

Inbox: Will Parker be ready in 2013?

Beat reporter Jane Lee answers fans' questions

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

The A's did not land a top third-base prospect in their latest trades. Do they feel Stephen Parker will be the real deal in 2013?

-- Jeff C., Kennewick, Wash.

That could definitely be the year Parker eases into the big league scene, but I don't think the A's are going to rush the process. At the moment, they're quite comfortable with Scott Sizemore at third base and the potential he has there with more time under his belt, while Parker is still very much a work in progress. He's been rather inconsistent with the glove during his time in the Minors -- he has a career .924 fielding percentage at third base -- and also saw a dip in power last year at the Double-A level. However, the long-term power potential is there for Parker, who will likely start the season in Sacramento.

At the same time, I'd suspect Billy Beane and Co. are always on the lookout for a third baseman since it is an area that doesn't have a ton of depth. But when making those trades this offseason, the team needed to address immediate needs and felt it did so by acquiring a couple of outfielders, as well as pitchers to fill the holes left by Gio Gonzalez and Trevor Cahill.

Why did the A's designate Adrian Cardenas? Why not Pedro Figueroa? Figueroa hasn't even played in Triple-A, but Cardenas has.

-- Jonathan T., Woodside, Calif.

Cardenas simply doesn't have a defensive home in Oakland right now. There's something of a roster crunch, with Jemile Weeks entrenched at second base and Sizemore having taken the reins at third. I believe Cardenas offers a decent amount of value, particularly offensively, so I know the A's would like to retain him, but perhaps this is either their way of giving him the chance to be picked up by another team on waivers or trying to work him into a trade of some sort. Cardenas has good on-base potential and could offer respectable utility services to another team, so I wouldn't be surprised if either of those scenarios surface. However, he is just 24, so the A's would do well by having him back in the system.

What other missing pieces are there for the A's after rebuilding the pitching rotation and the outfield?

-- Jason M., San Jose, Calif.

Not much, it seems, but the A's are never done looking, and I wouldn't be surprised if they brought in a designated hitter by the start of camp. The team, at this point, does appear serious about signing Manny Ramirez, simply based on the fact it's done nothing to dissuade speculation of its potential interest. I still think the fit would be rather odd, but inserting him into the middle of the batting order would automatically change the look of what, right now, is still a mostly powerless lineup.

Can you predict this season's "surprise" player? Weeks was a pleasant surprise for the A's last season.

-- David N., Santa Monica, Calif.

I'm not sure anyone will stand out as much and in such quick fashion as Weeks did last year, but keep an eye on Collin Cowgill. Since he was dealt to the A's in the Cahill trade, it seems he's kind of gotten lost in the shuffle of outfielders, and at the moment, it appears unlikely he'll grab a starting job with Seth Smith, Coco Crisp and Josh Reddick expected out there, left to right, come Opening Day.

But manager Bob Melvin made it very clear at FanFest on Sunday that Cowgill will be watched closely in spring and has not been ruled out of the mix. Melvin raved about him, and when looking at what he's done in his Minor League career, it's hard to find an area of weakness in his game. He can hit for power, he has some speed and his above-average throwing arm allows him to play all three outfield positions.

Perhaps he lands on the team as a fourth outfielder to start the season, maybe he spends one too many days on the bench. But whenever he gets the chance to play, I think we'll see an exciting player.

I hate to sound like Bart Simpson with the "Are we there yet, are we there yet?" but any news today on a new stadium?

-- Denny H., Triangle, Va.

Not today, and I doubt there will be any tomorrow or the next day or a week from now. A month from now? Perhaps. All I can tell you is what the A's brass keeps telling us, and officials remain confident in their belief that a decision is coming "soon."