

A's News Clips, Wednesday, December 7, 2011

Oakland A's face major questions in the outfield

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

DALLAS -- The A's have a decision to make regarding their outfield.

They're in rebuilding mode but aren't convinced that a highly touted, yet unproven, prospect such as Michael Taylor is ready for an everyday job.

So they're open to signing low-cost free agents, but playing those types of veterans might block Taylor or other prospects from getting a legitimate opportunity.

It's clear the A's must acquire some outfield depth because they could lose all three starters from last season to free agency. David DeJesus already is gone, and Josh Willingham and Coco Crisp could soon be.

How they sort out their final mix of outfielders will be one of their biggest chores come spring training.

"There's an opportunity for them to prove (themselves)," A's general manager Billy Beane said of his young outfielders.

Oakland could target outfielders via trade, but as the second day of the winter meetings wrapped up Tuesday, they were not close to completing any deals.

"There's nothing imminent," said Beane, who was scheduled to catch a flight out of Dallas on Tuesday night.

The meetings end Thursday.

The A's currently have four outfielders on their 40-man roster, and only Ryan Sweeney has more than 28 games of major league experience. Taylor and Jai Miller have combined for 39 games, and Jermaine Mitchell -- who might be sidelined at the start of spring training because of knee surgery -- has yet to make his big league debut.

As the roster stands, Beane said he envisions Sweeney as his right fielder but is less certain who will play left and center.

Taylor, who will be 26 later this month, is the most puzzling candidate. The A's raved about his tools upon acquiring him from Toronto in December 2009, but he has hit .272 and averaged 11 homers and 71 RBIs over two seasons with Sacramento, hardly dominant numbers. He made his big league debut in September and hit .200 with one homer in 11 games.

"I think he might be more of a fourth outfielder," said one scout who has watched Taylor extensively. "I'm not sure they know what they have yet."

Beane said the A's won't rush outfielders Grant Green or Michael Choice, the team's first-round picks in 2009 and 2010. But manager Bob Melvin spoke highly of Choice and said he thinks it's possible Choice could taste the majors in 2012.

In trade news, the Boston Red Sox and San Diego Padres were among the teams the A's held discussion with Tuesday regarding closer Andrew Bailey. It's thought that Boston would part with outfielders Ryan Kalish or Josh Reddick as part of a package for Bailey, but it will likely take higher-profile prospects for the A's to pull the trigger.

Word is the A's have talked with Texas and asked for one of the Rangers' top three prospects -- shortstop Jurickson Profar, left-hander Martin Perez or third baseman Mike Olt -- who the Rangers weren't willing to part with.

One team no longer targeting Bailey is Toronto, which obtained Sergio Santos from the Chicago White Sox and plans to install him at closer.

White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf told the San Francisco Chronicle that he supports the A's decision to get a stadium in San Jose. "It has to come to a head soon," Reinsdorf said. —...Certainly, (the Coliseum is) past its time. In my opinion, Oakland's past its time, too."

There's thought that action could be taken on the A's ballpark situation in January at the next owners' meetings. Reinsdorf is considered to have sway among owners, who can vote to overturn the Giants' territorial rights to San Jose.

Chin Music: Oakland A's winter meetings update: Day Two

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 12/6/2011 10:59am

Scratch the Toronto Blue Jays off the list of potential teams targeting closer Andrew Bailey. Toronto acquired Sergio Santos from the Chicago White Sox and plans to plug him in at closer. I'd heard Tuesday that the A's and Jays engaged in some pretty serious talks about Bailey.

While the buzz continues over which trades Oakland might make, there are other roster-related issues to consider. Here's a few:

–It's looking less and less likely that Hideki Matsui will be back in an Oakland uniform. That was the clear impression from manager Bob Melvin and GM Billy Beane in their comments Monday night. As the roster currently stands, Melvin said Chris Carter – who has terrific power but has hit .167 in 39 career big league games – might be the most logical man at DH. But you can toss a couple other first-base candidates – Brandon Allen and Kila Ka'aihue – into the mix as well. "Conceivably, we have a number of guys that can go into that role," Beane said. "It's a matter of one of those guys grasping the opportunity and running with it." Melvin is a huge Matsui fan – the two have dined together twice recently in New York – but he also sounded skeptical about a Godzilla return.

–As I mentioned yesterday, the A's are very likely to explore the free agent market for outfielders to plug in on a short-term basis. Beane said the team talked with Laynce Nix before he signed with Philadelphia.

–Regarding first base, Melvin said defensive ability would play a factor into who wins that job, given the A's team-wide struggles with the glove last season. Is that bad news for Carter, who is hardly the slickest fielder? Melvin said he thought Carter looked more comfortable defensively toward the end of last season. But you figure if Brandon Allen – who showed good potential defensively – can hit at all in the spring and cut down on strikeouts, he might have the inside track. He offers the best combo of power and competent defense.

–Something to watch in spring training is whether new (and old) pitching coach Curt Young can help Trevor Cahill return to his All-Star form. "That's why we targeted Curt and thought he could be an important piece for us here," Melvin said. Young served as the A's pitching coach from 2004-10 before spending last season in the same role with Boston.

–Melvin spoke highly of outfielders Michael Choice and Grant Green – the A's top two hitting prospects – but he suggested that Choice (a 2010 first-round pick) could be on the faster track to the bigs. Choice hit 30 homers last season with Single-A Stockton and the initial thought was that another full season in the minors was needed. But Melvin believes there's a chance Choice might force his way into the picture next season. "I think Michael Choice is coming along a lot quicker than people would have thought," he said. While it might be a stretch to expect Choice to make the big league club this spring, Melvin added: "There always seems to be a couple guys that pop up in spring training that do something that you don't expect."

Green, the A's 2009 first-round pick, has more professional experience under his belt, but considering he just converted from shortstop to center field midway through last season, it's not surprising that Choice might be on the faster track as of now.

In case you missed it, check out my story [from the first day of the winter meetings ...](#)

Gio Gonzalez says Miami would be nice destination

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Gio Gonzalez is busy in Hialeah, Fla., doing upside-down ab exercises and one-legged 800-pound leg presses. Those arduous workouts are helping the A's starter keep his mind off the trade rumors involving him.

The most recent team with interest in Gonzalez, The Chronicle learned late Tuesday evening, is Detroit, according to multiple Tigers sources. The Tigers are uncertain they can match any potential offer by the Yankees, who have been clear in their interest in Gonzalez, but they'd probably be willing to part with top prospect Jacob Turner, a 6-foot-5 right-hander.

Among the rest of the possible trade partners, one team has piqued Gonzalez's interest: He is happy in Oakland, but Gonzalez said Tuesday that if he were to be traded this winter, the Miami Marlins - reportedly among the many teams interested in the left-hander - would be an ideal destination.

"It's good to be at home," Gonzalez said by phone. "My family and friends are here. I grew up in South Florida. There's great weather, a new stadium, a lot of positives."

Gonzalez emphasized that he isn't looking to leave Oakland, but he understands that baseball is a business. The A's have said that they will listen to offers on all their players except second baseman Jemile Weeks, although general manager Billy Beane also has made it clear that the team is not shopping players. Gonzalez, an All-Star this past season, is the most coveted A's player, but it would take a significant haul to land him.

So it's no sure thing that Gonzalez is going anywhere. That would be fine with him.

"I love Oakland," he said. "I love the coaches, I love the players, I love the fans. It would be bittersweet to leave, but I also love South Florida and my family."

There's no guarantee the Marlins would have a leg up when it comes to acquiring Gonzalez. Most contenders are believed to have asked about him.

How would Gonzalez respond if he isn't Miami-bound?

"At this point, all I can think about is my health," he said. "Whoever wants me, I'll be ready to go. If Oakland wants me back, I will bust my tail every day to help them get to the World Series. If they decide to trade me, I'll do the same for any other team."

That starts with the brutal workouts with Sergio Pacheco at Physique World Gym in Hialeah. Pacheco has Gonzalez doing upside-down abdominal workouts while wearing ankle weights, and he's running with car tires on his back. Gonzalez said that Pacheco would like him to report at 220 pounds, 10 pounds more than his current weight.

In 2009, Gonzalez put on 27 extra pounds, but that was not necessarily "good" weight, and much of it seemed to go to his posterior, prompting Dallas Braden to say, "It looks like he swallowed two watermelons and they slipped down the backside of his pants."

This time, Gonzalez said, "It's going to my rear, but it's all muscle."

Numerous scouts said Tuesday that their teams had interest in Gonzalez or A's closer Andrew Bailey, who is very likely to be traded in the next month.

"Bailey is a huge key for us," Gonzalez said. "But if in three years we're looking at being a playoff team because of some rebuilding now, you can't get mad at that decision."

Briefly: Beane said the A's top need in the outfield is in center. ... Beane shot down a report that the Royals have inquired about Gonzalez. ... The Red Sox were among the teams that spoke to the A's on Tuesday.

Drumbeat: Tigers are trying to push for A's starter Gio Gonzalez

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Dallas 12/6/2011, 10:19pm

I learned from multiple Detroit team sources tonight that the Tigers have strong interest in Gio Gonzalez and they probably would be willing to part with top prospect Jacob Turner, a right-handed starter, in any deal. Turner, 20, was the ninth pick in the 2009 draft.

To land Gonzalez, of course, it will take a package of significantly more: likely one more of the club's top three or four prospects and several other decent young players. (I can't repeat it enough: Think Dan Haren deal.)

The sources I spoke to tonight are unsure if the Tigers would be able to match any proposal the Yankees might make. The Yankees have long coveted Gonzalez, and the Detroit faction believes that New York might have a better package of young pitching to offer.

The question, of course, is whether the Yankees would part with any of their top three prospects, and I have heard mixed opinions about that this evening. If they really want Gonzalez, they'd have to, and with a team such as Detroit apparently motivated to start the conversation with a pitcher like Turner, maybe the Yankees would increase their offer.

A's general manager Billy Beane said yesterday that Oakland is not looking for any specific positions when it comes to potential deals, simply the best prospects available. So while the A's have plenty of good young pitching right now and they're looking for outfielders for the coming season, in any major deal they aren't limiting themselves to outfielders or corner infielders.

I continue to hear most contenders have some interest in Gonzalez or Andrew Bailey, so the bidding could get interesting with prominent clubs starting to get serious about including top prospects in any deal.

Gonzalez faced the Tigers twice this past season and allowed one run.

Drumbeat: Day 2 in Dallas: A's looking for center fielder, Royals not in on Gio

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the winter meetings, 12/6/2011, 4:54pm

A quick recap of Billy Beane's media session this evening: When we first walked in, he knocked down a report that the Royals are trying to trade for Gio Gonzalez and he sounded amused it was a rumor.

It's certain that pretty much every contender is asking about either Gio Gonzalez or Andrew Bailey, and even some middle-tier teams are doing so; I spoke to about 20 scouts today and all but two told me their team has some level of interest in one or the other. They're at the least being discussed in meetings. They're All-Stars, they're potential available (at a price), so I'd think nearly every team has at least mentioned them internally. It might be good to rehash here that Beane said yesterday that the A's are looking to get younger players in return than those they deal away, so some of the names being thrown out as potential returns – for the most part, you can discount them if they have more than a year and a half or maybe two years of service time. (As someone said yesterday, if the Mariners were to offer Felix Hernandez, they'd take him. It was said jestingly, because it would never happen, but the point was all bets are off when it comes to star players. Not that the A's could probably afford any.)

The Red Sox were leaving the A's suite just before we entered, and while they are in the Bailey hunt (Boston people are saying they can't offer enough for Gonzalez), it sounds as if some of the conversation was about preventing medical issues. The Red Sox had plenty of those last year and the A's, with a new medical and training staff, feel as if they're starting to get a handle on establishing better health.

Beane is leaving tonight, his usual two-day stay at the meetings over. It's unlikely the team would make a move here. The A's typically leave the meetings Thursday, think about various options for a day or two, and then make some moves a few days after the meetings. So....Bailey might be in the news over the weekend or early next week.

We know Beane met with Tampa Bay GM Andrew Friedman this morning: he told us he was eating breakfast with Friedman while a Japanese photographer was trying to take pictures of him from behind a palm tree. Beane had some fun with it, moving behind Friedman until the Japanese photographer laughed; he asked a Japanese reporter why the interest, and he was told "Moneyball" just came out in Japan – and also interest in Hideki Matsui, an A's free agent, remains very high in Japan.

Beane said he continues to believe that few if any of the A's current free agents will be back, including Coco Crisp. He had mentioned earlier in the evening that center field is specifically the team's top need. He said the team sees Ryan Sweeney as a right fielder.

Michael Taylor, also a corner outfielder, hasn't earned his way onto the big-league roster yet, Beane said. Taylor has yet to dominate at the Triple-A level, so he still must prove he's ready for 500 big-league at-bats. Beane sounded more excited about Jermaine Mitchell, but Mitchell's status for the spring is iffy after knee surgery.

Gio, Bailey drawing interest from other clubs

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

DALLAS -- A's general manager Billy Beane didn't enter the week as a fan of the Winter Meetings, and he won't exit as one when he departs earlier than his colleagues Tuesday night.

"There is a lot of interest," Beane said of his players, "but I've never really liked this environment. The four walls start to get you a little stir-crazy."

So don't expect the A's, who over the next two days will be represented by assistant general manager David Forst, to strike a deal before Thursday, when the annual event concludes. Don't, however, rule out one going through shortly after. The Tim Hudson, Mark Mulder and Dan Haren deals of years past all were completed following the Winter Meetings, and one of similar stature -- think Gio Gonzalez or Andrew Bailey -- could manifest in similar fashion.

"We just had a club in here, and I said I almost prefer to speak when we get out of here," said Beane, referring to Red Sox officials.

Boston is one of a handful of teams interested in Bailey, but perhaps one of the only ones also showing intrigue in Gonzalez. However, Beane noted Tuesday in his nightly session with local reporters that "nothing is imminent with anybody."

"There doesn't seem to be a lot going on, aside from chatter," Beane said of the league as a whole.

The biggest trade of the week thus far came Tuesday, and it wasn't exactly a flashy one, either -- the Blue Jays swapped players with the White Sox, dealing pitching prospect Nestor Molina for right-hander Sergio Santos. Toronto plans to make Santos its closer, meaning the Blue Jays can be erased from the list of Bailey suitors.

Several still stand, though, and the A's are expected to continue to listen. The Reds, like the Red Sox, have discussed Bailey. But Oakland, in reality, is not actively shopping anyone, instead choosing to utilize its time not spent hearing out other clubs' offers, but in pursuit of an outfield plan.

After all, the A's don't currently have one. Beane on Tuesday named Ryan Sweeney as the club's starting right fielder, as the roster stands now. But the team desperately needs to fill the other two outfield spots, particularly in center, and Beane doesn't envision doing that by way of internal options.

"I've always thought that the young guys sort of force themselves onto big league rosters by virtue of their performance, first at Triple-A," he said. "I think a couple of guys have probably done that. You certainly have to look at Jai Miller and, probably as much as anybody, Jermaine Mitchell."

But Miller is far from a lock, and Mitchell underwent knee surgery in September, making his status for the start of the season unclear.

"Had he not had the surgery," Beane said, "I would probably say he would be one guy that, given the need at the position, I'd let him go out there and play and lose the position. The other guys, to some extent, it's still something they have to earn and grasp."

Included in that group is Michael Taylor, who has yet to demonstrate offensive consistency at the Triple-A level. And in 30 at-bats with the A's in September, he collected just six hits with 11 strikeouts. It's surely a small sample size, but Beane doesn't even seem content with the much larger one created at the Minor League level.

"We still like his talent," Beane said. "He still has to show us he's capable of performing at a level where we can say, 'Here's 500 at-bats.' There hasn't been a dominant performance yet at the highest level. A good performance, but not dominant."

Among the potential center-field candidates, Coco Crisp isn't a likely one, as expected. Beane has kept in touch with the speedster's agent, Steve Comte, but he admittedly does so with plenty of other agents, including the representative for fellow free-agent Josh Willingham, Matt Sosnick -- a neighbor of Beane's.

The A's GM, however, likely hasn't had as many conversations with Seth Levinson, the agent for Gonzalez. Beane said, despite discussion of a long-term contract with the All-Star lefty last year, talks have since stalled "because of some other things more immediate, more pressing."

Translation: The A's really can't touch payroll until a stadium decision comes through, which is why they're leaving open the possibility of trading Gonzalez in an effort to net a handful of prospects that could christen a new stadium.

Beane shot down all rumors related to the Royals as a trading partner for the pitcher, but the Marlins, Red Sox and Yankees appear to be the most frequently mentioned teams still in the hunt. Boston might be a better fit for Bailey, considering its depleted farm system following the Adrian Gonzalez deal likely won't yield the right return goods for Gonzalez. And the Yankees don't exactly have the high-upside outfielders the A's need and want.

Miami, however, could be a nice landing spot for local product Gonzalez -- especially if the Marlins sign Albert Pujols, at which point their budget would likely force them to turn to the trade market rather than the free-agent crop. With Pujols in tow, Miami would also seemingly be able to move either outfielder Logan Morrison and/or first baseman Gaby Sanchez -- guys who could make a big impact in Oakland.

Major Lee-ague: Beane: No long-term contract for Gio ... right now

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 12/6/2011, 4:37pm

Along with Andrew Bailey, Gio Gonzalez has been a popular name here at the Winter Meetings this week. He's obviously been the subject of much trade talk — the Marlins, Red Sox and Yankees are among the rumored teams to be interested, while Billy Beane shot down talk of the Royals being in. But on Tuesday he was asked if he has considered locking up Gonzalez to a long-term contract, as he's already done with young hurlers Trevor Cahill and Brett Anderson, along with catcher Kurt Suzuki. It's a fair question and one I know several fans have asked all year.

Billy's response?

"We had had some conversations last year, but not right now I don't think, because of some other things more immediate, more pressing."

Translation: The A's really can't touch payroll until a stadium decision comes through, which is why they're leaving open the possibility of trading Gonzalez in an effort to net a handful of prospects that could welcome in fans to a potential new stadium in San Jose in a few years.

Of the Marlins, Red Sox and Yankees, the Marlins appear to represent the best trade partner at this point for Gonzalez — especially if they sign Albert Pujols, at which point their budget would likely force them to turn to the trade market rather than the free-agent crop. With Pujols in tow, Miami would seemingly be able to move either outfielder Logan Morrison and/or first baseman Gaby Sanchez — guys that could make a big impact in Oakland.

The Red Sox, meanwhile, depleted their farm system when acquiring Adrian Gonzalez, and the Yankees don't exactly have the high-upside outfielders the A's need and want. Boston could be better positioned to land Andrew Bailey.

Major Lee-ague: Beane talks outfield

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 12/6/2011, 3:51pm

While the entire outfield represents a glaring issue for the A's this winter, A's general manager Billy Beane noted the most pressing concern rests in center field since they would like to keep Ryan Sweeney in right field — Beane deemed him their starting right fielder, as the roster stands now. The A's GM said he's stayed in touch with Coco Crisp's agent, Steve Comte, but noted he does so with several agents. It remains unlikely that Crisp would make a return to Oakland. As for Michael Taylor, Beane said he's had "good performances," but the A's are waiting for "dominant" before giving him a shot at 500 ABs at the big league level. The only proven youngster, Beane said, is Jermaine Mitchell, but the outfielder had knee surgery in September and isn't expected to be up to speed by season's start. The A's won't look to fill these spots in the free-agent market, at least not now. Beane expects to hold out and, in the meantime, could possibly find just what he wants via trade.

Not much news came out of his suite tonight, and, per usual, Beane is departing early tonight, leaving assistant GM David Forst as the A's head honcho through Thursday. As mentioned yesterday, Beane doesn't expect to get a deal done during the Winter Meetings, but that's not to say something couldn't happen shortly after.

Major Lee-ague: Tuesday musings from the Winter Meetings

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 12/6/2011, 12:22pm

DALLAS — It's Day 2 at the Winter Meetings, and there seems to be an escalated dose of buzz in the air, with several trades already going down today among a few teams — none of which were the A's. However, the Blue Jays swapped players with the White Sox, dealing Nestor Molina for Sergio Santos, who will serve as their new closer. That means one less team is in on Andrew Bailey, who had before been linked with Toronto, among other clubs. Blue Jays GM Alex Anthopoulos was asked specifically about Bailey while speaking to media following the trade, and though citing his policy of not talking about other teams' players, noted that he and his staff inquired on "anyone out on the trade market." You can read between the lines there and assume they did indeed check in on Oakland's two-time All-Star.

There still appears to be at least six other teams with keen interest in Bailey, and the Red Sox are known to be meeting with Billy Beane and Co. today, with Bailey being a likely topic of discussion. If you recall, the A's nearly pulled off a trade with Boston right before July's trade deadline, but the proposed swap of Rich Harden for first base prospect Lars Anderson was never completed. It would make sense, then, for Anderson's name to come up again today, especially considering the A's long-term concern at first base, where there's currently a logjam of unproven players. The A's might also view Josh Reddick as an attractive name, and it's thought that Boston would easily give him away. The 24-year-old outfielder has played in 143 big league games, including 87 this year. He hit .280 with a .784 OPS, 18 doubles, seven home runs and 28 RBIs for the Sox and could be just the type of player the A's are looking for — a young outfielder with a decent bat who can be slotted into an everyday role next year. Yesterday, Beane alluded to the fact he's not completely comfortable with just sending out the group of inexperienced outfielders he has in tow now. Sure, Michael Taylor, Jermaine Mitchell and Jai Miller are options — but likely not the best ones for the Opening Day starting lineup.

Another intriguing deal to think about: Bailey to San Diego — who lost closer Heath Bell to Miami — in a trade involving Chase Headley. The Padres third baseman just completed his third full big league campaign, hitting .289 with a .374 on-base percentage in 113 games. He's a good defender and has a ton of upside. The A's seem intent on keeping Scott Sizemore at the hot corner, but I can't imagine them turning down a potentially decent upgrade if given the chance at one.

Bailey has also garnered interest from the Angels, Mets, Rangers, Mariners and Reds.

Yankees should trade Jesus Monetro to Oakland A's for Gio Gonzalez, a young up and coming left-hander

Gonzalez has the makeup to transform Yankees

John Harper, NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

DALLAS - If [Brian Cashman](#) is going to give up [Jesus Montero](#) in a trade this winter, the one available pitcher he may be inclined to do it for is A's lefty [Gio Gonzalez](#).

That's still a big if on Cashman's part, but the problem at the moment is that Montero alone apparently would not get the deal done.

According to a source, A's [GM Billy Beane](#) told Cashman at these winter meetings that to trade Gonzalez to the Yankees he would want Montero, as well as one of the highly-touted pitching prospects duo of [Manny Banuelos](#) and [Dellin Betances](#), and top center-field prospect [Mason Williams](#).

That's laughable, of course, and Beane has to know it. Mr. Moneyball has talked to several teams about Gonzalez this week and his position, at least for now, is that he would only trade the 26-year-old lefty if he is overwhelmed.

Yet several baseball people at these meetings seem to believe there's a deal to be made here. They are convinced that Cashman is more determined to upgrade his starting rotation than he is telling the media - or even his fellow GMs - and they

are also convinced that Beane's desperation to add offense to his young pitching will eventually bring Gonzalez's price down significantly.

In that case, any such deal eventually could come down to Montero for Gonzalez, with perhaps lesser prospects thrown in.

But would Cashman do it?

He has insisted he won't deal Montero unless it's for someone like [Cliff Lee](#), and Gonzalez isn't quite on that level. However, he is one of the best lefthanders in the American League, a strikeout pitcher who won 31 games over the last two seasons for a team that doesn't score runs.

So then: Should Cashman make such a trade?

My first instinct was to say no, that I'd like to see what Montero could do with the bat over a full season, after his impressive showing in September. But talking to scouts and execs here has convinced me it would be worth the gamble.

For one thing, several say Gonzalez is still evolving, with a work ethic and heady approach, in addition to great stuff, that has enabled him to continue to improve. They think his only major flaw, the 91 walks he issued last season, is at least partly the result of pitching a little too carefully at times, knowing his margin for error was so small with the light-hitting A's.

"Put him on a team like the Yankees that scores runs and the walks would come down because he wouldn't have to be quite so fine at times," one AL scout said yesterday. "Other than that, he has dominant stuff and he's really learned how to pitch."

The numbers are proof enough. Gonzalez racked up 197 strikeouts in 202 innings last season, while allowing only 175 hits.

In addition, Gonzalez can't be a free agent until after the 2014 season, which means he would be a lot cheaper than signing free-agent lefty [C.J. Wilson](#) to a six-year deal.

Still, trading Montero would be a tough call, to the point where only three of six baseball people polled yesterday said they would deal him for Gonzalez. But the ones who did said Gonzalez could be a legitimate No. 2 starter behind [CC Sabathia](#).

In addition, they insist the Yankees don't have championship-caliber pitching beyond Sabathia and perhaps a blossoming [Ivan Nova](#). They pointed not only to the ever-inconsistent [A.J. Burnett](#), but also to the uncertainty surrounding [Phil Hughes](#) and the distinct possibility that [Freddy Garcia](#) won't be as junk-balling effective as he was last year.

"A lack of timely hitting cost them against Detroit (in the playoffs)," said one AL exec, "but if they'd gotten to the next round their pitching would have been exposed by that Texas lineup. I think Nova might be the real thing, but even with him they need another front-end pitcher to win it all."

Then there is the case to be made that Montero's shaky play behind the plate means he will always be primarily a DH, which could be an issue in coming years as [Alex Rodriguez](#), with six years left on his contract, plays less and less third base.

Finally, at least a few of the baseball people said the word was out that Montero has less than a stellar work ethic and thinks awfully highly of himself. Indeed, he annoyed some veteran Yankees in September by showing prima donna instincts in the clubhouse even as a rookie.

But there's also no doubt the kid can hit. So we'll see. At the moment there's no guarantee Cashman will have such a choice to make, but if the goal is strictly to win championships, I'm sold that Gonzalez gives them a better chance than Montero over the next handful of years.

Winter Meetings interview with Bob Melvin

By MLB.com

Q. How's the offseason going for you?

BOB MELVIN: Good. It's good to be here and talk about baseball things with baseball people. It's always kind of the prelude to the offseason is the offseason, but now we're looking more towards the baseball end of it and it's downhill when we get past this.

Q. You said the offseason would be a good chance for you to learn about your farm system. Have you taken the time to do that?

BOB MELVIN: Yeah. Unless you see somebody firsthand, obviously it's a little more difficult, but you have more time to delve into it some, and got to see some of the fall league players, Green and Choice in particular both had good fall leagues. So getting to, like you said, be a little more aware of the system, not just the big league team but the system, as well.

Q. Your team is one that could have potentially a lot of turnover this season with a lot of free agents. How do you look at the offseason not really knowing what you might have on the field in the spring?

BOB MELVIN: Yeah, you have to concentrate on the players that you have here and you know that are going to be there. I like the guys that we have. Certainly we have a lot of pitching, and as long as you have a lot of pitching, you know it's going to keep you in games. We'll see how it all turns out come Spring Training and who we start with and who we have. But the guys that we have, less the free agents, I still like our core group.

Q. How do you view your outfield situation right now?

BOB MELVIN: That's probably the one that we're looking at the hardest right now is the outfield situation. With potentially those four guys, our four free agents leaving, including Matsui, and how well he did at the end of the year, so those four guys that we rotated on a daily basis there's a chance none of them will be back, so there's an area we will spend a little bit more time on.

Q. The stadium issue looms really large, what the team may or may not do this offseason. Is it frustrating for you as a manager that this has been going on for so long?

BOB MELVIN: Right, so I don't think so. If you're part of it for many years as, say, Billy has, certainly it gets that much more frustrating. A lot has been written as the season wore on, and now it seems like there's a decision looming sooner than later, I can see where there would be some frustration in not knowing and trying to put together your team, one, in not the biggest market in the world to start with and then having some of those questions out there that do pertain to what you're trying to do, I can see how that would be frustrating for him.

Q. Can you talk about your new coaching staff and sort of what those guys are going to bring and what you're looking forward to with them?

BOB MELVIN: Well, Chip Hale was a natural. He was first and foremost for me. Joel Skinner did a nice job for us, but I was hoping from the beginning knowing that Chip was going to be my guy to come in and promote him from third base to a bench coach, he deserves that. I think down the road he's a guy that certainly he got a chance to interview for the managing job in New York, and rightly so, the year before, and I think down the road he's certainly one of the guys that would be potentially managers down the road. So it'll be nice to have him in a different role, a guy that I am completely comfortable with walking away from whatever and knowing that he's going to take care of it. He'll run Spring Training and do all the schedules, and he's done it for me before, so that's a comfort having somebody like that.

And Curt Young, for a couple different reasons. One, he's had such a long history with the organization, player, coach, the pitching coach and a successful one for quite a long time, to be able to bring him back, plus a guy that I know personally from my years living in Arizona. I actually played with him in Kansas City for one year, so comfortability too. Chili Davis is a guy that I played with, a very well respected guy. You'll see once he steps into a clubhouse, he's got one of those clubhouse personalities where he gets a tremendous amount of respect.

So adding those three guys I think will certainly, one, help the team, and number two, guys that I'm familiar with and know that I know that the job is going to be taken care of.

Q. How much of a boost is it to bring in a guy like Young, who's so familiar with your pitching staff?

BOB MELVIN: More familiar than I am, and I was there for, what, almost three quarters of the year last year, so guys that he has roots with from their younger days coming up through the big leagues and the maturation process and the whole bit. It's one thing to know a guy's numbers and mechanically and so forth, but to understand the individual, too, it's a natural fit for us.

Q. You mentioned the strength of your pitching. As a manager is it somewhat alarming to hear some of your best pitchers' names being thrown out so often in trade rumors?

BOB MELVIN: Yeah, I start to twitch a little bit when you hear that. But listen, in our market and the way we do business, you can't say there's nobody who's untouchable. You have to be open to the fact that if you can improve your club, whether it's short term, whether it's long term, you have to look at all those variables. So we do have a lot of pitching. Whenever you have a lot of something, you know that there are going to be a lot of hits on that, and we do have a lot of good pitching, not only youngsters, we've got some veteran guys, too. It's only natural that there is a lot of gossip going on as far as our pitchers right now.

Q. When you look at your outfield, I guess you have a decision of do you take a young guy like Michael Taylor, throw him out there and see how he does or bring somebody else in. How do you see that or balance that out?

BOB MELVIN: Yeah, and that's exactly right. You have to balance what you think your best options are, and sometimes it's not just short term, sometimes you're looking at long-term solutions. We did get somewhat of a look at Michael Taylor, also Jai Miller. Jai did a nice job in the time that he played for us, too. That is a balancing act. You know, it's where you allot your money, where your prospects have more prevalence than maybe bringing somebody else in as a free agent, all those things are things that you're weighing at this particular point in the season, and when you have a lot of pieces and potential chips as we do, particularly with the pitching, then you're going to hear a lot about which direction we're going.

Q. From what you've seen from Michael, do you think he's ready to step in and maybe just be an everyday player?

BOB MELVIN: Well, I don't think you're going to find out what you need to find out about a player like that unless you do give him that opportunity. Now, a lot of times, a lot of talk about Spring Training not being the ideal place to do that. Well, it's just the position that we're in. So this Spring Training, sitting where we are right now, we're going to have to do a lot of evaluating based on Spring Training.

Q. Are you concerned at all about the shortened Spring Training schedule with leaving for Japan a little bit early when you have that many players?

BOB MELVIN: Not really, just mostly getting the pitchers ready, to make sure on the first day that we open up in Japan that we're ready to go there. On a position player end, the Spring Training gets a little lengthy anyway.

Q. When you look at Chris Carter, where would you envision him and would you prefer to stay away from full time DH duties with him?

BOB MELVIN: Well, as we sit here right now, it looks like the logical fit, but I don't know that once we start Spring Training that it's going to look like it does right now. He's a guy that we know looking at his history in the organization that he takes his lumps early on and it takes him a while to feel like he belongs, and then at every level except the big league level at this point in time right now, he's broken out and hit. That's part of the evaluation process with him, as well, is it going to happen at this level and how long is it going to take.

Q. So as the roster stands now, do you kind of see him as a DH?

BOB MELVIN: You know what, I'm not going to just -- you hate to just say a young kid is a DH. You want to make sure you do your due diligence everywhere. I felt like he was a little more comfortable at first base later in the season than he was earlier in the season during pregame drills and a lot of the stuff that we did. He looked like he was getting more and more comfortable at first base.

Q. How do you see first base?

BOB MELVIN: There's a lot of guys we're looking at there. Barton, with the injury last year, didn't get to do some of the things that he's done before.

Brandon Allen started out hot and cooled off a little bit, but certainly is an athletic talent that we liked what we saw.

Kila, I'm not even going to go to the last name right now, but another guy that's done it all at Triple A, has just never really had the opportunity at the big league level to do it. And then Carter, as well. So we have quite a few guys we're going to look at over at first base.

Q. Do you feel set at third base?

BOB MELVIN: With Scott [Sizemore]? Yeah, as we sit here right now, certainly. But if Texas wants to give us Beltre, we'd probably move him into third base. I don't know that that's going to happen. Scotty came a long way. He probably had the most difficult task last year in that he's come into a new organization, he doesn't start the year with us, he's going to a new position, he's playing third base, a position that he hasn't played much of and a position that you can't help but think about I've got to drive in some runs because corner positions typically drive in runs. So there were a lot of things that he had to get comfortable with, and you look at his production, less maybe the average, still the on base percentage is good, and knocked in a lot of runs for the amount of bats we had, so we feel good at this point.

Q. Is first base maybe a spot where you feel like you could sacrifice a defensive guy if you feel he's going to give you something with the bat or is a glove a determining factor?

BOB MELVIN: We had our troubles last year defensively and we don't want to go down that path this year and there's going to be a priority put on defense from day one. If somebody wants to play first base, they're going to have to play some defense on top of it.

Q. As a manager, how do you look at approaching the season when it looks like you are pretty much in rebuild mode, which is what Billy has talked about with the stadium situation?

BOB MELVIN: You know, I try not to look at it that way. We still don't know what our team is going to look like at this point, not 100 percent, and like I said, the guys that we do have that we know going forward, I like a lot. So I think all these guys have the chance to progress and get better. We do have pitching, which is going to keep us in games and keep the other team hopefully from scoring to where we are in games.

Now, couple that with playing better defense, we'll try to get better situational hitting and so forth, you know, I still like our group of guys. I think we do things right, we do things fundamentally sound, and if we continue to pitch and get better defensively, we're going to win some games regardless with this group we have now, let alone what we bring in, as well.

Q. What's your understanding of where Jermaine Mitchell might be to start Spring Training?

BOB MELVIN: Yeah, I'm not sure yet. I don't think anybody is sure on that one yet.

Q. Are you sort of cautiously optimistic he might be in that outfield mix?

BOB MELVIN: Yeah, I am. Choice and Green are other guys that we're excited about looking at, as well.

Q. Did you see either one of them being a big league possibility?

BOB MELVIN: I don't know about starting, but certainly at some point in time -- and if -- I think Michael Choice has come along a lot quicker than people would have thought. A lot of the discussion during the season about him was give him another full year next year and he'll be ready to play.

Then as the season went along, you get into the fall league, it's like, hey, maybe it's going to be halfway through the season. And then he's playing that much better in the fall league and continued to do it. It's like, hey, if we take a look at the guy in Spring Training, you never know. There always seemed to be a couple guys that pop up in Spring Training that do some things that you don't expect.

Q. Has Grant Green had enough time in the outfield for you to be comfortable with him out there?

BOB MELVIN: Based on what our people are telling us, he probably needs a little bit more time, defensively more so than offensively at this point. What was it, a half a season or something like that?

But the thing about him, he's a good athlete. It would be different if you were going from center field to shortstop as opposed to shortstop to center field, or the outfield anywhere.

Q. Are you expecting Dallas Braden to be on time and ready to go at Spring Training?

BOB MELVIN: Maybe a little behind in spring, and I think we forecast him to maybe be a little bit behind once the season starts, but it wouldn't surprise me if he was ready to start the season. He's a hard working kid that is pretty passionate about what he does. So at some point in time in Spring Training, we would think that we'd get enough innings for him and enough pitches and so forth to be an option somewhere in April probably, yeah.

Q. Given the injuries to him and Brett, do you think there's a need to bolster the pitching depth a little bit?

BOB MELVIN: I feel pretty good with our depth with Moscoso and Outman is another guy. No, I'm comfortable with where our starters are at this point.

Q. Chili Davis doesn't have the most experience as a coach. What drew you guys to him as a hitting coach for you?

BOB MELVIN: Well, I had interviewed him several times, interviewed him when I was with Seattle, interviewed him when I was with Arizona and really was ready to do it then. I don't think, for a number of reasons, he was probably ready to commit at least one of those times. I think one of the interviews might have been more of a feel out type of a situation to see where he is in his career as far as going forward coaching. But a guy I know a lot about. Like I said, there's certain guys that just have instant impacts in clubhouses, guys that are respected for what they've done because of word of mouth players that have played with them. He's a very respected guy on the Yankee World Series teams, always a guy that hitters when they're struggling, sometimes you don't always go to the hitting coach, you go to another hitter for a different perspective. He was always one of those guys.

He's a switch hitter on top of that, knows what it feels like to do it from both sides of the plate, and I think was amongst the guys that I played with and watched even after I played with him. I think his preparation for each and every at bat was as good as I've seen. Very rarely threw away an at bat, and I think with younger players, the quicker they learn that, the better they are, the more tenacious they get and the better prepared they are each and every at bat, and I think that was another focal point with him.

Q. How much would you like to have Hideki Matsui back on your club?

BOB MELVIN: Well, he was terrific. From the time I came last year to the end of the season, he was terrific, and not only from a production standpoint, from a guy that our younger guys could look up to and see how he prepares. He was a role model for our guys, as well. We're not going to probably be market makers as far as free agents go. We're probably going to be more patient in seeing where guys are a little bit later in the process. But we don't close the door on that. He's a guy that has a good impact for us last year that is certainly a guy that you would certainly think about.

I think in his case, he also probably opened up some eyes for National League teams, as well, for a guy that can play the outfield and pinch hit and do all those things that it's difficult for younger guys to do. I think once the -- once it starts to get heated up a little bit as far as signings into, with the first wave of guys, the Pujolses and Fielders, and I think the pace probably picks up with some other guys, and I think he's going to have several options out there. We'll see if it gets to where we are. I'm just not sure the timing already there.

Q. What is your impression of Norichika Aoki, the Japanese outfielder?

BOB MELVIN: I don't know enough about him. I've heard good things, but I haven't seen any video or anything.

Q. Any thoughts on what you think Trevor [Cahill] has to do to kind of get back to where he was in 2010 just from a production standpoint?

BOB MELVIN: You know what, I think he just got a little out of whack for a guy that's had the success that he's had. He had a couple of bad stretches where maybe his command wasn't as good, fighting himself as far as mechanically. It's not like his stuff took a turn in a bad direction. His stuff is still there. It's probably just simplify a little bit, repeat his delivery a little better and get his mechanics more squared away. And then mentally if he has a couple of good games like we saw at the end of the season, then I think he starts to get on the roll that he's been on for the most part of his career.

Q. Do you think Kurt can have an impact with him?

BOB MELVIN: No question, yeah. That's why we targeted Kurt and was a guy we felt could be an important piece for us.

Q. Did you see Hideki?

BOB MELVIN: Yeah, we went out to dinner a couple times. I don't have too many friends in Manhattan.

Q. Was it sushi?

BOB MELVIN: Sushi one time, Italian the other. I told him he ruined me sushi wise. I was never a big sushi eater, and he took me to such a good place that I think the quality of the sushi was so good that the sushi that I've had since has not been as good, so I think he ruined me. I think the only place I'll be able to get sushi like that might be in Japan. That's one of the reasons we're going to Japan.

Q. Is that another reason it might be nice to have him back if everything worked out? Do you think about that, how much fun it would be to go there with him?

BOB MELVIN: Well, it's a natural. I think us probably and Seattle were natural teams looking at it last year and who we had personnel wise on our roster. Those are the two most prominent Japanese players in history, two of maybe five, four. They're two pretty impactful guys if you're looking to do a series like that. Those are the first two guys you're going to look at.

Beane leaves meetings, A's OF Wide Open

Dave Bernstein, csn.com, 12/6/2011

DALLAS -- A's GM Billy Beane has left the Winter Meetings. He does not like the atmosphere and would rather do business elsewhere. You can't blame him, since he's mostly stuck in his suite without a lot of room to do his thing.

Much like Beane, the A's starting outfield is on the way out. [Josh Willingham](#) and [Coco Crisp](#) almost assuredly will not be back in Oakland in 2012. Other than David DeJesus -- now with the Cubs -- it's not a certainty but pretty close.

Beane said as much yesterday. Tuesday, he elaborated a bit saying that some of the young talent in the organization has a chance to show what they are made of next season. The GM said he's not committed about the young players making it into the starting lineup, they'll have to earn it.

[Ryan Sweeney](#) is projected as the starting right fielder. Centerfield? Maybe from within but Beane says outside the organization, "there's not a lot of centerfielders out there."

Left field is still open as well. He reiterated, "We have to find alternatives."

Players in the system are an option. [Jai Miller](#) and [Michael Taylor](#) are the names you hear most often. They both saw time with the big club in 2011.

Taylor came to the system with high regard. In 2011, he struggled in the majors, hitting just .200 with one home run in 11 games.

"We still like the talent. He needs to show he's ready at the highest level," Beane said of the Stanford product.

Jermaine Mitchell is on the 40-man roster as well. He performed very well last year, with a .332 average, 15 home runs, 78 RBI and 60 total extra-base hits in 130 games between double-A and Triple-A in 2011.

The free agent market is not filled with viable options either. Some of the better names available are the players leaving Oakland.

With Beane now gone from Dallas, he's likely to get some work done away from the mayhem. Something tells me finding outfielders will take up a good deal of his time. By February, something needs to happen.

Is now the time to trade Andrew Bailey?

Dave Bernstein, csn.com, December 6, 2011

PROGRAMMING NOTE: *Jaymee Sire and senior coordinating producer Dave Bernstein are in Texas to cover the MLB Winter Meetings. Look for updates throughout the day here on CSNBayArea.com and comprehensive coverage on SportsNet Central all this week at 6, 10:30 p.m. and midnight on Comcast SportsNet Bay Area.*

Dallas -- The first significant trade went down Tuesday at the Winter Meetings. The White Sox [traded young closer Sergio Santos](#) to the Blue Jays for a pitching prospect.

Why is that important to the A's? It takes a trading partner away from Billy Beane if he is indeed shopping Andrew Bailey. A report late Monday out of Boston noted that Oakland would be talking to the Sox about Bailey Tuesday.

It's hard to ignore all the smoke around Bailey these days. But one thing is for sure: the closer market is taking shape. If Beane is going to trade his closer, now might be the time to do it.

The other big wave hitting Dallas today is the dalliance by the Marlins with Albert Pujols. If the Cardinals slugger jumps ship to Miami, it could open some doors for a deal for Gio Gonzalez.

Gonzalez, a South Florida native, has been mentioned in numerous reports from Kansas City to New York. But Miami would be a fit player-wise. If Pujols signs potential 10-year deal, it would seem that either Logan Morrison or Gaby Sanchez would be expendable. Both young hitters would be a fit in Oakland. After all the offense Miami is acquiring, it needs arms. The All-Star Gonzalez fits that bill.

MLB Owners: Oakland is "Past its Time" for A's

MLB owners voice support for A's San Jose plan.

By Chris Roberts, nbc bay area

The city of Oakland has plenty of fans, just not at the Major League Baseball winter meetings.

A's owner Lew Wolff has many boosters at the annual powwow of MLB executives, however -- Wolff, and his plan to move the team to San Jose.

"I'm totally supportive of Lew getting a new ballpark and going to San Jose," said White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf, in comments to the San Francisco Chronicle. "He needs to be there. It has to come to a head soon."

Wolff and the A's have long made clear their intention to exit the East Bay city for friendlier climes. A stadium plan for Fremont floated in the mid-2000s seemed imminent before the real estate market collapsed. Now, Wolff is eyeing land in east San Jose for a stadium. The plan would need approval from MLB and the Giants.

Oakland hasn't made any serious moves towards refurbishing the Coliseum, and ideas for a field at Jack London Square have not gotten off of the drawing board.

"Certainly, (the Coliseum is) past its time. In my opinion, Oakland's past its time, too," Reinsdorff added. "Oakland's had plenty of opportunity to build a stadium and hasn't gotten it done."