

**Oakland A's acquire bat in outfielder Seth Smith from Colorado Rockies in exchange for pitchers Guillermo Moscoso, Josh Outman**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's continued subtracting from their starting rotation Monday, but they added to what increasingly looks like a very respectable outfield.

Oakland acquired left fielder Seth Smith from the Colorado Rockies for pitchers Guillermo Moscoso and Josh Outman.

It's a hefty price tag considering Moscoso and Outman were potential starters for a rotation that already lost Gio Gonzalez and Trevor Cahill to trades earlier this offseason.

But the A's are expected to bolster their staff with the signing of veteran right-hander Bartolo Colon, who reportedly has agreed to a one-year deal in the \$2 million range. Final details are being ironed out.

The left-handed hitting Smith, who is 29, batted .284 with 15 home runs and a career-high 59 RBIs last season for Colorado. Those were better across-the-board stats than anyone else currently on the A's roster.

"He's got power, and I still think there's more in there," A's general manager Billy Beane said of Smith. "He's still right in the prime of his career."

The A's never made a run at retaining left fielder Josh Willingham -- their leading home run and RBI man from 2011 -- or right fielder David DeJesus, who both left via free agency. But they re-signed center fielder Coco Crisp to a two-year, \$14 million deal. Beane anticipates Crisp being flanked in the outfield by Smith and Josh Reddick (obtained from Boston in the Andrew Bailey trade).

The A's have caught heat for trading away All-Star pitchers in Cahill, Gonzalez and closer Bailey, moves that signaled they're throwing in the towel on 2012. But, at least concerning the outfield, the present doesn't look shabby.

Smith won't duplicate Willingham's 29 homers and 98 RBIs, but he's four years younger, should provide better defense and had 56 extra-base hits in 476 at-bats.

Reddick, who turns 25 next month, won't have to do much to improve on DeJesus' 2011 production (.240, 10 homers, 46 RBIs).

Also, Reddick won't be eligible for free agency until after the 2016 season. Smith, who agreed to a one-year, \$2.4 million deal with the Rockies on Sunday that transfers over to the A's, won't hit free agency until after 2014.

"We're very pleased with what we've done with the outfield," Beane said.

It's worth noting Smith played mostly against right-handed pitching last season, hitting .299 with 14 homers in 384 at-bats. He hit just .217 with one homer in 92 at-bats against lefties.

Smith played quarterback at Ole Miss and backed up Eli Manning. So he'll be cheering hard for the New York Giants quarterback Sunday against the 49ers, right?

Not so fast. Smith grew up a die-hard 49ers fan in Mississippi.

"I've always pulled for Eli, but to see my 49ers back in it is pretty exciting," he said.

While the A's outfield is taking shape, their rotation is a huge question mark.

Brandon McCarthy, Dallas Braden (coming back from shoulder surgery) and Colon should fill three spots.

Brett Anderson will miss at least half the season recovering from Tommy John elbow surgery. Tyson Ross, coming off an injury-riddled season, and unproven Graham Godfrey are candidates for the other two spots.

But Monday's trade shows the A's are also willing to consider some of the young starters that they've acquired in the trades of Cahill and Gonzalez -- including Jarrod Parker, Brad Peacock and Tom Milone. Those three have combined for just nine major league appearances.

Seth Smith at a glance

Position: Left field  
Drafted: 2004, 2nd round, 50th pick by Colorado  
Career average: .275  
Career home runs: 51  
Career RBIs: 181

### **Report: A's agree to deal with Bartolo Colon**

By Carl Steward, Bay Area News Group

The A's have reached agreement on a one-year free agent deal with veteran right-handed pitcher Bartolo Colon, ESPN reported Sunday.

Oakland general manager Billy Beane, contacted by phone, would not confirm the Colon signing, which [MLB.com](http://MLB.com) reported is worth nearly \$2 million and possibly includes a signing bonus. The deal won't be official until Colon, who'll turn 39 in May, takes a physical.

Beane did say Oakland is actively exploring the current market of available players. In addition to signing a starting pitcher, he has said in recent weeks that the A's would also like to acquire an experienced outfielder and possibly a relief pitcher if the budget allows.

"We are pursuing some veteran free agents to help out the young guys we've traded for," Beane said. "And we've got a few other things going on."

Colon had also been negotiating with the Arizona Diamondbacks before choosing Oakland as his seventh major league team. The New York Yankees had also expressed the possibility of bringing Colon back in recent weeks.

Colon was out of baseball since mid-2009 before enjoying a rebirth with the New York Yankees in 2011, going 8-10 with a 4.10 ERA with 7.4 K/9 and 2.2 BB/9 over 164 innings. Plagued by elbow and rotator cuff issues in recent years, Colon was buoyed by stem cell treatment from his bone marrow and fat. Colon reportedly clocked 94-96 mph with his fastball in his 26 starts last season.

However, Colon faded down the stretch, going 0-4 with 5.37 ERA in his final 10 starts. He was left off the Yankees' postseason roster.

Colon is 161-113 during his 14-year career, which includes stints with the Cleveland Indians, Montreal Expos, Chicago White Sox, Los Angeles Angels, Boston Red Sox and Yankees.

Colon will help the A's make up for the rotation experience they lost when both Gio Gonzalez and Trevor Cahill were traded away for prospects recently. In addition, left-hander Brett Anderson is expected to be out until mid-season as he recovers from Tommy John surgery.

As it stands, Oakland's veteran starting pitching options include Brandon McCarthy, Guillermo Moscoso, Graham Godfrey, Tyson Ross and Josh Outman. Dallas Braden, who missed most of 2011 with a shoulder injury, also may be available at the start of the season.

Pitchers Tom Milone and Brad Peacock, acquired from the Washington Nationals in the Gonzalez deal, and Jarrod Parker, who came from Arizona in the Cahill trade, will also compete for rotation spots in the spring. All three spent a little time in the majors late last season, but the left-handed Milone is considered closest to being ready to return to the big leagues.

### **A's get outfielder Seth Smith for 2 pitchers**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Seth Smith platooned with the Rockies, making only 23 career starts against left-handed pitchers. His numbers warranted the limited role.

With the A's, he'll get a better chance against lefties.

In Oakland's latest roster rearranging, Smith, 29, was acquired Monday for pitchers Guillermo Moscoso and Josh Outman, and the A's plan to play him regularly in left field.

"He hits right-handers very, very well, which has been a weakness for our club," general manager Billy Beane said. "He'll have the opportunity to play more against left-handers, which probably will help. It's hard to hit lefties when you don't play against them."

Smith is a .290 career hitter against right-handers. He has hit lefties at a .202 clip. Last year, it was more of the same: .299 and .217, and he became expendable after Colorado signed Michael Cuddyer.

"I welcome it," Smith said of facing more lefties. "I don't really see it as a challenge as much as an opportunity. I know what the numbers are. I also know it's not as bad as the numbers look, and there's room for improvement, and it'll show up on the field."

Beane envisions Smith in left, Coco Crisp in center and Josh Reddick in right with Colin Cowgill the fourth outfielder. Beane is still pursuing right-handed outfield depth.

Jonny Gomes and Cody Ross remain on the market, along with lefty-swinging Johnny Damon, who hit lefties better than righties and is done with the Rays after they signed designated hitter Luke Scott.

Smith, who is 6-foot-3 and weighs 210 pounds, batted .284 with a .347 on-base percentage, 15 homers and 59 RBIs in 147 games in 2011. A factor is his home-road splits: .296 at Coors Field, .257 on the road. Again, the hope is that more consistent playing time will lead to more consistent hitting.

"From what I hear, there's a lot of green grass in Oakland. My job is to find it," said Smith, who was arbitration-eligible for the first time and got a \$2.415 million deal Sunday.

Moscoso, 28, was 8-10 with a 3.38 ERA in 23 games (21 starts) last season. Outman, 27, was 3-5 with a 3.70 ERA in 13 games (nine starts). Remaining rotation candidates include Bartolo Colon (whose contract is to be finalized soon), Brandon McCarthy, Dallas Braden (if he's healthy), Tyson Ross, Graham Godfrey, Brad Peacock, Tom Milone and Jarrod Parker.

"Some of the kids we acquired will get a crack at the rotation," Beane said, "which isn't dissimilar to a few years ago with Brett (Anderson) and Trevor" Cahill.

Moscoso said his cutter, especially effective late in the season, will be a resource in Denver. Outman is a flyball pitcher and will have to adjust to the altitude.

### **Bartolo Colon agrees to 1-year deal with A's**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

With Gio Gonzalez and Trevor Cahill dealt for prospects and Brett Anderson and Dallas Braden coming off major surgeries, the A's are short on established starting pitchers.

Bartolo Colon is nothing if not established.

Colon has agreed to a one-year deal with the A's, pending a physical, The Chronicle confirmed Sunday, to join an untested Oakland rotation. Besides Brandon McCarthy, possible starters - if Braden opens the season with Anderson on the disabled list - include Guillermo Moscoso, Tyson Ross, Josh Outman and Graham Godfrey.

The A's also have three pitchers acquired in recent trades: Brad Peacock and Tom Milone (acquired from the Nationals in the Gonzalez deal) and Jarrod Parker (from the Diamondbacks for Cahill).

The A's have nobody with experience close to Colon's. He's 38 with 161 wins in 14 seasons. Last year with the Yankees, he went 8-10 with a 4.00 ERA. He did his best work in the first four months (8-6, 3.30) before slipping in August and September (0-4, 5.37) and getting omitted from the postseason roster.

The Yankees entered the season with few expectations for Colon, and manager Joe Girardi was quoted as saying the right-hander "turned out to be the biggest surprise of spring for us." By the end of July, pitching coach Larry Rothschild called him "our glue."

That Colon is 5-1 with a 2.14 in his career at the Coliseum is a bonus. He tossed a four-hit shutout in Oakland on May 30.

A's fans have seen plenty of Colon, who pitched for the Angels from 2004 and 2007. He won a Cy Young Award in 2005, leading the American League with 21 wins, but sustained shoulder and elbow injuries and didn't pitch significant innings again until last year.

After sitting out the 2010 season, Colon supposedly benefited from surgery in his native Dominican Republic in which his fat and bone-marrow stem cells were injected into his arm to help repair it. His velocity increased, and so did his success.

Weight has been an issue with Colon, who's listed at 5-foot-11 and 265 pounds and reported to spring training with the Yankees clearly overweight.

### **Drumbeat: Athletics trade: What Guillermo Moscoso and Josh Outman are saying**

By John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle, 1/16/2012, 11:52am

Guillermo Moscoso was on his way to work out with Gio Gonzalez today when he got the word that he (and Josh Outman) were traded to the Rockies for outfielder Seth Smith.

"I'm really surprised," Moscoso told The Chronicle's Susan Slusser. "I'd never expect it. But this is the business. You never know what will happen.

"Right now, I'm in shock because I didn't expect this. I've been focused on going to camp with the A's and starting a new year with them. But you can always be traded to the next team. I look at it as a new opportunity with a new team."

On leaving Oakland: "I'm sad leaving the A's. I appreciated the way they treated me there. I had one of my best years, and I had a lot of support from the team, the fans and the reporters - I have a lot of people to say 'Thank you' to, everyone there."

On pitching at Coors Field: "I've never been to Colorado. This will be my first time there. But at the end of last year, I was pitching pretty well, I had one of my best months and it was because my cutter was working so well. I was getting a lot of groundballs. That's what I've been working on all offseason, and hopefully that's something I can bring to my new team."

In another Slusser interview, Outman called the trade "kind of bittersweet. I was looking forward to going to Japan. And I was looking forward to being one of the starters with some experience and maybe having more of a chance to stay in the rotation, with a lot of the other guys traded. But I understand the business aspect of this, and I'll have a good opportunity in Colorado – and that will be because Oakland gave me a good opportunity first."

On pitching a mile high: "Pitching there will need an adjustment from me. I've been a flyball pitcher, and I might have to make a few adjustments because everyone knows what happens in the thin air there."

On leaving the A's: "It's a business move. I'm not mad by any means. I was looking forward to being around and seeing all the young talent and, if they get a new stadium, seeing what they're capable of in a few years. But with Colorado, there's more of an immediate chance to succeed."

### **Drumbeat: Athletics add hitter (Seth Smith), lose two more starters (Guillermo Moscoso, Josh Outman)**

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle, 1/16/2012, 11:10am

The A's rotation changes by the day.

One day after word spread that the A's were signing veteran Bartolo Colon, they dealt two younger starting pitchers for Rockies outfielder Seth Smith.

Guillermo Moscoso and Josh Outman have a new baseball home: Coors Field.

So the rotation has these candidates remaining: Brandon McCarthy, Dallas Braden (if he doesn't open on the DL), Tyson Ross and Graham Godfrey, along with Brad Peacock and Tom Milone (acquired from the Nationals in the Gio Gonzalez deal) and Jarrod Parker (from the Diamondbacks in the Trevor Cahill deal). Brett Anderson is expected to join the rotation in midseason.

Smith is a corner outfielder, playing 107 games in right and 25 in left last year. In his career, he appeared in 190 games in left, 155 in right and nine in center. More important, he's what the A's need: a proven hitter.

He batted .284 with a .347 on-base percentage, 15 homers and 59 RBIs in 147 games for the 2011 Rockies. He topped .300 in April, May, June and August.

He swings left-handed and has lopsided splits, .299 with 14 homers off right-handers and .217 with one homer off lefties. He's a career .336 pinch-hitter in 167 at-bats. But he'll have a different role in Oakland. GM Billy Beane said Smith will be given a chance to hit left-handers and is destined to be the left fielder.

One other key factor, considering it's tougher to hit at the Coliseum than Coors Field: Smith is a .296 hitter in Denver, .257 on the road.

Moscoso, 28, was 8-10 with a 3.38 ERA in 23 games (21 starts), and Outman, 27, was 3-5 with a 3.70 ERA in 13 games (nine starts).

### **A's acquire outfielder Smith for pair of arms**

### **Moscoso, Outman head to Colorado as Oakland boosts offense**

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com

Having to part ways with a couple of starting pitchers hurt Billy Beane. It always does. But, as the Athletics' vice president and general manager said, "When you're in Oakland, you're always sort of robbing Peter to pay Paul. It's very rare that you just add players."

Beane needed a corner-outfield bat, and he felt he had enough depth in the starting rotation to get it.

So on Monday, he pulled the trigger, sending righty Guillermo Moscoso and lefty Josh Outman to the Rockies for the left-handed-hitting Seth Smith -- a young power hitter who can help an A's offense that ranked 12th in the American League in runs scored last season, then lost Josh Willingham and David DeJesus to free agency.

"From a short-term or immediate need, [Smith] addressed an outfield spot that was wide open for us," Beane said, "and from a long-term standpoint he's a guy who's still in the prime of his career, who we have under contract for a minimum of three years, and he brings much-needed power to a group that has very little."

Smith, who recently agreed on a \$2.415 million deal for the 2012 season, has hit .275 with a .346 on-base percentage while averaging 16 homers, 55 RBIs and 138 games over the last three years. The 6-foot-3, 210-pounder registered a .284 batting average in 2011, hitting 32 doubles, nine triples, 15 home runs and 59 RBIs while stealing a career-high 10 bases in a career-high 147 games.

Beane envisions Smith playing left field and lefty-hitting Josh Reddick -- acquired from the Red Sox for closer Andrew Bailey -- starting in right, with right-handed hitter Collin Cowgill in the mix as a fourth outfielder and potential platoon mate.

The A's are also looking for some more right-handed-hitting-outfield depth -- but they now have a little punch from the left side.

"We're excited," Smith said, referring also to his wife, Lindsay, and daughter, Sienna Elizabeth. "I've seen the trade speculations, so we've been kind of trying to keep up as much as possible. I didn't want to look at anything too much, but there was a high likelihood that it could happen, and we're definitely excited about the opportunity. I was able to talk to Billy Beane earlier today, and he had some good things to say and some exciting things."

One topic on the agenda: How Smith can expect to see more action against left-handers. The 29-year-old has a career .881 on-base plus slugging percentage against righties and a career .588 OPS against lefties, but will welcome the opportunity "with open arms."

"I don't really see it as a challenge as much as I see it as an opportunity," said Smith, who holds the distinction of being quarterback Eli Manning's backup at Ole Miss. "I've hit lefties well in the past and for whatever reason, I haven't had as much success recently. But I've had good at-bats. I know what the numbers are, I know what it looks like, but I also know that it's not as bad as the numbers say it is."

Smith has another drastic split -- he sports a career .925 OPS in the thin air of Coors Field and a .750 OPS everywhere else. It's no different than that of many who have suited up for the Rockies in the past.

Now, he'll play half his games in one of baseball's most pitcher-friendly ballparks.

"There's no way around that," Smith said. "But ultimately, baseball is baseball. From what I hear, there's a lot of green grass in Oakland, and my job is to find it."

Moscoso, 28, posted an 8-10 record and a 3.38 ERA in 23 games (21 starts) for Oakland last season. It was the right-hander's first year with the A's after posting a 4.30 ERA in 11 relief appearances with Texas over the previous two seasons.

Outman returned last year after missing the entire 2010 season following Tommy John surgery in June '09. The 27-year-old lefty went 3-5 with a 3.70 ERA in 13 games (nine starts) over two stints with the A's in 2011, and is 8-8 with a 3.75 ERA in 33 career appearances, including 25 starts, over three seasons.

Both have Minor League options left, and Rockies GM Dan O'Dowd expects both to take part in what he called a "spirited competition" for rotation spots in Spring Training.

Reached by phone on Monday, Outman called the move from Oakland, a place he's spent the last three years, to Colorado "a little bittersweet."

"I thought it was going to be kind of a breakout year for me [in Oakland] now that I've gotten fully over the surgery and everything, and an opportunity to get back into the rotation," Outman added. "But I think I'm going to get a really good opportunity with Colorado. Just another place where I know they want me."

Moscoso, ironically enough, was about to begin a workout with former Oakland ace Gio Gonzalez in Miami when he found out he had been dealt for the third time in his career.

"I was shocked," he said. "I didn't expect that one. I was really surprised. But it's a business. It's just all about baseball. You never know what's going to happen. I just have to keep doing my best, and now that I have a new team, it's like a new opportunity."

The A's traded Gonzalez and Trevor Cahill this offseason, but they still have an assortment of arms that will be in the mix for rotation spots heading into Spring Training.

There are in-house guys like Brandon McCarthy, Tyson Ross, Graham Godfrey and the recovering Dallas Braden, and there are newcomers like Tom Milone, Brad Peacock (both acquired from the Nationals for Gonzalez) and Jarrod Parker (acquired from the D-backs for Cahill).

They also agreed in principle on a contract with veteran right-hander Bartolo Colon a couple of days ago -- though Beane couldn't comment on the deal because it's still pending a physical.

"The fact that we had acquired so much young pitching in the trades earlier, it probably forces us to give those guys a chance right out of the gate," Beane said. "And I think with a couple of those guys, they are ready to take that step."

As for how Beane now feels about his offense?

"I'm happier today than I was yesterday, but we'll see," he said. "I don't think you're ever happy. We had a pretty good hill to climb offensively, but I think at least we made some [progress]. We still have a couple weeks left, and we'll see where it goes from there."

### **Prospect Watch: Top 10 right-handed pitchers**

### **Pair of Pirates, D-backs among game's up-and-coming aces**

By Jonathan Mayo / MLB.com

*MLB.com's Top 50 Prospects list has been expanded to 100. The 2012 version will be unveiled on Wednesday, Jan. 25 on MLB.com as well as on a one-hour show on MLB Network, airing at 10 p.m. ET. Leading up to that, MLB.com takes a look at baseball's **top 10 prospects at each position**.*

On the 2011 list of Top 10 right-handed pitchers, there was the American League Rookie of the Year and the hurler who finished fifth in that voting. Seven of the 10 pitched in the big leagues. This year's **Top 10 right-handed pitchers** list has five repeat performers and is strengthened by five newcomers, featuring a quartet of 2011 first-round picks.

**1. Julio Teheran, Braves:** At the start of the 2010 season, Teheran was at the lowest full-season rung, the South Atlantic League. He made his Major League debut in May, then spent more time in Atlanta in September, speeding through the Braves' system to get there. He was dominant in Triple-A during the 2011 season, using outstanding stuff and mound presence to excel. He has three above-average-or-better offerings -- with his fastball, curve and changeup -- and commands all of them well. He'll still be just 21 for all of the 2012 season, and he should continue to add strength to his frame. The Braves have a ton of good young pitching, and Teheran has a chance to lead them all.

**2. Shelby Miller, Cardinals:** They say the jump to Double-A is the toughest one to make, but Miller didn't have any trouble with that leap in 2011. With the gloves off, Miller dominated in the Texas League and went to his second Futures Game. Still armed with a plus fastball, he's learned to be a more complete pitcher, improving his breaking ball, his changeup and his knowledge of how to use all of his weapons. He's also proven to be more durable and able to pitch efficiently deep into games, even while missing plenty of bats. He'll have to continue to do that as he moves up and prepares for what could be his Major League debut in 2012.

**3. Jameson Taillon, Pirates:** Taillon was the No. 2 overall pick in the 2010 Draft for good reason -- he was a big, strong high school right-hander with outstanding stuff and a better feel for pitching than many prepsters. While the Pirates maintained a strict innings limit on Taillon in his first season, nothing happened to dampen the excitement for his future. He has the potential to have four above-average or plus pitches -- fastball, curve, slider and changeup -- and can throw all of them for strikes. He'll move up a level in 2012, and with the gloves coming off a bit, could start pushing his way up the ladder more quickly.

**4. Trevor Bauer, D-backs:** Bauer spent most of his college career in Gerrit Cole's shadow, but he's ahead of his UCLA teammate on this list and should get to the big leagues faster. He made it to Double-A in his first summer, and there was even some talk of him getting a September callup, though cooler heads prevailed. Using an unorthodox delivery and conditioning methods (he's a big proponent of long-tossing), the somewhat undersized right-hander elicits comparisons to Tim Lincecum. As interesting as that all is, his stuff is even more exciting. He'll throw as many as five pitches, grading out from average to plus across the board. He should get a very long look in Spring Training and will be a part of the D-backs' rotation for years to come.

**5. Dylan Bundy, Orioles:** While Bundy was the first high school arm taken in the 2011 Draft, after three college pitchers, it would be a mistake to think that means he'll take a long time to develop. Like Bauer, Bundy uses long-tossing to build arm strength, and it seems to work for him. He's not that big, but he's strong and athletic, utilizing a four-pitch mix extremely well. His fastball is plus and he maintains velocity with smooth mechanics. He has two breaking pitches -- a curve and slider

-- both of which are outstanding, and he also throws a changeup. Occasionally, prep pitchers buzz through a system, and it wouldn't surprise anyone if Bundy pitches at more than one level in 2012.

### **Top 10 Right-handed pitching prospects**

#	<u>2012</u>	#	<u>2011</u>
1.	Julio Teheran, ATL	1.	Jeremy Hellickson, TB
2.	Shelby Miller, STL	2.	Julio Teheran, ATL
3.	Jameson Taillon, PIT	3.	Kyle Drabek, TOR
4.	Trevor Bauer, ARI	4.	Michael Pineda, SEA
5.	Dylan Bundy, BAL	5.	Jacob Turner, DET
6.	Gerrit Cole, PIT	6.	Jameson Taillon, PIT
7.	Jacob Turner, DET	7.	Shelby Miller, STL
8.	Taijuan Walker, SEA	8.	Casey Kelly, SD
9.	Archie Bradley, ARI	9.	Jarrood Parker, ARI
10.	Jarrood Parker, OAK	10.	Jordan Lyles, HOU

**6. Gerrit Cole, Pirates:** Look at Cole's size and pure stuff and it's easy to see why he was the No. 1 pick in the Draft. If he can harness his three plus pitches, he has everything a team wants from a top-of-the-rotation starter. He has three plus pitches with his fastball, slider and changeup. He gets into trouble when he overthrows, leaving everything too hard and straight. Outside of a rough Rising Stars appearance, he showed just how successful he can be when he stays under control while pitching in the Arizona Fall League. He has the stuff to move quickly and should do just that. Assuming he can learn to be consistent with his delivery, it shouldn't take him too long to make it to Pittsburgh.

**7. Jacob Turner, Tigers:** Following the Tigers' model for young pitchers, Turner made his Major League debut in just his second pro season, leaping up from Double-A for a July outing and then returning in September. Now he's ready to compete for a rotation spot on Opening Day. Just 21 when the season starts, Turner has improved as an all-around pitcher. Though his plus fastball is still his best pitch, his other offerings -- curve and changeup -- have improved, as has his command. If that continues, he'll be able to join former fast-trackers like Justin Verlander and Rick Porcello in the Tigers' rotation.

**8. Taijuan Walker, Mariners:** With the way Walker pitched in his first full season, the Mariners will quickly forget they didn't have a first-round pick in 2010. The SoCal high school product was a multi-sport star and, as a result, is really focusing on pitching full-time for the first time as a professional. So far, so good, as Walker has been dominant as the Mariners have been cautious with him up until this point. The stuff is there, with a mid-to-high 90s fastball and excellent curve. His changeup is rapidly improving. That three-pitch mix, his size and athleticism could all add up to a frontline starter in the future.

**9. Archie Bradley, D-backs:** The second of two Oklahoma high school pitchers taken in the top 10 of the 2011 Draft, he's no less impressive than state-mate Dylan Bundy. A three-sport standout in high school, Bradley signed with Arizona rather than play quarterback at the University of Oklahoma. He has a very exciting combination of size and stuff, with a plus fastball, a power curve and a changeup he didn't need in high school, giving him the chance to have three above-average pitches. And though he played other sports, he has a good idea of what he's doing on the mound, meaning he may not move as slowly as some prep pitchers do, starting with full-season ball in 2012.

**10. Jarrod Parker, A's:** Parker put his 2010 Tommy John surgery behind him last year, particularly in the second half, earning a September callup and a spot on the D-backs' postseason roster. He was then the key prospect sent to Oakland in the Trevor Cahill deal, immediately becoming the A's top prospect. He has a very good four-pitch mix and his stuff was all the way back. He also came back a more mature and complete pitcher, one who used his time away from the game wisely. He profiles as a top-of-the-rotation starter and should get an opportunity in Oakland in the very near future.

*To be eligible for the list, a player must have rookie eligibility. To qualify for rookie status, a player must not have exceeded 130 at-bats or 50 innings pitched in the Major Leagues, or accumulated more than 45 days on the active roster of a Major League club or clubs during the 25-player limit period, excluding time on the disabled list or in military service.*

### **A's agree to one-year deal with righty Colon**

By Joey Nowak / MLB.com

The Athletics have agreed to a one-year deal with right-handed starting pitcher Bartolo Colon, a baseball source has told MLB.com. The club did not confirm the deal.



According to the source, the deal is worth nearly \$2 million, and could include a signing bonus. Both sides are continuing to work to finalize the agreement.

Colon, 38, has played 14 seasons in the big leagues, most recently with the Yankees. He proved to be reliable at the back end of New York's 2011 rotation, winning eight games with a 4.00 ERA.

The right-hander did not pitch in the big leagues in 2010, and had not won more than six games since his 2005 campaign with the Angels, when he won 21 and was the recipient of the American League Cy Young Award.

### **Total of 142 players file for salary arbitration**

### **Lincecum, Kershaw, Hamels, Ortiz among notable names**

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com

A total of 142 players filed for salary arbitration, as announced Friday by the Major League Baseball Players Association.

The arbitration filing period ran from Jan. 5 until Friday, with Jan. 17 set as the day for salary arbitration figures to be exchanged. Those players and teams who actually go to hearings will engage in that process from Feb. 1-21 in St. Petersburg, Fla.

San Diego easily topped the list with 11 players who filed, including Luke Gregerson, Chase Headley, Carlos Quentin, Clayton Richard, Tim Stauffer, Will Venable and Edinson Volquez. The Red Sox were next with eight, as their list included Alfredo Aceves, Daniel Bard, Andrew Bailey, Jacoby Ellsbury, David Ortiz and Jarrod Saltalamacchia. The Red Sox had offered arbitration to the free agent Ortiz, and he accepted. The same holds true for Blue Jays second baseman Kelly Johnson and Brewers setup man Francisco Rodriguez.

The Indians, Royals, Cubs, Giants and Nationals each had seven players file. Among the more prominent names to file was San Francisco starter Tim Lincecum, who earned \$13 million in 2011 in the second year of a two-year, \$23-million deal. Also on the list were the Dodgers' Clayton Kershaw, who won the 2011 National League Cy Young Award, and Andre Ethier.

The Royals who filed were pitchers Luke Hochevar, Jonathan Sanchez and Felipe Paulino; catcher Brayan Pena; infielder Chris Getz and outfielders Alex Gordon and Mitch Maier.

Atlanta outfielder Michael Bourn, Baltimore outfielder Adam Jones, Chicago Cubs pitcher Matt Garza, Cleveland infielder Asdrubal Cabrera, Detroit starters Max Scherzer and Rick Porcello and Philadelphia's Cole Hamels and Hunter Pence also filed.

The White Sox were the lone team without a player who filed. Quentin was eligible, but he was traded to the Padres on New Year's Eve, and John Danks agreed to a five-year, \$65-million deal that bought out his third year of arbitration eligibility.

### **Twenty years later, '92 season stands tall**

### **Wave of change, growth began during memorable campaign**

By Spencer Fordin / MLB.com

It seemed like just another season at the time, but it's grown into a seismic beacon of change for baseball. The grand old game saw plenty in 1992, most notably a new Commissioner, the beginning of a building boom and the first World Series champion from outside the United States.

Twenty years later, it's easy to take all of it for granted. Major League Baseball in 1992 still had two divisions and two playoff teams from each league. Roger Maris and Hank Aaron were still the game's respective season and all-time home run kings.

Perhaps more notable, 1992 brought expansion of the league's borders and barriers. Toronto, which had been part of the last growth in 1977, took home the World Series title, and new Commissioner Bud Selig, then holding an interim title, presided over the November Expansion Draft that birthed the Florida Marlins and Colorado Rockies.

The season of change started with a pair of warning shots across the bow. One week before the season, the crosstown-rival Cubs and White Sox engaged in a trade that sent heralded prospect Sammy Sosa to the National League in exchange for 1987 American League Most Valuable Player Award winner George Bell.

Sosa, 22 years old at that point, had 29 career home runs, but he'd go on to hit 545 for the Cubs, a total that included three seasons in which he exceeded the long-standing Maris record of 61. Bell, meanwhile, would play just two more seasons -- both for the White Sox -- before retiring.

The other harbinger of change came on April 6, when a crowd of more than 40,000 witnessed the Orioles beating the Indians, 2-0, in the first game at Camden Yards. That building, a nostalgic return to ballparks of the past, sparked a boom in which 20 new stadiums have been built in the past 20 years.

As of now, there are only eight active ballparks -- Fenway Park, Wrigley Field, Dodger Stadium, Angel Stadium, Oakland Coliseum, Kauffman Stadium, U.S. Cellular Field and Rogers Centre -- that existed prior to Camden Yards' construction. How many of those will still be in use in another 20 years?

On the field, the action was fairly well defined all season. Toronto, which in 1991 had gone to the AL Championship Series -- it lost to Minnesota -- led the AL East for all but six days, and it never fell more than a half-game out of the top spot.

The Blue Jays, led by John Olerud, Joe Carter and future Hall of Famers Roberto Alomar and Dave Winfield, acquired David Cone from the Mets in late August to bolster their playoff rotation. The thought, in most quarters, was that Toronto needed something to push it over the top against Oakland.

The A's, at that point, were the league's best claim to a dynasty. Oakland had missed the playoffs in 1991 but it had gone to the World Series in three straight seasons before that. The A's boasted the Manager of the Year in Tony La Russa and also the league's runaway player of the year.

Dennis Eckersley was already five years into his reinvention as a closer -- three of which had been All-Star campaigns -- when the 1992 season rolled around. The right-hander was typically dominant and led the league in both games finished and saves en route to being named both the league's Cy Young Award winner and MVP. No other AL player managed that twin distinction until 2011, when Detroit's Justin Verlander mastered the league's hitters and took both awards.

The story was just as clear-cut in the NL, complete with a player who dominated the league's headlines. Pittsburgh slugger Barry Bonds signed a one-year deal worth \$4.7 million before the season -- the most lucrative one-year contract in league history to that point -- and then led all NL hitters in on-base (.456) and slugging percentage (.624) en route to the MVP Award.

And that was only part of the story. Bonds, who would be eligible for free agency at the end of the season, helped the Pirates dominate the NL East. Pittsburgh was in first place for all but eight days, setting up an NLCS rematch with the West-leading Atlanta Braves.

Atlanta, meanwhile, was just beginning its own epic postseason run. The Braves had made the playoffs in 1991 -- losing to Minnesota in a 1-0 classic in the decisive game of the World Series -- but were perhaps better known at the time for a two-decade run of futility. Atlanta had made the playoffs just twice in 25 years prior to '91, but it would go on to make 14 consecutive postseason appearances.

The Braves, led by a rotation of Tom Glavine, John Smoltz and Steve Avery, took the division lead for good on Aug. 2 and wound up outpacing the competition by eight games. Atlanta wouldn't add Greg Maddux, the 1992 NL Cy Young Award winner for the Cubs, until the following season.

Smoltz, who had beaten the Pirates in Game 7 of the 1991 NLCS, reprised his heroics in the opening game of the series. Atlanta won easily behind Smoltz and took a 3-1 lead through four games, but Pittsburgh outscored Atlanta, 20-5, over the next two games to even the scales.

The series went to Game 7, a pitchers' duel between Smoltz and Pittsburgh ace Doug Drabek that wasn't decided until the ninth inning. With the Pirates leading by two runs, the Braves came back with a decisive rally sealed by Sid Bream's dramatic slide at home with two out.

That play -- Bonds made the throw home from left field -- sealed the immediate future for two franchises. Bonds would go on to play for San Francisco, his hometown team, and he'd wind up winning five more NL MVP Awards and setting the all-time records for home runs (762) and walks (2,558). The Pirates, meanwhile, saw more talent leave and haven't had a winning record since.

The ALCS, meanwhile, brought its own form of drama. The A's had won the World Series in 1989 and lost it in both '88 and '90, and they brought a super-charged lineup that boasted leadoff man Rickey Henderson and cleanup hitter Mark McGwire to the series against Toronto.

The first three games of the series were all decided by two runs or fewer, and Oakland brought a five-run lead into the eighth inning of Game 4. The tide would turn, though, and following a three-run rally in the eighth, Alomar drilled a game-tying homer off Eckersley in the ninth.

Toronto completed the comeback victory by chipping away for a run in the 11th inning, and after dropping Game 5, the Blue Jays stomped the A's with a 9-2 win in Game 6. Alomar, inducted to the Hall of Fame in 2011, was named the series MVP.

Atlanta edged the Blue Jays in Game 1 of the World Series, but Toronto went on to notch one-run wins in each of the next three games, scoring the winning runs in the ninth inning in both Games 2 and 3 and seizing October momentum by the sheerest of margins.

The Braves edged back into contention with a win in Game 5, and they gave this edition of the World Series legendary status by tying the score with two out in the ninth inning of Game 6 in Atlanta. The epic deadlock was broken on a two-run double by Winfield in the 11th, and though they gave up a run, Jimmy Key and Mike Timlin combined to record the final three outs and seal the Series win.

Baseball's postseason, just two years later, would barely be recognizable. Toronto won again in 1993, on Joe Carter's walk-off home run, but labor problems forced the cancellation of the 1994 World Series. MLB added another division to each league -- and another tier to the playoffs -- before the '95 campaign.

In 1992, Rollie Fingers and Tom Seaver were inducted to the Hall of Fame, and George Brett and Robin Yount recorded their respective 3,000th hits. It was a year of upheaval and ingenuity, but mostly it was just another landmark year for America's national pastime.

### **'Godzilla' may spare Japan, return to NYC instead** **baseball notebook: Showdown between Ichiro-Matsui unlikely for opener in Japan**

Last updated: January 17th, 2012 12:20 AM (PST)

With or without Hideki Matsui, Oakland Athletics manager Bob Melvin is looking forward to opening Major League Baseball's 2012 season in Japan.

The Athletics and Seattle Mariners open the regular season with a two-game series at Tokyo Dome on March 28-29. Many hoped the series would feature a showdown between Matsui and countryman Ichiro Suzuki, but Melvin said the A's likely won't be re-signing Matsui, a 37-year-old free agent.

"Matsui was a great fit for us last year and we all loved having him on our team," Melvin said at a press conference on Monday to promote the series. "But this year it doesn't look like a fit for us based on the personnel we have going forward." In his first season with Oakland last year, Matsui hit a career-worst .251 with 12 homers and 72 RBI in 141 games. Where he'll play in 2012 is a major story in Japan with speculation on everything from a return to the New York Yankees, a return to Japanese professional baseball or even retirement.

Seattle and Oakland had been scheduled to play in Japan in March 2003 when Melvin managed the Mariners, but the series was scrapped because of the start of the war in Iraq.

#### **LET'S MAKE A DEAL**

Players and teams started rushing to settle arbitration cases, a day before the sides were to swap proposed salary numbers. Eleven players agreed to contracts, leaving 126 set to exchange figures after 142 filed for arbitration last week. About 100 more were expected to reach agreements before the sides submit proposals this afternoon for one-year contracts that are not guaranteed.

Among one-year contracts announced Monday were deals for Pittsburgh All-Star closer Joel Hanrahan (\$4.1 million) and right-hander Charlie Morton (\$2,445,000), Detroit right-hander Rick Porcello (\$3.1 million) and left-hander Phil Coke (\$1.1 million), Kansas City second baseman Chris Getz (\$937,500) and catcher Brayan Pena (\$835,000), New York Yankees pitcher Phil Hughes (\$3.2 million), Los Angeles Angels third baseman Alberto Callaspo (\$3.15 million), Milwaukee outfielder Nyjer Morgan (\$2.35 million) and Washington catcher Jesus Flores (\$815,000).

In a deal not yet announced, San Francisco outfielder Angel Pagan agreed at \$4.85 million.

Among free agents, oft-injured reliever Joel Zumaya and Minnesota agreed to an \$850,000, one-year contract and Philadelphia and pitcher Joel Pineiro agreed to a minor league contract.

### **Bean-counting GM Beane deserves a better place to work**

#### **Low-budget Athletics No. 30 in power rankings**

Phil Rogers, Chicago Tribune 1/16/2012

*First in a series, counting down to the opening of spring training. First up: the Athletics, No. 30 in [Phil Rogers'](#) power rankings.*

Loved the movie "Moneyball." If you weren't touched by Billy Beane's relationship with his daughter, you don't have a heart.

Back in the fall of 2002, Beane turned down a chance to jump from Oakland to Boston because he couldn't stand the thought of moving away from his daughter, whose mother lives in California. But Casey Beane is in her 20s now, going full steam ahead for an independent life, so Beane no longer has geographic limitations on his career.

He really should move on. But his deal with Athletics owner Lew Wolff has become a velvet coffin.

As a former player and scout who was a progressive thinker when that was seen as a baseball liability, Beane should be running one of baseball's better organizations. Instead he has stayed put with the stadium-poor A's, who operate at Oakland's Coliseum of Many Names, in baseball's low-rent district, across the bay from San Francisco's glittering AT&T Park.

There was talk in September and October that Beane was getting out, finally ready to consider one of several openings for general manager (most notably with the Cubs, Red Sox and Angels, but also the Orioles and Astros). But both Beane and his highly respected assistant, David Forst, stayed put.

Those two have since been occupied in stripping a roster that has steadily shrunk since 2007, the season that ended the eight-year run of winning teams in the Tim Hudson-Barry Zito-Mark Mulder era. You might think they would have wanted to improve it after a 74-88 season.

Yet Beane and Forst allowed their top run producer (Josh Willingham) to leave as a free agent and traded their top pitcher (Gio Gonzalez). Also moving on through trades or free agency were Andrew Bailey, Trevor Cahill, Ryan Sweeney, Craig Breslow, David DeJesus and Hideki Matsui.

What had been a \$67 million payroll in 2011 will come in much lower this season, somewhere under \$50 million, with the re-signed Coco Crisp as the highest-paid player (2 years, \$14 million) and catcher Kurt Suzuki and reliever Brian Fuentes the only others earning \$5 million.

This is Wolff screaming loudly that he should be allowed to build a stadium in San Jose, which he has been barred from doing because it is San Francisco Giants territory.

There's no hotter topic on Commissioner Bud Selig's plate, and while it's at the top of the list of tasks he'll undertake the next three years — Selig accepted a two-year contract extension at last week's owners' meeting — it's unclear how he'll resolve it.

Looking at the Orioles' decline in attendance since the arrival of the Nationals — from 2.74 million in 2004, the last year the Nationals were still the Montreal Expos, to 1.76 million last season — you can see why the Giants aren't especially welcoming. There are other numbers to consider, however.

Wolff bought the A's for \$180 million in 2005, and the growth of baseball in general and revenue sharing in particular has allowed their value to increase while the product deteriorates. Forbes lists the current value at \$307 million.

Beane, whose contract runs through 2014, has a 4 percent stake in ownership. That's \$7.2 million with the valuation at what Wolff paid for the team, \$12.3 million at the current Forbes figure or a hypothetical \$22.5 million if the A's move to San Jose and eventually gain equal footing with the Giants — currently valued at \$569 million by Forbes.

In the meantime, manager Bob Melvin will be given a ridiculously punchless lineup — weaker than the team that was 12th in the AL with 645 runs last season — and a rotation with Brandon McCarthy as the Opening Day starter (Dallas Braden and Brett Anderson should be midseason additions after 2011 surgeries) in front of Guillermo Moscoso and three guys from a group including Bartolo Colon, Josh Outman and next-generation arms Brad Peacock, Jarrod Parker and Tom Milone.

And furthermore

(bullet) MLB should have a minimum payroll. It would require all teams to at least attempt to be somewhat competitive, and fairness is an issue. For instance, how much of an advantage will the Angels and Rangers have in the wild-card race because they have 19 games each against Oakland?

(bullet) According to Bill James' projections, the Athletics' most productive hitter next season will be DH Brandon Allen, with a slash line of .243/.327/.449, 22 home runs and 71 RBIs.

(bullet) Melvin is a major upgrade in the dugout, probably the best manager they've had since Tony La Russa (although Art Howe was much better than the movie's portrayal by Philip Seymour Hoffman suggests).

(bullet) MLB scoffs at Forbes' projections, but they're the best available.

(bullet) Wolff is very close to Selig, but so far that does not appear to have gained him any advantages.

### **A's Powell talks of ups, downs**

By [Chuck Carree](#), [starnewsonline.com](#) 1/14/2012

As keynote speaker at Saturday night's annual Leland Hot Stove League banquet, Landon Powell decided to ad-lib.

He talked about ups and downs he encountered in baseball, including an unexpected offseason and minor league assignment with the Oakland A's.

"When you wing it, it's more sincere and from the heart," Powell said.

Twelve years ago, Powell led Apex to an N.C. High School Athletic Association championship. He signed with South Carolina and played in the College World Series three times, making the all-tournament team twice. Two years ago, he was named to Rosenblatt Stadium's Legends Team.

As a professional, he suffered knee injuries two years apart. Liver disease has also impeded his progress.

"It built character," he said. "I developed thick, tough skin."

He was selected 24th overall by the A's in the 2004 Major League Baseball Draft. He made his big league debut five years later, hitting a two-run double in his first at bat.

He considers catching Dallas Braden's perfect game in 2010 the highlight of his three-year career. To him, it rivals the game-winning hit to lead Team USA to the World Championship when he was 16 and winning a gold medal in international competition for the Team USA college team.

"I have had a lot of great things happen in baseball and the perfect game is one of them," he said. "It was a history-making moment and it is cool to know my name will go down in history as one of 19 to catch a perfect game."

Major-league success is fleeting, however. Last month, he was designated him for assignment and was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento.

"As a backup catcher, there is never a lot of job security," Powell said. "That was a business move for me. Monetarily my contract is guaranteed whether I play in the big leagues.

"As a backup catcher, you are always considered somewhat expendable. It won't stop the way I play and prepare. I expect to be back in the big leagues, either with the A's or someone else. I know I am good enough to be there."

In three seasons, Powell has played in only 123 games with a .207 batting average.

"You get limited at bats as a backup and I wish people looked at the game differently," Powell said. "They think batting average kind of defines a player. As a backup catcher, I am paid to play a defensive game and call pitches and throw runners out stealing."

Since 2009, he says he has thrown out the second-most stealers among catchers and has one of the lowest catcher ERAs.

He resides in Greenville, S.C. with his wife, Allyson, and 3-year-old son, Holden, named after Holden Beach, where the Powells have a vacation home.

Off the field, Powell dedicates time helping an upstate non-profit, Donors on the Diamond, a fundraising organization for organ and tissue donations.

"We basically have a party on the field with live bands, several auctions and we have several major league players come as well college coaches," he said. "We let everybody know how important it is being an organ donor."

### **Helping baseball's scouts in a post-'Moneyball' world**

Bill Shaikin, [Los Angeles Times](#) 1/13/2012

LOS ANGELES -- In the front offices of major league clubs, the statistics-vs.-scouts debate ended long ago. No club today could imagine winning without tapping the resources of the increasingly sophisticated statistical tools available as well as the experience of scouts trained to look at a kid today and project his tomorrows.

Yet that debate was very much alive in 2003, sparked by the book "Moneyball," and by author Michael Lewis' portrayal of how Oakland Athletics General Manager Billy Beane and assistant Paul DePodesta challenged the hegemony of the scouting community.

"Billy had his own idea about where to find future major league baseball players: inside Paul's computer," Lewis wrote. "He'd flirted with the idea of firing all the scouts and just drafting the kids straight from Paul's laptop."

The response from some owners was all too predictable. The A's won, at less cost, with fewer scouts. In the winter following the publication of "Moneyball," 103 scouts lost their jobs, according to veteran baseball executive Roland Hemond.

There was some small consolation in the timing. Hemond was among several baseball lifers concerned about how the sport treated scouts - the talent seekers living in chain hotels and eating fast food all summer, for wages so low that a savings account might be an extravagance.

The lifers decided to set up a foundation to assist scouts in need. Dennis Gilbert, a one-time minor leaguer and former agent for Barry Bonds and Bret Saberhagen, said he would provide the seed money.

"We were taken aback that Dennis would take on a venture like that," Hemond said. "Without him, we don't have the foundation."

The Professional Baseball Scouts Foundation launched in 2003, just in time to help that post-"Moneyball" wave of unemployed scouts. The foundation offers emergency financial assistance to scouts and their families in times of need, from paying a mortgage bill to covering funeral expenses.

The foundation's ninth annual gala takes place Saturday at the Century Plaza Hotel, a star-studded fundraiser with guests including Hall of Famers Johnny Bench and Frank Robinson, Dodgers star Matt Kemp and Commissioner Bud Selig.

Gilbert, the driving force behind the gala, is a special assistant to Chicago White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf. Gilbert, a lifelong Angeleno, is heading one of the groups bidding to buy the Dodgers.

"Dennis would be a great owner," Reinsdorf said. "Dennis is a great person. He'll have a lot of competition."

### **Former South Effingham baseball star headed to Oakland after challenging season in Boston**

By Stephen Prudhomme, Spiritnewspaper.com, Pooler, GA, 1/13/2012

Josh Reddick says he loves playing for the Boston Red Sox and standing in the same batting box at Fenway Park as past team greats Babe Ruth and Ted Williams.

This year the opportunities to stand in that batting box won't be as numerous. Just like Ruth, Reddick has been traded to another team. It remains to be seen whether a curse is forthcoming.

A Rincon resident and former baseball star at South Effingham High, the 24-year-old outfielder was traded to the Oakland A's last month as part of a multi-player deal. Reddick was on a cruise and unavailable for comment when the trade was announced. In his blog, he wrote: "To all the Red Sox fans, thanks for the memories and shout outs. Looking forward to playing in Fenway in late April."

In an on-line article by Jane Lee of MLB.com, A's assistant general manger David Forst says they viewed Reddick as an everyday outfielder who they've liked for quite some time. He adds that hitting coach Chili Davis saw him a lot and really liked him in center field when he was with the Red Sox (in the minors) and describes him as a very good defensive outfielder in the majors.

Reddick played in 80 games for the Red Sox last season and batted .280 with seven home runs and 28 RBIS. He also was named a Topps rookie all-star. Still recovering from wrist surgery in November, he says he expects to be fully healthy when spring training opens next month.

Reddick was part of a team last season that invited intense media and fan scrutiny after it gave up a big lead and fell just short of the playoffs. Manger Terry Francona was subsequently fired amid reports of players drinking during games, taking the blame for a team, with one of the highest payrolls in baseball, not living up to its potential.

Reddick says he has a lot of respect for Francona and maintains the former Red Sox manager didn't lose control of the clubhouse. "He treated us like men," Reddick says. "We were ready to play. They made a scapegoat out of him."

As to reports of drinking in the clubhouse, Reddick says he did not see that going on. He adds the team featured veterans who were ready to play and that he focused on the game and "keeping my mouth shut."

Boston's historic collapse wasn't due to a lack of effort, according to Reddick.

"We tried hard," Reddick notes. "We came to the clubhouse and focused on the game that day. It's as though someone put a spell on us. Everything went against us. We fell apart."

Reddick had to endure some boos from the Fenway faithful after making a fielding error against the Orioles late in the season. He says he tried to block it out and took a deep breath when he got to the dugout.

Remarking that it "sucks" to fall short of the playoffs, Reddick says he didn't watch a whole lot of the World Series. He adds he wanted to go home and not watch or talk about baseball. "I had been playing baseball for 9 months," says Reddick, who

lives with his brother and sister-in-law in Rincon. "I didn't want to deal with it."

What Reddick will have to deal with this season in Oakland, just as in Boston, is the talent level at the major league level. Comparing it to the minors, he says it's a huge step in talent and quality. Noting that it's full of superstars, Reddick says you have to make constant adjustments and be on top of your game.

Pitchers, he adds, find your weakness in a heartbeat and put the ball where they want 90 percent of the time. Every hitter has one pitcher they struggle against, and for Reddick it's A.J. Burnett of the New York Yankees.

"He's hit around in the league, but I can't figure him out," Reddick says. "I've never gotten a hit against him. His stuff is electric."

To break that hitless streak, Reddick says, he needs to adopt a cocky edge and the attitude that Burnett will not get him out. "I have to go up there with the idea I'll rip it to left or over the wall," he adds.

Although he's no longer in Boston, Reddick's goal with the A's likely remains the same. "I went to be a starter and help the team win," Reddick says. "There is no 'I' in team."

Of course, nothing would be better than smacking a home run from that famous batter's box at Fenway Park and perhaps eliciting some boos and perhaps even a few cheers from the Red Sox fans.