

A's News Clips, Friday, January 6, 2012

Oakland A's: Team agrees to two-year deal with outfielder Coco Crisp

By Joe Stiglich, Contra Costa Times

The A's announced center fielder Coco Crisp's two-year contract in a press release Thursday afternoon.

Earlier this week, the sides agreed on a two-year, \$14 million deal that includes a \$7.5 million club option for the 2014 season. Crisp had to pass a physical Thursday before it became official.

Crisp, 32, talked with several teams but eventually settled on returning to the A's for a third season. He hit .264 with eight homers and 54 RBIs last season and tied for the American League lead with 49 stolen bases.

A's bring back Crisp with two-year contract

Speedy veteran stabilizes outfield as Oakland builds young talent

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's general manager Billy Beane didn't want to throw in just any veteran to his mix of young talent when exploring outfield possibilities.

"I think having a good player is the most important thing," Beane said. "I think a veteran doesn't help you if he isn't any good."

Cue Coco Crisp's return. The A's made it official on Thursday, retaining the center fielder with a two-year deal worth \$14 million.

According to a source with knowledge of the deal, Crisp's new contract will award him \$6 million this year and \$7 million in 2013. The A's also hold a \$7.5 million option for 2014, with a \$1 million buyout, and will pay him a \$250,000 bonus if he's traded.

Crisp hit .264 with eight home runs, 54 RBIs and a career-high 49 steals in 136 games last season, his second in Oakland. He'll again pair nicely with Jemile Weeks at the top of a new-look lineup that remains without any proven power hitter.

The speedy outfielder's return is refreshing news for A's fans, who in the past month have watched the organization trade three All-Star pitchers -- Gio Gonzalez, Trevor Cahill and Andrew Bailey -- along with lefty Craig Breslow and outfielder Ryan Sweeney as part of a rebuilding effort.

The A's also let former free agents Josh Willingham and David DeJesus go without much fuss, making Crisp's return something of a surprise after they made it clear they were taking the youth route this year.

But Beane noted Thursday that he's been in contact with Crisp's agent, Steve Comte, regarding a new deal since spring, marking nearly a year of discussions before both sides pulled the trigger this week.

"We were in contact the entire time," Beane said. "And I called him the first day after the season ended and maintained contact with him. He was always in the back of my mind, given the position he plays and how good of a player he is. I thought, regardless of what we did, even if we brought in a bunch of young players, we would need a player like Coco to be a part of the club and he would be a good addition."

With Crisp set to man center, the A's are likely to play Josh Reddick in right field and either Michael Taylor or Collin Cowgill in left, though other options could be had by spring. Beane said a handful of free agents, notably outfielders, could be of interest for the club, which is also still exploring trade possibilities. Beane's front-office army is in the early stages of the process on both ends, though.

"We have some ideas," Beane said, "but I think our outfield is a lot better today than it was two weeks ago. We basically had no outfield, aside from Ryan [Sweeney], before we started doing things. But I do feel like it's an area we still need to continue to address between now and the spring."

The A's are rebuilding yet again, and all they get is this Coco Crisp jersey

By Scott Miller | CBSSports.com Senior Baseball Columnist 1/5/2012

Breaking news, outfielder [Coco Crisp](#) re-signed with the [Oakland Athletics](#). Fine. Whatever. I long ago lost track of who and what the nondescript A's are fielding as a team. More importantly, so have most of their fans.

Who's on first? What's on third? Abbott and Costello had more consistency in their No-Name lineup than the Athletics. More chuckles, too.

Time was, president/general manager Billy Beane was a genius, *Moneyball* was cutting edge and the A's were plucky. They're not plucky anymore. They're boring. And brutal.

And with AL West rivals Texas and Los Angeles among the game's *nouveau riche* via new cable television contracts, the A's are desperately in need of another market inefficiency to exploit. Best-case scenario for all involved is if they find it in San Jose, and soon.

Maybe there's plenty of "upside" in the latest batch of prospects the scavenger-hunting Beane hauled in this winter. But there is absolutely no upside in 2012 with [Gio Gonzalez](#), [Trevor Cahill](#) and closer [Andrew Bailey](#) gone. And there is zero upside for the immediate future.

"I think this is one last shot to get a new stadium," an executive with one major-league club says. "Be as bad as we can be to prove to baseball that we really need a new stadium.

"And they're going to be bad. They're going to be atrocious."

In Oakland, upside is always two or three years away. The constant wheeling and dealing ensures that. Players come and go like strap-hangers spinning through the New York subway turnstiles. Faceless, nameless blurs.

Last year, [David DeJesus](#) and [Josh Willingham](#) were supposed to add pop to the middle of the Oakland order. They're gone now, too. Overmatched owner Lew Wolff, unable to gain traction on a new ballpark, has given up.

Beane, master of the preemptive-strike trade, dispatched Gonzalez, Cahill and Bailey in deals ... the way he years ago traded [Tim Hudson](#) and Mark Mulder ... the way he shipped away [Dan Haren](#) ... and so on.

At least back then, young Athletics had a chance to grow up and become a Hudson or a Mulder. Now? I think maybe they're serving too many Red Bulls in the Athletics' offices. Young players are gone before the over-caffeinated A's even know what they have.

Beane traded Haren to Arizona in December 2006 in a deal that brought five players in return. Pitcher [Brett Anderson](#), knocked out of the A's rotation last summer by Tommy John surgery, was one. So was [Carlos Gonzalez](#) ... yes, the CarGo who finished third in NL MVP voting in 2010 and has the tools for greatness.

Oakland traded CarGo to the Rockies -- along with closer [Huston Street](#) and pitcher [Greg Smith](#) -- for [Matt Holliday](#) in November 2008. Holliday was a bust, and Beane proceeded to deal him to St. Louis midway through the '09 season for third baseman [Brett Wallace](#), outfielder [Shane Peterson](#) and pitcher [Clayton Mortensen](#).

These trade threads are endless. Oakland shipped Wallace to Toronto for outfielder [Michael Taylor](#). Mortensen was dealt to Colorado for right-hander Ethan Hollandsworth.

It is dizzying. With players coming and going at a rate that would exhaust your local UPS driver, how can anything lasting be constructed?

[Andre Ethier](#) is a two-time All-Star, won a Gold Glove last year and has developed into a potent middle-of-the-order hitter in Los Angeles.

Neither he nor Gonzalez had the chance to develop in Oakland. Ethier was dealt for [Milton Bradley](#) -- *ouch* -- in 2005, when he was 23. Gonzalez was acquired by Oakland when he was only 22 and was gone two years later.

Fair question: Did the A's rank last in the AL in attendance last season solely because of a decrepit stadium and another losing team? Or was no small part of it that the A's have become impossible to identify, even with a scorecard and a state-of-the-art DNA kit?

Dating back to when Sandy Alderson was sitting in Beane's chair, the A's have consistently believed that .500 is a waste of time (and, more importantly, a waste of money). If they can't win, they would rather finish last, cheaply, while rebuilding. There is some merit to that.

But now? The A's are like those Russian nesting dolls. There's rebuilding underneath the rebuilding. And more under that.

"Their young pitching looked great last year," one scout says. "It's too bad Anderson went down, but Gio is a top-of-the-line guy, and Cahill, I love."

Gio Gonzalez is 26. Cahill is 23. Neither is a free agent anytime soon. A couple of years ago, the plan was to build around young pitching.

Some in the industry believe Beane has become disinterested, that he's more turned on by soccer and other outside interests. I've known him for years and I find that hard to believe. He's fiercely prideful. And in baseball, if you have interests outside of the baselines, you're often viewed with suspicion.

Far more damaging to Oakland, I think, is the financial squeeze combined with the fact that Beane is just not surrounded by the same folks he had back in the heady days of Hudson-Mulder-Miguel Tejada. Paul DePodesta set the bar as Beane's No. 2 man. Oakland's drafts never have been great, but when Matt Keough was scouting for the A's, for example, their ability to acquire talent was far better than it has been for years.

Nick Swisher, Rich Harden, Joe Blanton ... all were recommended by Keough. So, too, was Jacoby Ellsbury, but Keough was overruled on that one. Then, personal problems sacked Keough's front-office career and he was gone.

The A's flounder on, projecting a \$55 million payroll in 2012. Bruce Jenkins, the respected *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist, recently called Wolff and John Fisher "one of the most bitterly disappointing ownership structures in the history of Bay Area sports."

At this point, Charles O. Finley's donkey would be an aesthetic improvement. Coco Crisp? He may as well have signed with Triple-A Sacramento. Nicer ballpark, and when both clubs are home, the RiverCats have been known to outdraw the A's.

Later this month, with the category having swelled to 10 films, there is every chance the fine *Moneyball* movie will receive a Best Picture nomination. It will be the last bit of stardust for the A's, whose own picture has rarely been more bleak.

GMs who helped their teams long-term

Jim Bowden, espn.com 1/4/2012

In examining those teams that are built to win now, conversely there are those teams for whom it will take some time to become competitive again. In several instances, they are the very teams that just emptied their big league clubs to those "win now" teams. However, it is a simple fact of baseball's cyclical nature that teams must reload and rebuild, or, in some cases, continue to build. And these five general managers have done the best jobs this offseason to better position their teams long-term.

1. Billy Beane, Oakland Athletics

Beane has walked this ground before. Payroll issues forced him to trade his "Big Three" of Tim Hudson, Mark Mulder and Barry Zito. However, this time around he got a much better return after dealing Gio Gonzalez to the Nationals and Trevor Cahill to the Diamondbacks. Pitching prospects Jarrod Parker and Brad Peacock could be potential No. 2 or No. 3 starters; Tom Milone should be a solid No. 5 starter and is big league-ready now. But 19-year-old A.J. Cole might have the biggest upside of all. However, he is four years away if he stays healthy and develops properly. Collin Cowgill is a definite upgrade in the outfield, and while catcher Derek Norris might only be average behind the plate, he has a chance to be a 25- to 30-home run hitter. No doubt it is tough to trade two 15-game winners like Gonzalez and Cahill,

but the return was so large on both fronts the A's have improved their long-term future more than any team in baseball this offseason.

2. Josh Byrnes, San Diego Padres

Trading a 24-year-old ace who hasn't even hit his prime doesn't sound like a good long-term decision, but that is exactly what Byrnes made when he sent Mat Latos to the Cincinnati Reds in exchange for three former first-round picks and a former 17-game winner and was traded for an eventual AL MVP. The Padres acquired their long-term solutions at first base in Yonder Alonso, catcher with Yasmani Grandal who is cut from the Jason Varitek mold, and pitching with Brad Boxberger who should be a part of the Padres' bullpen this year and former 17-game winner Edinson Volquez, who continues to rebound from Tommy John surgery. Volquez might even be a comeback player of the year candidate in 2012 or 2013. This deal could eventually prove to be a franchise-changing move for the Padres.

3. Dan O'Dowd, Colorado Rockies

O'Dowd made the best long-term deal at last year's trade deadline when he acquired young pitching prospects Drew Pomeranz and Alex White from the Indians in exchange for Ubaldo Jimenez. O'Dowd continued his shrewd trades for young pitching this offseason when he traded catcher Chris Iannetta to the Los Angeles Angels for right-handed pitcher Tyler Chatwood. Chatwood has an eventual No. 3 starter's ceiling even though he might continue his development as a reliever in 2012.

4. Frank Wren, Atlanta Braves

Wren's phone hasn't stopped ringing for all of his young starting pitchers, including Julio Teheran, Arodys Vizcaino, Randall Delgado, Mike Minor and Brandon Beachy. He amazed the baseball industry by not losing any of those starters in acquiring Michael Bourn from the Houston Astros last July, and he continues to stand fast when clubs come calling trying to exchange a bat for an arm. Wren deserves credit for being able to hold on to all the arms, which bodes well for the Braves' future. He hasn't made many moves this offseason, and that might prove wise in the long run.

5. Dayton Moore, Kansas City Royals

Like Wren, Moore did a great job this offseason by not trading any of his top pitching prospects including Mike Montgomery, Chris Dwyer, Jake Odorizzi and Aaron Crow, as well as holding on to top outfield prospect Wil Myers. The Royals are close to becoming legitimate contenders, and a veteran pitcher or two could put them over the top. However, Moore was shrewd to not give in to the temptation of making a short-term deal just to try to contend now, and instead held on to all of his best assets. Thus, when they are ready to win in 2013, all of their young pieces have been left intact. Sometimes the best deals you make are the ones you don't make, and that was the case with Moore and the Royals this offseason.