

## **A's News Clips, Monday, November 21, 2011**

### **Report: A's may find out soon if they can move to San Jose**

San Jose Mercury News staff and wire report

There are indications that Major League Baseball is now quickly moving toward a decision on whether to permit the A's to move to San Jose, Fox Sports reported Saturday.

Commissioner Bud Selig, who nearly three years ago appointed a committee to help decide the A's future home, reportedly plans to meet with the San Francisco Giants within the next two weeks. The Giants hold territorial rights to San Jose, a huge obstacle Selig would have to help the A's clear through negotiations.

According to Fox's sources, the A's already met with Selig earlier this month, and the team has given MLB assurances it will comply with baseball's request to expand the A's proposed 32,000-seat capacity of Cisco Field.

The San Jose City Council last week agreed to give the A's exclusive rights for up to three years to buy almost 5 acres of downtown land for \$6.9 million in order to build the ballpark near San Jose's Diridon Station.

### **Q&A With Tony LaRussa**

#### **Retired, but maybe not from baseball**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Tony La Russa guided the Cardinals to the World Series title and retired three days later.

From managing. Not baseball.

La Russa won 2,728 games with the White Sox, A's and Cardinals, ranking third all-time behind Connie Mack and John McGraw. At 67, the Alamo resident is open to a new career, so long as he keeps his gig with his beloved Animal Rescue Foundation in Walnut Creek.

We caught up with La Russa last week as he accepted a donation for ARF in San Francisco, and he touched on subjects that hit home with A's and Giants fans.

#### **Q: What are your plans now?**

**A:** "I'm hoping and guessing I'll stay in baseball some way. You'd like to help a club try to compete and pursue the dream, a chance to play in October and win a championship. That's the best dream going. People think I'm kidding, but I'd also love to go into business and wouldn't hesitate to open a bookstore."

#### **Q: What about a front-office job with the A's or Giants?**

**A:** "I signed with the A's and managed the A's. I've been in the National League, so we played a lot in San Francisco, and the Giants have been outstanding to me over the years, particularly with ARF-related requests. I'd like to find a club where there's a fit, and I don't know if the A's or Giants need any help that I would provide. Both are very solid."

**Q: Of course the A's could use your help. The Giants, too.**

**A:** "I think the A's have it figured out. Billy (Beane) does a good job. I'm not sure there's a spot or responsibility available."

**Q: Your A's teams often packed the Coliseum. What's your take on A's ownership's desire to move to San Jose?**

**A:** "The A's should stay in the Bay Area with a legitimate shot to compete economically, and there are some real doubts it can happen in Oakland. The Giants got the (territorial) rights (to San Jose in the early '90s) because (former A's owner) Walter Haas just said 'here.' There was no reason other than to be real nice and fair and give them to the Giants. I don't know what the grounds would be for the Giants to say it's ours and not the A's."

**Q: What was your best team?**

**A:** "It depends on what you mean by best. If you're talking most talented, the '89 A's. That group could play against anybody, anytime. But 'team' means 25 guys, even 35 guys over a season committed to doing their best. We had several in Chicago - '83 was special - and Oakland, and we had a nice run in St. Louis. I appreciated all of those. But as far as a pure baseball team, the '89 A's. I didn't manage that club. I just pushed buttons. Told them what time the game started and moved aside."

**Q: Your take on the 'Moneyball' movie?**

**A:** "It might've been entertaining some. But if you're trying to get some credibility on how the A's won 20 in a row and went to the playoffs, the movie says it's because (Scott) Hatteberg moved to first base and a couple of trades. No, they won because of three great starting pitchers (Tim Hudson, Mike Mulder and Barry Zito) and two franchise players, (Eric) Chavez and (Miguel) Tejada. The movie doesn't show that. It does the opposite. It disparages scouts and player-development guys, and the Philip Seymour Hoffman character doesn't represent Art Howe. It's a nice story but not accurate."

**Q: Your successor in St. Louis, Mike Matheny, announced his staff, and it includes Mark McGwire as hitting coach. You brought him back to the game, defended him and took some heat for it.**

**A:** "I feel terrific for Mark. A lot of people thought I was being friendly bringing him in last year. It had nothing to do with it. I just know he's got a coaching gift and passion. I'm happy for him. He did a great job. They wanted him back."

**Q: Any regrets? You were the manager for Jose Canseco and Mark McGwire in the steroid era ...**

**A:** "The discussion of steroids almost completely disregarded the effect of creatine, which isn't a banned substance. In those early days, when you saw guys getting bigger and stronger, a lot had to do with creatine. No doubt at some point steroids were in use. You need to track the introduction to creatine - the use of it and the belief by teams, front-office people and managers that it was and still is an important factor for some of the strength."

**Q: What would you change if you were commissioner for a day?**

**A:** "You can't have two sets of rules for one major league. I would say no to the DH. I remember Sparky (Anderson), a great mentor, telling me I'd enjoy managing in the National League. It's a different brand of baseball. He was right. I enjoyed the National League, St. Louis especially."

## **Bob Melvin says Astros to AL West 'makes sense'**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's are welcoming a new addition to the AL West as early as 2013, and manager Bob Melvin said he has no problem with the Houston Astros joining the division.

"I wasn't privy to who goes where, but taking one team out of the division that has six and putting them in one with four makes sense," Melvin said by phone Friday.

Melvin is not as keen on playoff expansion; each league will have two wild-card teams, under a plan approved Thursday by baseball owners, and most likely a one-game play-in for those clubs.

"I didn't think there was anything wrong with the current format," he said. "The more you dilute it, the less chance the best team has to win."

Outfielder Jason Pridie was signed to a minor-league deal this week by the A's, who are expected to lose the entire starting outfield - Josh Willingham, Coco Crisp and David DeJesus - on the free-agent market.

"He gives us depth in a position where we don't have a lot of depth, with all or most of our free agents probably leaving," Melvin said. "As it stands now, we'll take more of a look at Michael Taylor, Jai Miller and Ryan Sweeney."

Melvin said he had some talks with Sweeney before the end of the season, and "from our conversations, I know he'll have a sense of urgency this spring," Melvin said.

Oakland is still seeking a hitting coach after Mike Aldrete elected to stay in St. Louis, where he was promoted to bench coach. Former A's hitting coach Ty Van Burkleo is expected to be a front-runner for the job.

The A's added outfielder Jermaine Mitchell to the 40-man roster and outrighted recently acquired right-hander Evan Scribner and outfielder Cedric Hunter to Triple-A Sacramento. Mitchell is rehabbing from knee surgery, and his status for the spring is unclear.

The A's also signed right-handed reliever Jim Miller and outfielder Jeff Fiorentino to minor-league deals. Fiorentino played two games with Oakland in 2008.

## **Drumbeat: Melvin is OK with Astros in West, expanded playoffs less so**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 11/18/2011 1:50pm

A's manager Bob Melvin doesn't have an issue with the Houston Astros joining the AL West as soon as 2013, though the Astros will be the most distant team in the division and the division grows from four teams to five. There's long been a belief it's easier to win a four-team division than a five-team division – or six-team division, such as the NL Central. Eight or years or so ago, the AL West was considered one of the toughest divisions in baseball, and the NL Central the worst, so it's all relative.

And Melvin said that the bottom line is that the math works.

"It makes sense that every division has five teams," he told me. "I certainly understand that. I wasn't privy to who goes where, but taking one team out of the division that has six and putting them in one with four makes sense. I don't know what team was really going to be a perfect fit, anyway, and the travel won't be that much more than Texas."

Presumably, AL West teams will visit the Rangers and Astros on the same trip, minimizing lengthy flights. The major-league schedule always has some real head-scratchers scattered into every team's season, however, so you never know.

Melvin is less enthusiastic about the expansion of the playoffs; each league will have two wild-card teams now and most likely a one-game play-in for those two clubs.

"I am kind of digesting it right now," Melvin said. "I didn't think there was anything wrong with the current format. I would hate it to get like basketball, where half the teams are in. I actually enjoyed it when playoff spots were at a premium, and an honor. This certainly wouldn't take away from that, but the more you dilute it, the less chance the best team has to win."

The A's signed outfielder Jason Pridie to a minor-league deal this week, and Melvin said that bench coach Chip Hale, who was with the Mets last year, is very familiar with Pridie. Pridie hit .231 in 110 games with New York last season. The A's are expected to lose their entire starting outfield – Josh Willingham, Coco Crisp, David DeJesus – on the free-agent market, and DH/outfielder Hideki Matsui also is not a lock to return, with the A's looking to rebuild.

"He gives us depth in a position where we don't have a lot of depth, with all or most of our free agents probably leaving," Melvin said. "As it stands now, we'll take more of a look at Michael Taylor, Jai Miller and Ryan Sweeney."

Melvin said that he had some talks with Sweeney before the end of the season, and the A's fourth outfielder made it clear he plans to win a starting spot and hang onto it.

"From our conversations, I know he'll have a sense of urgency this spring," Melvin said. "I know he'll come to camp with an attitude about winning a job that he'll keep."

The A's this afternoon added outfielder Jermaine Mitchell to the 40-man roster and outrighted recently acquired right-hander Evan Scribner and outfielder Cedric Hunter to Triple-A Sacramento. Former top pick James Simmons (2007) was left unprotected again, but his health problems over the past few seasons and his inconsistency will probably make it less likely that the pitcher would be snared away in the Rule-5 draft.

Right-hander Travis Banwart, 25, could be the most likely Oakland prospect to get taken in the Rule-5 draft after being left unprotected after a decent season at Sacramento that included 120 strikeouts and 46 walks.

Mitchell was a player GM Billy Beane mentioned as in the mix for an outfield job next spring, though he had knee surgery (torn meniscus) after Sacramento's season and his status for the spring is unclear. Assistant general manager David Forst said that Mitchell is off crutches and going to rehab, however.

Mitchell's combined Double-A and Triple-A seasons last year were impressive: a .332 average, 15 homers, 78 RBIs, 27 steals, 93 walks (and 112 strikeouts). He's 26 and when he's healthy, this might be the year he makes it to the big leagues.

Forst confirmed that the team has signed right-handed reliever Jim Miller, 29, and outfielder Jeff Fiorentino, 28, to minor-league deals. Fiorentino was up briefly with Oakland in 2008, during the team's season-opening series at Japan, and he spent the 2010 season playing in Japan. He was in the Atlanta and Baltimore systems last year. Miller spent most of last year with Colorado's Colorado Springs team, where he put up a 5.25 ERA, but I've always heard that park described as a launching pad. He struck out 73 in 72 innings and walked 21.

## **A's add prospect Mitchell to 40-man roster**

### **Move means outfielder protected from Rule 5 Draft on Dec. 8**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- On the final day for clubs to set their 40-man roster, the A's on Friday added outfield prospect Jermaine Mitchell and elected to outright right-hander Evan Scribner and outfielder Cedric Hunter to Triple-A Sacramento.

By placing Mitchell on the 40-man roster, the A's have protected him from the Rule 5 Draft, to be held Dec. 8 at the Winter Meetings in Dallas. The move also ensures Mitchell of his first invite to big league camp.

Mitchell enjoyed a breakout 2011 season in the A's organization, batting .355 at Double-A Midland before earning a July 3 promotion to Sacramento, where he posted a .302 average with 14 doubles, three triples, five home runs, 28 RBIs and 13 stolen bases in 56 games.

The 27-year-old outfielder, a former fifth-round Draft pick by the A's in 2006, recently underwent knee surgery and likely won't be ready by season's start, but it's likely he'll play a prominent role in Oakland's outfield mix once healthy.

Scribner and Hunter were both claimed off waivers from San Diego on Oct. 25. Their departure from the 40-man roster, combined with the addition of Mitchell, leaves the A's with one open slot.

### **Choice finishes off impressive AFL season**

OAKLAND -- Arizona Fall League action concluded this week, with several players in Oakland's organization posting impressive results.

Top outfield prospect Michael Choice, the club's No. 1 pick in the 2010 Draft, finished with a .318 average, six home runs and 18 RBIs -- along with a 1.090 OPS -- in 66 at-bats spanning 17 games for the Phoenix Desert Dogs.

Leading the team in at-bats was fellow outfield prospect Grant Green with 107. He posted a .290 average with five homers, nine doubles and 19 RBIs while also progressing in his transition from shortstop to center field.

On the mound, right-hander Tyson Ross made seven starts, going 1-3 with a 5.94 ERA. Reliever Andrew Carignan, who, like Ross, spent time in Oakland this year, made 12 appearances, compiling a 6.57 ERA while striking out 16 in 12 1/3 innings.

A handful of other A's players are still in action in the Caribbean Winter Leagues, including first baseman Brandon Allen and pitchers Fautino De Los Santos, Graham Godfrey and Jordan Norberto.

## **Report: MLB moving toward decision to allow A's to move to San Jose**

Staff report Sporting News

The Oakland Athletics desire to move to San Jose, and that desire has apparently been made a top priority by Major League Baseball.

FoxSports.com is reporting there are indications the league is moving to make a quick decision on the potential move. Commissioner Bud Selig plans to meet with the San Francisco Giants within the next two weeks about the move. The Giants hold territorial rights to the San Jose area, the top obstacle MLB would have to clear to get the move approved.

The Giants are apparently very much opposed to giving up their territorial rights to San Jose and the South Bay region, the report states. San Jose is about 45 miles south of San Francisco.

The A's met with Selig earlier this month and, according to FoxSports.com, were given assurances it would comply with MLB's request to expand the team's proposed 32,000-seat Cisco Field.

The San Jose City Council agreed last week to give the A's exclusive rights for up to three years to buy almost five acres of downtown land for \$6.9 million in order to build the ballpark.

A's owner Lew Wolff has stated that Oakland is no longer a viable market for his team. Oakland ranked last in the majors in home attendance last season, averaging 18,232 fans per game.

The report states a source noted another solution could be sought if the move to San Jose isn't made. Baseball would purchase the A's from Wolff, secure a stadium deal in Oakland and then resell the club.

Baseball purchased the former Montreal Expos in 2002 for \$120 million then sold the rights for \$450 million four years later. The team was moved to Washington and renamed the Nationals. The move was made after MLB and the Baltimore Orioles struck a deal, terms of which included a regional sports network (MASN) that heavily favored the Orioles.

## **2011 Year In Review: Midland Hitters**

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Nov 21, 2011

Our "2011 Year In Review" series continues with a look at the hitters on the Oakland A's Double-A affiliate.

### **Midland Rockhounds Offense At A Glance**

**Team BA:** .269 (tied for second out of eight teams)  
**Runs Scored:** 675 (fifth out of eight teams)  
**Team OPS:** 740 (fifth out of eight teams)  
**Team Stolen Bases:** 91 (seventh out of eight teams)  
**Team Slugging Percentage:** .391 (fifth out of eight teams)

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*Note: this article covers all hitters who had at least 150 at-bats for the Rockhounds this season.*

The Midland Rockhounds had an unusual offensive season in 2011. The team finished second in the league in batting average and on-base percentage, but fifth in runs scored and slugging percentage. Five Midland hitters reached double-digits in homeruns, but none had more than 13. The Rockhounds played better during the second half of the season and finished with a 36-34 record in the second half, but the team's overall mark was a disappointing 63-77.

The Rockhounds' second half record would probably have been even better if their best player hadn't been promoted to Triple-A Sacramento just after the All-Star break. Jermaine Mitchell obliterated Texas League pitching during his three months with Midland. In 74 games, Mitchell hit .355 with a .453 OBP and a .589 SLG. He had 15 doubles, 13 triples and 10 homers and he walked 54 times in 304 at-bats. Despite being promoted halfway through the season, Mitchell still earned a spot on the Texas League's post-season All-Star team. He was added to the A's 40-man roster last week. Mitchell had off-season knee surgery, but he is expected to have a chance to compete for a spot in the A's outfield once he is healthy.

Infielder Wes Timmons also made a big impact on the team in a short period of time. Timmons spent much of the 2011 season with Triple-A Sacramento, but he did garner 156 at-bats with Double-A Midland after the A's sent him down to that level for a six-week stint. Timmons is too advanced of a hitter for Double-A and it showed. He hit .365/.402/.500 with six doubles and five homers in 39 games. He also drove-in 28 and stole seven bases in seven opportunities.

Of the players who spent the entire season with the Rockhounds, first baseman Michael Spina put up the best numbers. He posted an 803 OPS with 10 homers and a team-leading 75 RBIs. He also walked 70 times in 129 games and upped his OBP to .380 from the .348 mark he posted with High-A Stockton in 2010. Spina was a bit streaky. He posted OPSs of 1093 and 922 in April and July and OPSs of 764, 605 and 723 in May, June and July, respectively. Although his power numbers were down some from his 2010 campaign, Spina did a much better job of making consistent contact, reaching base and hitting for average. He also improved defensively at first. Spina seems ready for Triple-A, although whether he is promoted may be dependent on who the A's sign to minor league contracts this off-season.

Stephen Parker put up similar numbers to Spina's for the Rockhounds in 2011. Parker wasn't able to match his outstanding 2010 season with Stockton, when he posted a 900 OPS and hit 21 homers. He still put up decent numbers for Midland, however, posting a .286/.373/.413 line. Parker's best months came in April and July, but he really only had one poor month – May, during which he hit only .210 with a 620 OPS. Parker finished the season on an up note, batting .313 with an 840 OPS after the All-Star break. He also collected eight hits in 25 at-bats in a five-game stint with Sacramento at the end of the season. As the A's best third base prospect in the upper levels of the minors, Parker is expected to start next season in Triple-A Sacramento.

Grant Green entered the 2011 season as the top-rated prospect on the Midland roster. Although Green's power numbers were somewhat disappointing, he still impressed coaches and scouts around the league, as he was named to the Texas League's post-season All-Star team and the Topps Double-A All-Star team. Like Parker, Green finished his season strong. Green hit .342 with an 822 OPS in August. It would be the only month of the season during which he had an OPS over 800. Green made a switch from shortstop to centerfield in July and hit better as a centerfielder, posting a .300/.335/.429 line as an outfielder and a .284/.347/.395 line as a shortstop. He continued to hit well as an outfielder during the Arizona Fall League, batting .290 with an 893 OPS in 26 games for the Phoenix Desert Dogs. Green will start next season in Triple-A and he could see time in the A's outfield during the second half of the year.

Despite spending April with Sacramento, utilityman Adam Heether still led the Rockhounds in homeruns with 13. In 101 games, he hit .255/.367/.419. His 62 RBIs were tied with Green for fourth-most on the team. Heether has been playing professionally since 2003 and spent much of the 2008-2010 seasons in Triple-A. He is currently a minor league free agent.

Outfielder/first baseman Shane Peterson began the season on a strong note, batting .278 with an 854 OPS in 14 games. He was then promoted to Triple-A when Chris Carter was sidelined with a thumb injury. Peterson hit well with Sacramento (.293/.377/.479 in 46 games), but he struggled upon his return to Midland. In 45 games after returning, he hit only .254 with a 698 OPS. Peterson has spent most of the past three seasons at the Double-A level and he is ready for a legitimate chance at Triple-A. Whether he gets that opportunity will depend on the A's minor league free agent signings this off-season. Oakland has already signed two minor league veteran outfielders – Jason Pridie and Jeff Fiorentino.

Like Peterson, Matt Sulentic has spent the past three seasons with Midland. Sulentic has been fairly consistent in terms of hitting for average in his three years with the Rockhounds, batting between .288 and .272. However, his power numbers

have been poor the past two seasons, as he has had slugging percentages of .336 and .357, respectively. Sulentic did bring back the speed aspect of his game in 2011. After stealing only 11 bases last season, he swiped a team-high 24 bases this year. That was also a career-high total for Sulentic. He also struck-out fewer than 100 times for the first time since 2008, when he only played in 95 games (he appeared in 124 games in 2011). Like Peterson, Sulentic's chances at being promoted to Triple-A next season are tied, in part, to who the A's acquire this off-season.

Jeremy Barfield was one of the Rockhounds' top run producers, finishing second on the team in homers with 11 and third in RBIs with 72. Barfield's overall numbers were disappointing, however, as he saw his batting average drop nearly 20 points and his OBP and SLG drop more than 20 points from his 2010 levels with Stockton. Barfield was the youngest position player on the Rockhounds' roster. He has shown flashes of being the profile corner outfielder that the A's projected he would be when they drafted him, but he has yet to be able to show that kind of power and production on a consistent basis. Defensively, Barfield still has the best throwing arm of any outfielder in the A's system. He will probably start the 2012 season back with Midland, but a strong start could bump him up to Sacramento for the second half of the year.

Tyler Ladendorf never really got his bat going during his first season at the Double-A level. The middle infielder hit only .225 with a 627 OPS in 432 at-bats. He swung the bat well against left-handers (.298/.386/.450), but struggled badly versus right-handers (.193/.272/.262). Ladendorf is one of the most talented defensive players in the A's system, but his bat will need to improve to get a shot at significant playing time in Triple-A. Ladendorf will turn 24 just before the start of the 2012 regular season.

Mitch Canham, Ryan Ortiz and Petey Paramore accumulated the majority of the at-bats as a catcher. All three had their struggles at the plate. The veteran Canham hit only .226 with a 583 OPS in 155 at-bats. He is currently a minor league free agent. Ortiz got off to a fast start with the Rockhounds after being promoted from High-A Stockton, batting .317 with an 887 OPS over his first 63 at-bats. He struggled over the last five weeks of the season, however, and finished his time with the Rockhounds with a .237 average and a 660 OPS. Ortiz got back to his hot hitting ways during the Arizona Fall League, however, batting .310 with a 948 OPS. He figures to be the Midland everyday catcher to start the 2012 season. Petey Paramore began the year as the Midland everyday catcher, but he lost that job after batting .192 with a 585 OPS in 151 at-bats. Paramore was sent back to High-A Stockton in July and spent the rest of the season with the Ports.