of last season with elbow issues, but the skyrocketing price of closers might make a lot of teams look trade first – particularly when it comes to a two-time All-Star who'd be under team control for three more years. Bailey showed he was healthy in the second half – and didn't blow a save after the break. What cost-conscious contender wouldn't want him?

But again: The A's aren't shopping players. I'd think it would have to take a Dan Haren-like deal to pry Gonzalez away, for instance, and I don't see that happening in the current climate. With other options in the bullpen – Grant Balfour, Brian Fuentes and possible future closer Fautino De Los Santos – Bailey probably would make the most sense if the A's were to trade a younger piece, but then again, Balfour is making more and he'd be a nice option for many teams, too. Oakland could shed some payroll and get a prospect or two back.

The A's have been linked in reports to outfielder Grady Sizemore and Cuban outfielder Yoenis Cespedes, but I haven't heard any rumblings at all from the team about either player. If the A's are focused on building a team with an eye toward the San Jose stadium they are starting to believe they might get, then Sizemore makes no sense whatsoever on a one-year deal.

Cespedes on paper is the kind of player that the team might have interest in – a potential building block who could be around for a possible new stadium – except from all accounts, a lot of big spenders are also after him. The A's are not in the mode where they'll do much spending right now, and they've never had a real look at Cespedes, anyway, so shelling out a lot for him isn't in the plans. I'd say take all Sizemore and Cespedes talk with a grain of salt – at least until the team has more clarity on the stadium situation.

There is now a date for A's fans to circle on their calendars: pitchers and catchers will report Feb. 18, I am told, with the first workout the following day. The rest of the position players will report on Feb. 24, with the first full-squad workout the following day.

The last time the A's opened in Japan, they opened spring camp a little bit earlier than usual, but this looks like a fairly typical reporting date.

Once a week or so, I seem to get a question about Brandon McCarthy's status for next year. He's under team control. He will be back.

Anderson throws for first time since surgery

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Any update on Brett Anderson's rehab journey wouldn't really be complete without mention of the pitcher's ongoing separation from Coca-Cola.

Speaking by phone from Austin, Texas, on Monday, the A's lefty confirmed that it's been nearly four months since he's consumed soda, which was once before part of his daily survival guide.

Perhaps it all sounds silly, but it's a point of pride for Anderson, who has shed more than 20 pounds while rehabbing from July's Tommy John procedure. And on Monday, Anderson watched those efforts pay off, as he played catch for the first time and came out of the session -- which included about 20 throws at a distance of 45 feet -- pain-free.

"It felt kinda weird, like how it would be if you were walking again or riding your bike again for the first time in forever," Anderson said. "But after about 10 throws, I felt pretty good, and I realize it's just one other thing I have to do in this process."

"Hopefully, now that I've started playing catch, it'll sort of expedite the process, at least in my mind. Once you can look at a schedule, you have goals to look forward to. Just getting to the point I'm at now has been kind of a grind, but now that I feel like an actual baseball player again, hopefully things start coming back quick."

The grind will continue for several more months. Anderson has pinpointed July 2012 -- marking a year since the surgery -- for a targeted return date to a big league mound. In the meantime, he'll follow a schedule dictated by the combined efforts of the A's training staff and the Andrews Institute of Dr. James Andrews.

Though rehab will keep Anderson out of the mix for all of the first half of the season, he's "just happy to be throwing a baseball again," he said.

Furthermore, he's upped his conditioning efforts and running an average of two to three miles multiple times a week.

"It's not my favorite thing ever," he said. "Running just to run, I don't think too many people like that, but it's part of the deal and it gets you in shape. I might as well take advantage of this time and get in the best shape of possible. It's frustrating it takes something like this for that to happen, but you have to make the best of it to make sure something like this doesn't happen again."

Since agreeing to a four-year contract extension worth \$12.5 million in April 2010, Anderson has endured three disabled-list stints that have limited him to 32 starts in that span. But he'll be just 24 upon his scheduled return next year, leaving the youngster plenty of time to reboot his career.

"I still have a long way to go, but I'm excited about what I can do once I'm back," he said. "Hopefully things will continue to go smoothly."

A's encouraged by progress of prospect Ynoa

OAKLAND -- Right-hander Michael Ynoa, one of the most highly regarded prospects in the A's system, appears to finally be on the right track since undergoing Tommy John surgery in August 2010.

According to A's director of player development Keith Lieppman, Ynoa threw a bullpen session in the Dominican Republic on Monday and is scheduled to take part in another on Friday. Barring any setbacks, he could land in a game prior to the end of the Dominican Instructional League on Dec. 2.

"He is free and easy with no problems," said Lieppman, who watched Ynoa's session. "So far, so good."

It's welcome news for the A's, who signed the Dominican to a then-record \$4.25 million bonus in 2008, when he was just 16 years old. At the time, he was projected to be in the big leagues by age 20, but that birthday came and went in September.

The injury-prone Ynoa has as many 60-day disabled-list stints in his career as he does professional appearances (three) and has just nine innings in the Arizona Rookie League to his name. He will be eligible for the 2012 Rule 5 Draft if he's not a member of Oakland's 40-man roster at that time, but the A's are hoping he can reclaim his stock before then.

Lieppman said Ynoa is likely to start the 2012 season at extended spring training before being sent to Class A Vermont.

After magical season, Selig's plate full

New CBA expected to include revamped playoffs, realignment

Hal Bodley, mlb.com

Commissioner Bud Selig will tell Major League Baseball's 30 owners and their general managers, during joint meetings in Milwaukee this week, their game has never been healthier.

If there is an air of optimism flowing from the chambers at the Pfister Hotel, it will be accurate. No sugar coating needed.

Fans remain intoxicated from one of the most fascinating, memorable postseasons on the books, not to mention September's unbelievable races to the wire.

Industry revenues are in the neighborhood of \$7.5 billion; over 73 million fans paid to see games in 2011, most since 2008; and any day now, MLB management and the Major League Baseball Players Association will sign off on a new Collective Bargaining Agreement which will ensure labor peace through 2017 -- a span of 22 years from the last work stoppage.

For those of us who've lived through the torture and scars of eight work stoppages, beginning a second decade of tranquility between owners and players is unheard of.

"Nobody, including me, could have dreamed we'd have labor peace for so many years," says Selig. "In retrospect, I've come to understand how badly [work stoppages] hurt us. I give everyone a lot of credit."

Yet as general managers and owners build the foundation for 2012 in Milwaukee, the face of baseball in many respects will have a dramatically new look next season.

We'll miss managerial icon Tony La Russa intensely standing in the dugout, guiding the St. Louis Cardinals. Terry Francona and general manager Theo Epstein will no longer run the Boston Red Sox, nor will relief fixture Jonathan Papelbon be saving games for them.

Yes, change is in the air.

After all the struggles and rain-interrupted games the once Florida Marlins, now Miami Marlins, endured, they'll move into their new \$515 million, retractable-roof ballpark. They'll open a new era of baseball in South Florida on April 4 against the World Series-champion Cardinals.

The Chicago Cubs, still longing for a World Series championship for the first time since 1908, have turned their baseball reins over to the 37-year-old Epstein, who ended an ages-old drought in Boston when the Red Sox won the 2004 Series and repeated the feat in '07.

Thus, if change is healthy, baseball will have its share in 2012 -- some real, some talked about.

And despite an atmosphere of euphoria, Selig's agenda remains full.

One priority is the sale of the Los Angeles Dodgers and return of the once-prestigious franchise to respectability after bankruptcy and ownership issues have left a dark cloud above.

Stadium issues for the Tampa Bay Rays and Oakland A's remain pressing issues.

Can these franchises survive in their present stadiums and locales?

Sale of the Houston Astros to businessman Jim Crane is reportedly near fruition, and with that may come MLB's first realignment since Selig's Milwaukee Brewers moved from the American League to the National League in 1998.

Selig says he would like to eliminate the disparity of having six teams in the NL Central (including Houston) and four in the AL West. If the discussed plan is adopted, the Astros would move to the AL West, creating an instate rivalry with the Rangers.

If that happens -- not before 2013 -- Interleague Play as we know it will greatly change. Because of three five-team divisions in each league, an Interleague game will be needed each day. Currently, there are two isolated periods of Interleague games each season.

Final plans for adding two Wild Card teams, which will expand the postseason field from eight to 10 teams, may be announced soon, but they will not become reality until 2013 at the earliest. This is expected to be included in the new Collective Bargaining Agreement.

As we look ahead to 2012, the All-Star Game may be moved from its traditional Tuesday to Wednesday.

"This will enable us to do more to make sure there is better representation," said Selig, adding this would provide more flexibility, allowing pitchers who play on Sunday to participate in the All-Star Game. The 2012 game will be played in Kansas City.

With several highly publicized missed calls by umpires during the season and postseason, the demand for more instant replay has been renewed.

I have often stated additional replay would harm the flow of baseball, delay games somewhat and take away the human element so crucial to the sport.

To that, Selig said more instant replay will be added next year, probably on fair/foul calls, "but not much more. I do not want to disturb the pace of the game."

It's difficult to remember a time when state-of-the-game subjects are so positive. They obviously greatly outweigh the problems baseball faces.

Oh, yes.

Selig's contract expires at the end of 2012, and he insists he will retire. My guess is that vow could change if owners persuade him to stay on.

But if he sticks with his plan, 2013 will be the first season -- since September 1992 when Commissioner Fay Vincent was forced out -- that baseball hasn't been run by Bud Selig.

That makes 2012 even more important.

Owners, GMs have big agenda awaiting them

Sale of Astros, Basic Agreement among topics to be discussed

By Barry M. Bloom / MLB.com

MILWAUKEE -- With a combined meeting of general managers and owners set to open at the downtown Pfister Hotel on Tuesday morning, it is looking like a big week for Major League Baseball.

By all reports, the owners and players are about to sign off on a new Basic Agreement that may pave the way for the first realignment of the game since the Brewers moved from the American League to the National League in 1998.

If the owners approve the sale of the Astros by Drayton McLane to a group headed by Houston businessman Jim Crane this week, a significant part of the deal reportedly will be the transfer of the Astros from the NL Central to the AL West, giving each league 15 teams beginning with the 2013 season. All six divisions would then be inhabited by five teams. The long-awaited sale is on the agenda for the joint meetings that will include the owners and GMs on Thursday morning.

"If that happens, it puts another team in the AL West that's in our time zone, and I think that's important," Rangers team president Nolan Ryan said during the postseason. "When [the Astros] get competitive again, it will be a natural rivalry. It would be good for baseball and Texas to have teams in the same state vying for the lead in the [AL] West."

Because of competitive balance, the MLB Players Association has been a solid proponent of realignment. Expected to come with it will be the addition of a second Wild Card team and a play-in game in each league as a precursor to the current three-tiered postseason format, which will remain the same. Theoretically, the new 10-team postseason could be introduced as early as the coming year, but it probably won't commence until 2013 because the 2012 schedule has already been released.

Crane's purchase of the Astros has been on hold since it was taken off the agenda at the last Owners Meetings in Cooperstown, N.Y., in August. MLB needed more time to vet Crane and his partners, as the collective bargaining talks involving realignment proceeded on a parallel pace. The sale needs 75-percent approval of the other owners and/or their designees to be ratified.

Last May, when McLane and Crane came to agreement, the sale price was announced at \$680 million. But Crane asked for and received a credit reportedly for \$50 million to \$80 million off the purchase price to move the club into the AL. The Astros, who expanded into the NL as the Houston Colt .45s, along with the Mets, in 1962, will be celebrating its 50th anniversary next season.

The labor negotiations have progressed since January, and it was hoped that they would be concluded last month by the end of the World Series. But issues involving the annual First-Year Player Draft have kept negotiators at the table, although FOX Sports reported on Sunday that both sides were close to resolving the matter by agreeing to a restraint on bonuses and changes to free-agent Draft-pick compensation.

There has been conjecture in the media about a possible announcement in Milwaukee this week. It could happen, although one high-ranking baseball official cautioned that there was still some work to be done.

The current deal, which was signed without any rancor in 2006, expires on Dec. 11, giving negotiators a little breathing room. Another five-year deal, through 2016, is expected, giving MLB continued unfettered labor peace since the end of the strike that wiped out the final third of the 1994 regular season, that year's postseason and delayed the start of the '95 season for almost a month.

"Nobody could have conceived, including me, that 16 years ago we could have this many years of labor peace," Commissioner Bud Selig said last month prior to Game 7 of the World Series. "In retrospect, I've come to understand how badly that hurt us. I give everyone a lot of credit."

But peace didn't come easily. Until a deal was reached in New York as players waited on buses to go to ballparks right at the deadline in August 2002, every labor negotiation between the owners and players from the mid-1970s on included either a strike or a lockout.

In 2006, when Don Fehr was executive director of the union, negotiations began in June and the deal was done behind the scenes and announced in St. Louis during that year's World Series. Michael Weiner replaced Fehr in that role nearly two years ago, and though he has long been involved in baseball negotiations, this is his first as the union's head.

This is the third such negotiations for Rob Manfred, MLB's executive vice president of labor relations and human resources, and none of them have included a work stoppage.

By all accounts, this year's negotiations have been meticulous, with both sides poring over and updating most of the previous agreement. Along the way, Selig has praised Manfred and Weiner for their thoroughness and cordiality under pressure.

With the GMs scheduled to open their meetings on Tuesday, large blocks of time have been set aside to update them on all aspects of the projected new Basic Agreement. For sure, they'll have some time to meet individually to talk about trades in preparation for the annual four days of Winter Meetings in Dallas, starting on Dec. 5, but the schedule this week will be frenetic.

First of all, there are a number of old faces in new places. Theo Epstein moved from Boston to Chicago and was joined by Jed Hoyer, who left San Diego to become the Cubs' GM. Ben Cherington replaced Epstein as Red Sox GM, and Josh Byrnes is the new GM of the Padres. Dan Duquette, after almost decade out of MLB, is now the GM in Baltimore, and Terry Ryan is back in his old position with the Twins after a four-year absence.

They'll all have their annual dinner on Tuesday night at which the Sporting News will announce its annual executive of the year, and then they're scheduled to meet again among themselves on Wednesday morning and with Selig that afternoon.

"That's always very educational for us, especially with the new Basic Agreement coming," D-backs GM Kevin Towers said of the meetings with Selig, which began for the first time in Paradise Valley, Ariz., early last year. "It'll be great to see what rules and regulations might change or might remain the same. It's nice to know what kind of environment we're going to be working in going forward."

At the same time on Wednesday, owners will meet in their various committees. Crane's purchase of the Astros from McLane first needs to be approved by both MLB's ownership committee and executive council before it's moved on to Thursday's joint session.

A's to San Jose Rumors Hit NYC

A's Owner Wolff denies "tacit agreement" with MLB to move team.

By Chris Roberts, nbcbayarea.com

If not Fremont, then San Jose. And if not locally, then baseball prognosticators across the country will gladly spread rumor of when, not if, the Oakland A's will depart the East Bay for greener pastures.

It's no secret A's owner Lew Wolff is tired of his team's digs at the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum. But it's the rumor published in the New York Daily News that had the LA-based real estate developer setting the record straight with the San Jose Mercury News.

The New York baseball writers say that as soon as MLB commissioner Bud Selig finishes with the Dodger problem -- as in hurrying the sale of that team by embattled owner Frank McCourt through the process as soon as possible -- Selig will turn to the A's, and issue a long-awaited report on an A's move to San Jose and the San Francisco Giants' "territorial rights" there.

In fact, Wolff has a "tacit agreement" in place with Selig that as soon as McCourt is out of the MLB, the A's will be in -- as in, in San Jose, the New York paper reported.

All that would be news to Wolff, according to comments he made to the Merc.

"Nothing has changed," he told the newspaper. "There's nothing new. I wish there were."

"I have not gotten tacit approval, if that's what you're asking," he added. "But I have not received tacit non-approval either. We're still waiting and looking forward to it being resolved and hoping it will happen sooner rather than later."

In other words: he'd love to move to San Jose but doesn't know when it'll happen. Meanwhile, plans for Oakland to build a new ballpark continue to go nowhere. Perhaps they could use recently-renovated Frank Ogawa Plaza.

Royals' Adcock dominant in AFL shutout

Rangers first-rounder Olt smacks one of three Saguaros homers

By Danny Wild / MLB.com

If this was Nathan Adcock's final outing of 2011, he made it a good one. In fact, he might have even overshadowed Mike Olt.

Adcock took a perfect game into the fifth inning, finishing with one hit over five dominant frames for his second win and Olt homered yet again as Surprise blanked Phoenix, 5-0, in the Arizona Fall League on Monday.

The Royals' right-hander was unhittable through four innings until the Yankees' Ronnier Mustelier drove a leadoff grounder up the middle to start the fifth frame. Adcock, who threw 56 pitches, got groundouts from Rob Segedin (Yankees) and Yan Gomes (Blue Jays) before striking out his final batter of the game, Ryan Ortiz (Athletics).

"I got into a real good rhythm, kept my sinker down, got some ground balls, some swings and misses," said Adcock. The 6-foot-5 righty spent all of 2011 in the Majors with Kansas City, where he went 1-1 with a 4.62 ERA in 24 outings, including three starts. "I just pitched to contact and got early outs."

Adcock struck out five and did not walk a batter, throwing his two-seamer, slider and change-up along with the sinker. With less than a week to play in Arizona, he realizes this may have been his final appearance.

"I always like to keep going as long as I can, I think I could have gone a little extra," he said. "But I'm glad I could give them a chance to win."

Those odds went up when Olt, a first-round pick by the Rangers in 2010, hit his league-leading 13th home run in his 24th game, a solo drive off Phoenix starter Travis Webb (Reds) in the fourth. The UConn product has homered in three straight games and six of his last seven starts, with seven long balls in that span. He has a shot to tie the AFL record of 14, which was set by Brandon Wood (Pirates) in 2005.

"He's just got power, sometimes he gets jammed and still gets the ball out," said Adcock. "Raw power to all fields. He works hard, he takes it seriously. He pours his heart and soul into playing baseball."

For the first few innings, though, the story was Adcock. He struck out two in the first and didn't allow a fly ball until the third.

"Yeah, [the perfect game] goes through your mind," Adcock said. "You think about it but you never want to jinx yourself, but you want to keep the same rhythm and tempo. I just had all four pitches going and kept them guessing.

"I threw them all pretty much for strikes," he added. "I'm a ground-ball guy, and my defense played well and backed me up today."

Surprise has already clinched the AFL West and will play in Saturday's championship game. Adcock would line up to start again Saturday, but he's doesn't know if he'll get the nod.

"I'm not sure, I haven't been told anything," he said. "Just playing it by ear."

Adcock got a lead to work with Monday when Marlins prospect Kevin Mattison homered in the third, his sixth of the fall. Olt led off the fourth with a drive to center and the Sagueros added three more in the sixth when Wil Myers (Royals) drew a leadoff walk, Olt was beamed by reliever Wes Etheridge and Marlins prospect Matt Dominguez followed with his fourth home run.

"Being with this team makes it a lot easier. There's a lot of energy, the guys play hard, they go all out for you," said Adcock. "That's what makes it fun, it makes you want to stay here and try to win a championship on Saturday."

Webb (2-1) took the loss for Phoenix after allowing two runs on four hits and a pair of walks over four innings.