

A's News Clips, Thursday, January 26, 2012

Cespedes can negotiate with big league teams

Associated Press

Major League Baseball has told teams that Cuban outfielder Yoenis Cespedes is eligible to negotiate with teams.

The commissioner's office notified clubs Wednesday, a day after Cespedes established legal residency in the Dominican Republic.

His agent confirmed the residency Tuesday.

MLB said Cespedes cannot finalize a contract until he obtains an unblocking license from the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control.

Cespedes said six major-league teams - the Marlins, Orioles, Tigers, Indians, Cubs and White Sox - are interested in him.

Braun a no-show: The Brewers say NL MVP Ryan Braun will not attend the team's fan festival Sunday because it's too sensitive a period for the slugger, who awaits a decision of his appeal of a 50-game suspension under baseball's drug policy. Brewers owner Mark Attanasio said Braun and the team "came to the conclusion that this is too sensitive of a time in the confidential process for him to attend this year."

Bailey gets raise: The Red Sox agreed to terms with former A's right-hander Andrew Bailey on a one-year contract worth \$3.9 million. Bailey made \$465,000 last year.

Ziegler, D'backs agree: Former A's right-hander Brad Ziegler and the Diamondbacks agreed to a one-year contract worth \$1,795,000, a deal that avoids arbitration. Ziegler, 32, made \$1.25 million last season.

Briefly: Former A's left-hander Gio Gonzalez signed his \$42 million, five-year contract with the Nationals. ... Right-hander Nick Masset agreed on a two-year, \$5.5 million deal with the Reds. ... Andruw Jones and the Yankees finalized a \$2 million, one-year contract. ... The Rockies and right-hander Rafael Betancourt agreed to an \$8.5 million, two-year contract. ... Cardinals closer Jason Motte agreed to a \$1.95 million, one-year contract after helping St. Louis win the World Series.

A's place six on Top 100 Prospects list

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Perhaps no other team has produced as much criticism this winter as the A's, who chose to trade away two of the game's best young pitchers in exchange for a handful of prospects.

The departure of All-Stars Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez, which was followed by Andrew Bailey's exit to Boston in yet another trade soon after, was met with much skepticism by A's fans, who are no strangers to the rebuilding path on which Oakland now occupies yet again.

They'll surely watch the A's endure multiple growing pains this year and, likely, the next, but it's Oakland's hope that the same prospects gained in the past few months will help make up a contending team as soon as 2014.

Exactly how many will reach their full potential remains to be seen. However, based on their showing on MLB.com's Top 100 Prospects list, A's fans stand reason to tuck away a dose of hope.

Three of the 10 prospects acquired via the aforementioned trades -- right-handers Jarrod Parker, Brad Peacock and A.J. Cole -- are on the list, as are righty Sonny Gray and outfielders Michael Choice and Grant Green. Oakland's party of six is only matched in number by the Padres and Rays.

This year's edition of MLB.com's Top Prospects list has expanded from 50 to 100 players. The annual ranking of baseball's biggest and brightest young talent is assembled by MLB.com's Draft and prospect expert **Jonathan Mayo**, who compiles input from industry sources, including scouts and scouting directors. It is based on analysis of players' skill sets, upsides, closeness to the Majors and potential immediate impact to their teams. The list, which is one of several prospect rankings on **MLB.com's Prospect Watch**, only includes players with rookie status in 2012.

Mayo handed the 23-year-old Parker a No. 26 ranking, but in Oakland's system he was immediately seen as No. 1 following his arrival in the Cahill deal.

"It was important to us that, if we were going to trade Trevor, we were going to get a guy that has the chance to be a front-line starter back, and we feel like Jarrod is that guy," A's assistant general manager David Forst said at the time of the trade.

Following rehab from his 2010 Tommy John surgery, Parker posted an 11-8 record and 3.79 ERA for Arizona's Double-A Mobile affiliate last summer. He was called up to the big leagues for the first time in September and made a quick impression in just one start, tossing 5 2/3 shutout innings and earning a spot on the D-backs' postseason roster.

Parker has a four-pitch mix, he represents one of several candidates to fill out the back of Oakland's rotation this year. Equally ready is Peacock, a product of the Gonzalez deal who landed at No. 75 on the list.

The young hurler, who will turn 24 in February, went a combined 15-3 with a 2.39 ERA between Double-A and Triple-A last year before being promoted to Washington, where he allowed just one run in 12 innings down the stretch.

Cole, meanwhile, is No. 88 on the list despite being just 19 with no experience above the Class A level, where he posted a 4-7 record and 4.04 ERA in 20 games -- 18 starts -- last year. In 89 innings, he tallied 108 strikeouts vs. just 24 walks and, when ready, is expected to become a front-line starter in the big leagues.

Just ahead of Cole on the list is Gray, who came in at No. 85. The A's 2011 first-round Draft pick jumpstarted his professional career in fine fashion, making five starts for Double-A Midland in the final two months of the season and not allowing a run until his last outing.

Gray, 22, finished with just one run to his name in 20 innings of work, also gathering 18 strikeouts and issuing six free passes while holding opponents to a .214 average. The 5-foot-11 righty, who compares himself to the likes of Tim Hudson and Roy Oswalt, is expected to land in the big leagues at a quick pace.

"He just has incredible gumption and fortitude," A's scouting director Eric Kubota said. "He's one of those kids who isn't backing out of any situation. He's not afraid of anything. He's going to go out and do everything he can on any given day to get you out."

Off the mound, Choice currently boasts more all-around potential than any other A's prospect, and he made the list at No. 59. The 22-year-old center fielder, another first-round pick by the A's, enjoyed a memorable full-season debut in 2011, collecting 30 home runs and 82 RBIs to go along with a .918 OPS in 118 games with Class A Stockton.

Power isn't the only thing Choice has to offer. The young outfielder boasts excellent speed and has the potential to develop into an above-average defender. The A's have no plans of rushing his journey to the big leagues, especially with Coco Crisp back in center, but Choice could potentially see Major League action by the end of this season.

Also in the center-field mix is Green, who transitioned to the position from shortstop last year. He's done well with the move and, in his first season at the Double-A level, hit .291 with a .750 OPS. Green's power numbers noticeably dropped from the previous year, when he had an .883 OPS at Class A. While some look to the strong Texas League winds blowing in Double-A Midland as an explanation, Green also endured some back soreness.

Green shouldn't be too far behind Choice. Both figure to play prominent roles in Oakland's future