

A's News Clips, Friday, January 20, 2012

A's in 'serious' talks with outfielder Jonny Gomes

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Outfielder Jonny Gomes, the pride of Petaluma, is nearing a deal that would bring him to the Bay Area for the 2012 season.

Gomes "could be in green and gold by Monday," one source with knowledge of the negotiations said Thursday, and another source confirmed that talks are serious.

Two other teams, however, are believed to be suitors for Gomes, potentially complicating matters as clubs try to fill their remaining roster spots before spring training camps open next month.

The A's have been looking at the free-agent market for outfield depth, and in particular for batters with good splits against left-handed pitchers. Gomes is a lifetime .281 hitter against lefties, compared with .224 against right-handers, making him a strong possibility to platoon with new A's outfielder Seth Smith, a career .290 hitter against right-handers but just a .202 hitter against lefties.

Should the sides come to terms, Gomes, 31, also could get at-bats at the DH spot, with the A's unsettled at that position.

When Gomes has played in the Bay Area as a visiting player, he typically draws a large contingent of fans from Sonoma County, sometimes filling an entire section; "Jonny Gomes Night" in 2007 at the Coliseum accounted for 707 tickets sold, matching Petaluma's area code.

Gomes, who attended Casa Grande High School and Santa Rosa Junior College, is known for his high-energy playing style and for his occasional tangles on the field.

One notable dust-up came in 2008, when Gomes was with the Rays and Coco Crisp, then of the Red Sox, charged the mound. Gomes was suspended for five games for throwing punches at Crisp, who recently re-signed with Oakland for two seasons and who would be playing in center field next to Gomes if the deal comes to fruition.

Career stats

Year	Team	G	HR	RBI	AVG
2003	TB	8	0	0	.133
2004	TB	5	0	1	.071
2005	TB	101	21	54	.282
2006	TB	117	20	59	.216
2007	TB	107	17	49	.244
2008	TB	77	8	21	.182
2009	CIN	98	20	51	.267
2010	CIN	148	18	86	.266
2011	CIN, WASH	120	14	43	.209
Totals		781	118	364	.242

Drumbeat: Petaluma's Jonny Gomes nearing a deal with the A's

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 1/19/2012, 1:17pm

A source close to the situation tells me that Petaluma's favorite son, Jonny Gomes, is so close to signing a contract with the A's "he could be in green and gold by Monday," and a second source confirmed that a deal is likely.

After acquiring Seth Smith in a trade last week, A's general manager Billy Beane said that the team would still look to add outfield depth, with an emphasis on outfielders with good numbers against left-handed pitchers. Conor Jackson, who played with the A's last season before being traded to Boston, was a consideration, as was another former A's player, Johnny Damon.

But it now appears that Gomes, 31, will be the guy, and that will make the 707 proud – Gomes annually attracts nearly a full section of fans from Petaluma when he's in town, so maybe Sonoma County can help boost Oakland's attendance this season.

Gomes also will bring a lot of energy and a good sense of humor to the Oakland clubhouse, along with giving a young club another veteran presence. And he's a career .281 hitter against lefties (with a .375 OBP), compared to .224 (and .306) vs. right-handers. I think it's safe to say he'll mostly be starting against lefties.

I've always thought it would be kind of neat for Gomes to play in the Bay Area. With his personality and local appeal, I believe he can be a real fan favorite. I know a lot of A's fans are trying to find a reason to stick with the team this year, and find someone to root for.... well, here's your guy, if some of the fun returning A's (Dallas Braden, Jemile Weeks, Coco Crisp) and the interesting young additions (too many to list) don't do the trick.

I don't know terms of any deal yet, but I have to assume it would be a one-year contract, with perhaps a chance of a team option.

Beane makes moves to give A's hope

Facing uphill climb, GM's puts his plan for the future in motion

By Richard Justice / MLB.com

Billy Beane vividly remembers the night he and his boss at the time, Sandy Alderson, were leaving work a few hours after trading Mark McGwire in 1997.

"We were in last place. We were last in the league in attendance," he said. "I thought, 'It can't get any worse than this.'"

At that point, it felt like the Oakland A's might never win another game, and Beane has revisited those emotions often the past few months in the midst of beginning another reconstruction project.

He'll never forget the empty feeling he had after trading McGwire to the Cardinals, but he also remembers what happened in the days after the deal.

First, rookie Ben Grieve was summoned from the Minor Leagues and had three doubles in his debut. A few days after that, Miguel Tejada was called up.

"We were still in last place," Beane said. "But there was a light at the end of the tunnel."

Indeed, there were better days ahead. Over the next three seasons, Eric Chavez, Mark Mulder, Barry Zito and Tim Hudson would also arrive, and the A's would make four straight playoff appearances and average 98 victories a season between 2000-03.

One of Beane's many gifts as general manager of the A's -- he replaced Alderson in 1997 -- has been his aggressiveness. He's unafraid to trade a player a year early rather than a year late. He also has been able to assess his club honestly and deal with a reality others sometimes can't or won't face. He has refused to accept mediocrity.

"At this stage of my career, I could pretend to kick the can down the road," he said, "but that's not part of my DNA. When you're somewhere in the middle, you're just prolonging the process you'll eventually have to undertake. The competitor in me wants to win every day, but I also want to create something that'll get better year after year."

When he looked at the A's after the 2011 season, he saw a third-place club that had neither the payroll nor the Minor League talent to make a dramatic improvement. He had \$51 million in contract commitments for 2012 and a \$55 million budget even before attempting to re-sign his starting outfield of David DeJesus, Josh Willingham and Coco Crisp (only Crisp will be back).

"I had to look at it honestly," he said. "Look at the moves the Angels and Rangers have made. They're going to have payrolls rivaling the Red Sox and Yankees. It just seemed foolish to go forward with a third-place team that was losing significant parts. We felt we had to do something dramatic."

As A's assistant GM David Forst put it: "Given our choice, we wouldn't want Albert Pujols in our division. But it confirmed that this was a necessary move on our part. You're either planning to be good or stuck in mediocrity."

They are mediocre no more. They also believe that reports of 120 losses have been greatly overstated. Despite the trades, the A's should still have a pitching staff good enough to keep them in most games.

But trading their three most marketable pitchers -- starters Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez and closer Andrew Bailey -- was done with an eye on the future. In doing so, Beane acquired 10 players between the ages of 19 and 25. He'll also have four of the first 56 picks in the June Draft.

Among the 10 new players are three pitchers -- Brad Peacock, Tom Milone and Jarrod Parker -- who could someday be the nucleus of a great staff.

As for 2012, it'll be interesting to see how the club evolves during the season and where the new kids land. Beane signed veteran starter Bartolo Colon, acquired outfielder Seth Smith from the Rockies and has offered a contract to outfielder Jonny Gomes for immediate help. Still, this season's more important work will be in player development.

Beane's ultimate goal is to have the A's in a good place if they're given permission by Major League Baseball to build a new ballpark in San Jose. That new park could be a dramatic step forward in allowing the franchise to have a competitive payroll.

"Given a choice, I'd rather be sitting here knowing we're going to be competitive with the Rangers and Angels," Forst said. "That's why we've been so public in our push for a new stadium. We do believe in a new venue we'll be sitting here in three or four years ready to do that."

There's surely something inside that has both Beane and Forst wildly excited about getting to Spring Training and seeing all the new talent they've accumulated. After a week or two, they may see another light at the end of the tunnel.

"One of the most exhilarating things is to look on the field and see a group you think is going to be pretty special in a couple of years," Beane said. "We just have to have the guts to see it through. There's some optimism we may finally get that new stadium. If we do, this probably was a necessary step anyway."

He remembers how former Indians GM John Hart had the Indians positioned for five straight playoff appearances when Jacobs Field opened in 1994.

"There was a little bit of pain before that new stadium," Beane said, "but they did it right. Everyone thought the stadium was why they were selling out. It was a good team in that stadium. No one has done it as well as Cleveland."

A's linked to veteran outfielder Gomes

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's are reportedly on the verge of adding yet another veteran to their outfield mix in right-handed-hitting Jonny Gomes.

The 31-year-old Gomes, a career .281 hitter against lefties, could sign with Oakland as soon as Monday, according to The San Francisco Chronicle. Specific terms of the deal have not yet been disclosed, but a one-year contract is likely.

Having acquired Seth Smith in a trade with the Rockies earlier in the week, the A's stand to boost their outfield depth with a player who should nicely complement the left-handed-hitting duo of Smith and projected starting right fielder Josh Reddick.

Gomes, a Bay Area native, posted a .209 average with 14 home runs and 43 RBIs in a combined 120 games for the Reds and Nationals last year. The majority of his appearances came in left field.

He spent the first six seasons of his professional career with the Rays and, since 2003, has compiled a .242 average and .780 OPS. Gomes' most productive season came in 2010, when he hit .266 and drove in 86 runs while appearing in a career-high 148 games for Cincinnati.

Reddick honored by Red Sox: excited to join A's

By Ian Browne / MLB.com

BOSTON -- Josh Reddick came back to Massachusetts on Thursday night to be honored as the Red Sox's Rookie of the Year for 2011. In an otherwise comfortable return, the only wrinkle was that Boston is no longer his hometown during baseball season.

Just after Christmas, and just before Reddick was getting ready to leave for a cruise, he was traded to the Oakland Athletics as part of a deal for Andrew Bailey and Ryan Sweeney.

The Red Sox gained a closer and an unheralded veteran. They lost one of their most promising young players -- someone who just might have been their starting right fielder in 2012.

"It was actually the day before I was going on the cruise," Reddick said. "I was actually already in Jacksonville, Fla., and I was having dinner with an old high school coach. As soon as we walked out from eating lunch, I got a phone call from [general manager] Ben [Cherington]. I knew right away what had happened. He gave me a heads up, and the next day, we took off. It kind of worked out, because I turned the phone off, so I didn't have to worry about it blowing up. It's pretty good."

The trade came right around the time Reddick thought he would be returning to the Red Sox, the only organization he's played for.

"It was a bit of a surprise," said Reddick. "I thought if it was going to happen, it was going to happen at the Winter Meetings. Once we got past that point, it was kind of just sit by your phone and wait kind of deal. Once that passed over, I thought, 'I'll be going to Fort Myers in Spring Training.' Right back after the cruise, I was planning on going right back to Fort Myers and continuing to finish the rehab [from wrist surgery]. It didn't work out that way."

Though Reddick would have gladly stayed with the Red Sox for the rest of his career, he knows the type of opportunity the rebuilding Athletics have in mind for him. His days of shuttling back and forth from Triple-A have likely ended.

"It's going to be fun," Reddick said. "Obviously, that's what you want to do in this day and age as a young guy, so that's one thing I'm looking forward to. Obviously, it's going to be upsetting to leave Boston, but that's how the business goes and that's how you've got to deal with it."

Reddick is looking forward to his new adventure with the A's, one that will probably start with him playing in right field.

"I think center field was an option until we re-signed Coco [Crisp]," said Reddick. "Once we got him back, it was an option to move me to right field. Every depth chart you seem to look at has him in center and me in right. But like I've said in years past, I've played wherever they want me to."

Oakland fans will be glad to know that Reddick is well-versed in "Moneyball."

"It was actually quite funny," Reddick said. "When I got traded, I came back from the cruise and they wanted to fly me out there, and one of the movies that was showing on the plane was 'Moneyball.' I said, 'Why not?' I went ahead and got the feel for it and watched it. It turned out to be a pretty good movie."

And as the movie mentioned, the Red Sox had similar organizational philosophies as the A's, only with a lot more money to spend.

"Being with the Red Sox, I've learned a lot and developed quite a bit," said Reddick. "I'm just going to try to do what it takes to get on base. [A's general manager] Billy Beane seems to have the same kind of concept with on-base percentage -- and maybe not preach it as much as the Red Sox do -- but what every team wants to do is score runs, so I'll take the same approach I had this year into next year."

AP Source: A's close to deal with OF Jonny Gomes

By JANIE McCAULEY, AP Baseball Writer

The Oakland Athletics and Jonny Gomes were working Thursday to finalize a deal that would provide the team with outfield depth, a person with knowledge of the negotiations said.

The person confirmed the pending contract on condition of anonymity because the club had yet to formally announce the acquisition of Gomes, who grew up in nearby Petaluma and is still loved in wine country. The San Francisco Chronicle was first to report the sides were close to a deal Thursday.

The 31-year-old Gomes batted .209 with 14 home runs and 43 RBIs last year for Cincinnati and Washington in his ninth major league season.

Oakland's starting outfield is slated as newly acquired Seth Smith in left, re-signed Coco Crisp in center and new acquisition Josh Reddick in right. Collin Cowgill, acquired from Arizona in December, also is in the mix off the bench.

The A's have transformed their roster this winter, with general manager Billy Beane trading away many of his top pitchers.

Last month, the A's sent starter Trevor Cahill to the Diamondbacks along with reliever Craig Breslow, and All-Star lefty Gio Gonzalez to the Washington Nationals. Oakland also dealt All-Star closer Andrew Bailey and outfielder Ryan Sweeney to the Boston Red Sox on Dec. 28.

Oakland is expected to announce in the coming days that it has agreed to a one-year deal with right-hander Bartolo Colon.

Beane and A's owner Lew Wolff hope that Commissioner Bud Selig will rule the franchise can relocate some 40 miles south to San Jose and build a new ballpark. But the San Francisco Giants hold the territorial rights to technology-rich Silicon Valley. Selig said at the recent owners meetings a resolution "is very much on the front burner."

He appointed a committee in March 2009 to study the situation.

Tony Blengino represents Mariners on MLB Network's baseball trivia quiz show

Larry Stone, Seattle Times

Tony Blengino can't say too much about his appearance on the MLB Network's upcoming quiz show, Baseball IQ. The 32 contestants — one from each major-league team, plus MLB.com and the Hall of Fame — have been sworn to secrecy about the results until the show airs (much like the contestants on The Bachelor, not that there are any other comparisons between the two).

What Blengino — a special assistant to Mariners general manager Jack Zduriencik — can say is that there was "a stereotypical game-show buzzer" for the contestants to hit when they went head-to-head on a question. They did put makeup on him, "and I did not look freakish, as far as I could tell." And, yes, "there were lovely parting gifts. Everyone gets a basket of swag."

Baseball IQ, described as "a recall-based trivia show," premieres Tuesday at 6 p.m. Pacific time on MLB Network. Blengino's first-round match will air Tuesday, Feb. 7 at 6:30 p.m. Pacific time. He faced off against David Nosti, an account manager from the Oakland A's. That's part of the appeal of the program — the wide range of participants, ranging from front-office personnel to equipment managers and scoreboard operators.

"I got to meet a handful of (the contestants), and they're all super," Blengino said. "It's a cross section of different departments within the organization, but obviously they're all baseball lovers. They're all good, solid folks."

Of his foe, Nosti, Blengino said with a laugh, "Ironically, he was another Italian guy from New Jersey — although he was probably young enough to be my son. He's got his stuff together."

In the Mariners' case, they held an in-house trivia contest to determine their representative, in which Blengino came out on top of about a dozen participants. He said he was ambivalent at first about participating, but when people kept telling him he should do it, "it becomes a defend-your-honor type of thing."

Blengino was somewhat reluctant to leave the office while Mariners business is still being conducted, "but I asked Jack beforehand if there was any reason you don't want me to do this. He said, 'Go for it.' "

All the contestants flew to Secaucus, N.J., earlier this month for filming of the bracket-style tournament, which took place over a two-week period, according to MLB Network spokesman Lou Barricelli. A winner has been crowned, and will be revealed in the final episode on Feb. 23. There will be two new episodes aired each Tuesday beginning at 6 p.m. Pacific time until then. Participants can earn up to \$45,000 for their designated charity (Mariners Care, in Blengino's case).

The show is mostly predicated on lists, such as this one from the Mariners' test: "Name the 15 winningest pitchers in Padres history." But questions cover the gamut of the sport and its history.

The 48-year-old Blengino, who oversees the Mariners statistical analysis for player evaluation at all levels, as well as overseeing their advance scouting staff, comes by his baseball knowledge honestly. A native of Magnolia, N.J., he's been a rabid fan since the 1971 World Series between the Orioles and Pirates captivated him.

"That's when it all just locked in," he said. "That World Series is emblazoned in my memory — Roberto Clemente doing the things he did. I was mesmerized. From that point forward ... I got my first baseball game, Sports Illustrated Baseball, for Christmas when I was 8. My mom woke up at 7, and I was already a few games into the season."

Blengino graduated from St. Joseph's University in 1985 with a degree in accounting, and started a career as a certified public accountant. But the baseball bug kept tugging at him. He joined SABR (the Society of American Baseball Research) and published an annual book called "Future Stars," which was a scouting and statistical review of prospects. He eventually got into scouting in 2003 with the Milwaukee Brewers, where Zduriencik was scouting director. Blengino and current M's scouting director Tom McNamara were the two Brewers employees Zduriencik brought with him to Seattle.

Now Blengino can add "game show contestant" to his résumé, but he's not ready for another career change.

"It was a fun experience," he said. "I doubt if I'll ever have the experience of being on a game show again. The stars came into alignment."

Josh Reddick gets his introduction to Moneyball

By [Alex Speier](#), WEEI radio, 1/19/2012

Josh Reddick was already scheduled to go on a cruise the day after he was informed by GM **Ben Cherington** that the Sox were close to trading Reddick to the A's as part of a three-player package for **Andrew Bailey** and **Ryan Sweeney**, and so when the news became official, he'd already turned off his cell phone when the inevitable wave of calls came following his trade.

Upon Reddick's return to land, the A's wanted to fly their new outfielder to Oakland. Given the destination of his trip, his movie choice was fairly straightforward.

"It was actually quite funny," said Reddick. "When I got traded, I came back from the cruise and they wanted to fly me out there, and one of the movies that was showing on the plane was Moneyball. I said, 'Why not?' I went ahead and got the feel for it and watched it. It turned out to be a pretty good movie.

"As long as we don't have to pay a dollar for Cokes in the clubhouse," he added, joking about one of the clubhouse matters that was addressed in the movie, "I'll be all right."

The news was bittersweet for Reddick. The Red Sox drafted him in the 17th round in 2006 and signed him for \$140,000. Over the course of five pro seasons, he developed from an obscure non-prospect into someone who served as Boston's primary right fielder in 2011, hitting .280 with a .327 OBP, .457 slugging mark, .784 OPS, seven homers and 28 RBI in 87 games (278 plate appearances).

He has roots in the Red Sox organization and none in Oakland. Indeed, Reddick said that he knows no one with the A's and will be starting anew. Still, he will enter 2012 being given every opportunity to establish himself as an everyday big league outfielder, with a more certain opportunity in Oakland than the one he would have had in Boston.

"Obviously, it's going to be upsetting to leave Boston, but that's how the business goes and that's how you've got to deal with it," said Reddick, who is being recognized by the Boston chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America as the team's Rookie of the Year. "It was a bit of a surprise. I thought, if it was going to happen, it was going to happen at the winter meetings. Once we got past that point, I was laid-back with all the media talk with Bailey at the winter meetings, so it was kind of just sit by your phone and wait kind of deal. Once that passed over, I thought, I'll be going to Fort Myers in

spring training. Right back after the cruise, I was planning on going right back to Fort Myers and continuing to finish the rehab. It didn't work out that way.

"It's going to be fun [in Oakland]," he added. "Obviously, [an everyday opportunity is] what you want to do in this day and age as a young guy, so that's one thing I'm looking forward to."

In many respects, Reddick's career path aligns well with the sort of undervalued player whom the A's famously targeted in the book and movie. He was overlooked as an amateur and had to spend years fighting to prove himself worthy of his big league opportunity. But, now, he represents the sort of asset for the long term around whom the A's want to build, a young player with above average power and good defensive abilities who could justify a deal that would send a highly regarded closer like Bailey to another team.

"It feels good," Reddick said. "Obviously, it's something I've wanted to do my whole career is be a big-league ballplayer. To be traded for a two-time All-Star in his first three years in the majors shows a lot of clout in myself, I believe, and shows that the Red Sox did a good job on developing me as a player and making me an everyday player."

Interestingly, the absence of Reddick could be felt by the Sox, especially at the beginning of the year. **Ryan Kalish**, who likely was ticketed for Triple-A anyway, won't be available at the beginning of the season due to surgery to repair the torn labrum in his left shoulder. Meanwhile, news that **Carl Crawford** will require wrist surgery — a procedure that, it turns out, is almost identical to one that Reddick underwent in mid-November, with an eight-week timetable for recovery — will leave the Sox with a potential short-term shortage of outfielders at the beginning of the season.

That said, based on his own experience with the surgery, Reddick believes that Crawford will not miss much of the season. Reddick said that he was given an eight-week timetable for recovery; if Crawford follows a similar path, he would be unlikely to miss more than a few early-season games.

"I've been playing through slight pain for the last year and a half, and it was very manageable to go and get to the field early and get the trainers to look at it, get it heated up, get it treated. It got really bad after that hit-by-pitch against Texas [in early September]. That sparked it up a little bit more," said Reddick. "I got a cortisone shot to help it to the end of the year. I went home, and everything would have been fine if I wasn't going to swing, but I went and played in Taiwan for a week and had a few more at-bats, so that barked it right back up. When I got back, I got it looked at, just in case — I had some off-time — and it showed torn cartilage and a ganglion cyst right there in the wrist. We got it fixed."

"I think it was the exact same surgery [for Crawford]," he added. "Mine was cartilage as well. It's not really that tough of a rehab process. As long as you're there working, which Carl does, as we've all read about and seen, he'll be just fine. From the articles I've read, he'll be missing Opening Day and, at most, I have a feeling he's going to miss maybe a week. You obviously don't want to come back too quick from it, but he'll be fine."

In position to give

An established big league catcher, Suzuki hasn't forgotten his home

By ROBERT COLLIAS, Maui News, 1/19/2012

WAILUKU - Kurt Suzuki has not seen the "Moneyball" movie. He has lived it.

Suzuki, a 2001 graduate of Baldwin High School and the Oakland Athletics' starting catcher, will report to spring training next month as one of two Maui players with a major league contract, and prepare for his sixth big league season.

His entire professional career has the been spent in the Athletics' system - meaning he's been playing for general manager Billy Beane, the subject of the book "Moneyball," turned into a film with Brad Pitt in the lead role.

"It's cool. Billy has a great relationship with all his players," Suzuki said Saturday, before the Kurt Suzuki All Pono Baseball Clinic at Maehara Stadium.

"We have always got along, we talk a lot. He is a smart guy. He thinks outside the box. He doesn't do the normal thing. When you are working with a small-market team, you have to think outside the box, you have to really know how to scout and the A's have a good scouting department. They develop players and that says a lot about an organization."

After playing at Baldwin, Suzuki led Cal State-Fullerton to a College World Series title before being taken in the second round of the 2004 draft.

"It is very gratifying, being able to be in the position I'm in, to give back to the community," Suzuki said. "I don't think people realize how important the support is, especially being a Maui boy, a local guy, having the support of your hometown behind you 100 percent is pretty amazing and it is a pretty surreal feeling."

Baldwin coach Jon Viela, who was an assistant for the Bears when Suzuki was an all-state catcher, runs the All Pono Foundation in memory of his deceased son to help Maui youths develop in sports.

"When Kurt mentioned that he wanted to do something for the community last year I knew that his intention was to give back to the kids from where he grew up," Viela said. "With knowing how he was raised by (parents) Warren and Kathleen, it didn't surprise me that he wanted to give back to the kids - that is just the way he is."

Viela said that he and then-Baldwin head coach Kahai Shishido heard a good deal about Suzuki's abilities from his older sister, Kari Ann.

"Definitely, from when he was in 7th or 8th grade, his sister was our statistician and she kept on telling us, Kahai and myself, to keep an eye on her brother because he was good," Viela said. "Just knowing siblings, we thought that she just wanted to put in a good word for her brother, but she obviously knew that he had something special. He has helped out the program, he has helped out the school, he provides scholarships for athletes to go to college."

Suzuki is entering the second season of a four-year, \$23 million contract and is scheduled to make \$5 million this season.

The A's have not made the playoffs since 2006, and their best season with Suzuki was 2010, when they went 81-81. Playing in the American League West could mean another uphill climb.

"You never like to rule anything out," Suzuki said. "You definitely have to go out there and perform. Obviously, Albert Pujols with the Angels, C.J. Wilson with the Angels, the Rangers being who they are, signing Yu Darvish as well, the Mariners being a great, young, talented team, you still have to go out there and perform on the field and that is what I like to tell. That is what I am going to go out in spring training and say, is: 'We may not look like the best team on paper, but we've got a lot of young talent, we have got a lot of energy.' "

Suzuki is a new father - his and wife Renee's daughter, Malia, is 8 months old.

"It definitely has changed my perspective," he said. "You have a daughter to take care of. My main goal is to take care of my family. I think that kind of gives you extra motivation in itself."

Once the season starts, Suzuki is a busy man. He has played 528 games at catcher in the last four seasons, and a typical day starts at 1 p.m. for a game that begins at 7.

"I will go to the video room, watch video for probably about an hour, hour and a half, and then I will go to the batting cage for about 20 minutes, 30 minutes," he said. "Then I will go meet with the pitching coach and the other catchers to do a scouting report, more scouting reports together, and then we have got to go out and stretch for batting practice. I will come in early, meet with the pitcher, the starting pitcher that day and the pitching coach to go over a game plan for the team. Then I will go and change my clothes, get into my game clothes. I will go warm up, go stretch in the training room, whatever I have to do, and then go do my stuff to get ready for the game. And then I will go out there, so downtime is very minimal."

This offseason, Suzuki has worked out with Kula resident Kanekoa Texeira, a reliever who signed a minor league contract with the Cincinnati Reds organization earlier this month.

"I tell the guys in Oakland, 'If this guy comes free, get him because he is good,' " Suzuki said. "He has got a lot of potential."

Suzuki threw out 38 would-be base-stealers last year, third in the major leagues, while batting .237 with 14 home runs and 44 RBIs.

"You never want to stop, you want to go out there and perform and you want to become the best player out there," he said. "And that's my goal, I want to be the best catcher in the major leagues and I am never going to stop until I get to that point."