

A's owner talks about San Jose move

By John Woolfolk, San Jose Mercury News, 2/9/2012

A fuzzy toy likeness of A's elephant mascot Stomper greeted the San Jose Rotary lunch crowd Wednesday waving a baseball glove and wearing a green shirt proclaiming "San Jose Athletics."

But after three years of hoping and waiting for Major League Baseball to say whether the A's can seek a San Jose ballpark over San Francisco Giants' territorial objections, owner Lew Wolff could only tell the room full of city power brokers that he believes a decision will come soon.

Wolff couldn't say how soon, and he shares San Jose's frustrations with the delay. He believes he's made a solid case that he has exhausted his options in Oakland and an A's move to San Jose is best for baseball. He remained optimistic about the prospects for a San Jose move.

"It's excruciating," Wolff said. "But I do think we're getting to an end."

The A's lease at Oakland's coliseum runs out after next season, adding pressure to resolve the team's ballpark question to ensure the team will have a place to play. Oakland officials continue to fight to keep the team, moving this week to spend \$3 million for stadium architects to design a new sports complex at the coliseum site.

But Wolff dismissed those efforts and suggestions from Oakland fans that he hasn't worked hard enough on a new ballpark plan in that city or elsewhere in the team's Alameda County territory. Wolff said he spent more than four years working on proposals in Oakland that never bore fruit.

Wolff added that the team spent \$80 million acquiring property and pursuing a ballpark site in Fremont -- and expects to lose some \$30 million of that -- before giving up and setting its sites on San Jose in 2009.

"We really wanted to stay and figure it out in Oakland. We wouldn't have expended that money in Fremont if this was just a head-fake to get to San Jose," Wolff said. "We had to go appeal to the league and say 'Tell us what to do, we're out of options.' "

Wolff said that there's been no indication from the Giants of any change in bargaining position or talk of a buyoff price for the team's territorial right to Santa Clara County. Both teams had shared the Bay Area for decades. Previous A's owners allowed the Giants rights to Santa Clara County -- for free, Wolff noted. That was in the early 1990s when that team made two failed attempts to secure voter approval for South Bay ballparks.

"I think the attitude of the Giants," Wolff said, "is similar to what it's been for over three years."

But while Wolff said the Giants were "stonewalling," he said he didn't blame them for acting in their team's best interest.

"That's why we need the commissioner," Wolff said.

It was clear that local officials have lost patience with Commissioner Bud Selig, a fraternity brother of Wolff.

"We're all exasperated," San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed said. "It's been three years -- that's way too long."

But Wolff defended Selig, whom he noted he has known for 55 years, longer than his wife. He credited the commissioner with making baseball more profitable, always returning calls within 10 minutes and with having the personal skills of managing owners he described as among the "most powerful financially and egotistical and successful people in the world."

"If he were here, you would love him," Wolff said.

In the years since Selig convened a committee to explore the A's options, the state has moved to end redevelopment, a key tool cities such as San Jose have used to help finance projects. While the end of redevelopment -- official this month -- hurts Oakland too, it complicates cities' ability to assemble land for a major project.

San Jose had initially planned on buying the nearly 14 acres of land near the Diridon train station for the ballpark. With redevelopment gone, the city in November moved to give Wolff an option to buy the city-owned parcels for the ballpark at a

reduced cost. Other parcels, including one owned by Giants naming-rights sponsor AT&T, would still have to be acquired to complete the ballpark.

But Wolff said he wasn't worried about all that and had never counted on redevelopment money to build the ballpark.

"Frankly, the ballpark we're talking about is a huge private expense, and therefore some of the additional money that might be needed may pale, may be very insignificant to the good of the whole," Wolff said. "So we'll figure that out."

A group called "Stand for San Jose" that includes local Giants fans and is supported by the team has challenged San Jose's environmental review of the ballpark proposal in a lawsuit. But Wolff said he believes the city's review was thorough. He said the A's would do whatever they can to address residents' concerns about traffic, noise and other impacts. But he added that some impact is unavoidable, and that the downtown area is where such projects belong because the city already has freeways and other infrastructure to handle crowds.

"Where do you put traffic? Where's the best place for it? In a downtown," Wolff said. "That's where the traffic's supposed to go."

Wolff said the San Jose Giants, the San Francisco team's minor-league affiliate, are welcome to stay in San Jose if the A's come to town.

"That would be fine," he said.

Harden has surgery on shoulder he hurt in 2007

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

For more than four years, Rich Harden pitched with a torn right shoulder capsule. That's the same injury that has put Johan Santana's career on hold, and that caused Dallas Braden to get surgery last summer.

In Harden's case, the injury caused a significant drop in velocity, and led to numerous other physical problems as he compensated for pitching with an unstable shoulder. So last week, Harden, 30, decided to have his shoulder repaired, though there were some offers for the free-agent starter (most recently for the A's) this winter.

Dr. James Andrews performed the surgery in Pensacola, Fla., and Harden said he will miss the entire 2012 season, but he plans to pitch in the majors next year.

"There's no reason, if I work hard, I can't get back to where I was before," Harden told The Chronicle on Wednesday.

Harden knows precisely when he incurred the injury, which he hasn't discussed publicly: He tore the capsule trying to field a comebacker with his bare hand on April 15, 2007, pitching for the A's against the Yankees.

Since then, his teams have been aware of the injury but it was not revealed because of medical privacy laws.

In order to cope with the problem, Harden completely revamped his mechanics after the 2007 season, working with former A's pitching coach Ron Romanick, and he was able to put together a strong 2008 despite limited starts, going 10-2 with a 2.07 ERA.

After that, however, smaller injuries began to pile up and Harden increasingly was unable to find consistency with his arm slot, his location, his feel, everything. A hockey player in his youth, Harden was unwilling to reveal the true source of his drop in velocity, his lessened effectiveness and his many injuries.

"If you look at those injuries, that's definitely where they came from," Harden said. "Yes, I've been injured a lot, but nobody really knew what I'd been dealing with for five years. Every day, just to play catch, I had to re-train my body to throw. I was pushing the ball. I'd start the game throwing 86-87 mph and that was max effort."

A's left-hander Braden had arthroscopic surgery to repair his shoulder, but Harden required the full invasive procedure.

"Dr. Andrews sounded pretty surprised when he got in there about how I made it this long without surgery," Harden said.

Harden says he'd like to try pitching in relief, and he'd be open to returning to Oakland.

"I've always made it known how much I like playing here," he said. "We'll see what comes up."

Oakland A's owner Lew Wolff pushes public, MLB for approval to move team to San Jose

By Associated Press, February 8, 2:35 PM

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Oakland Athletics owner Lew Wolff says Major League Baseball's indecision over whether his club can move to San Jose has been "excruciating" but that he believes the process is finally nearing an end.

Just not as quickly as he'd like.

Taking questions at the downtown Rotary Club of San Jose, Wolff said Wednesday that the uncertainty about the possible move is harming the franchise more than anything. He's hopeful that a resolution from baseball is coming soon — a phrase that has been reiterated for years.

The A's need approval from league owners to move to the south bay, where the San Francisco Giants hold territorial rights to the technology-rich region. Commissioner Bud Selig appointed a committee in March 2009 to evaluate the issue facing the Bay Area teams.

A's owner frustrated by indecision

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. -- Oakland Athletics owner Lew Wolff said Wednesday that the indecision by Major League Baseball over whether his club can move to San Jose has been "excruciating" but that he believes the process is finally nearing an end.

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Taking questions at the downtown Rotary Club of San Jose, Wolff said the uncertainty about the possible move is harming the franchise more than anything. He's hopeful that a resolution from baseball is coming soon -- a word that has been reiterated by many for years.

"I'm not going to continue this much longer," Wolff said. "What we want is an answer. We want a yes, you can relocate and share the district, share the territory. Or you can't. But not having any answer is very difficult. Not just for me, but for the people that work for us, for planning our baseball team every year."

The A's need approval from league owners to move to the south bay, where the San Francisco Giants hold territorial rights to the technology-rich region filled with fans and corporate dollars. Not to mention the Giants' Class-A affiliate is in San Jose.

Commissioner Bud Selig appointed a committee in March 2009 to evaluate the issue facing the Bay Area teams. MLB spokesman Pat Courtney said Wednesday there was nothing new from the commissioner's office on the situation since Selig's remarks at the owners' meetings last month that the issue was on the "front burner."

Wolff again refused to give a time frame on a possible decision -- perhaps because even he's not sure when one could come down -- and hinted that he could force a vote by league owners in a few months if a ruling remains in limbo. He later clarified to reporters that he plans to wait for the committee's recommendations.

"We're following the process. It's excruciating," Wolff said. "We talk constantly on many matters. I think we're getting there. We have ways where we can be a belligerent owner. It's not in me at this point."

Among the other notable items:

- Wolff said buying out the Giants' territorial rights to San Jose "has not been discussed with us."
- He confirmed the team would be renamed the San Jose A's if it relocated. There was even a stuffed version of Stomper, the A's mascot, dressed in a "San Jose Athletics" uniform that greeted guests at the luncheon.
- Wolff said he'd be fine if the Giants wanted to keep their Class-A team in San Jose.
- The A's are not exploring a move to any other city and selling the team is not an option now.
- Wolff said the team took in about \$32 million in revenue sharing from other teams last season. He said the franchise spent all of the money, about half on player payroll. He expects payroll to be about \$65 million to \$70 million next season.

Without a deal to move out of the outdated Oakland Coliseum, the A's maintain that they can't compete with other clubs. Oakland shed several of its best players this winter -- including top starters [Trevor Cahill](#), [Gio Gonzalez](#) and closer [Andrew Bailey](#) -- for talented prospects in the latest payroll purge.

"I have one grandchild who still won't talk to me since we traded Gio," Wolff said.

Wolff, a successful Los Angeles real estate developer, reiterated that he has exhausted all efforts to keep the team in Oakland.

The A's also had previously planned to build a state-of-the-art stadium in nearby Fremont that they thought would eventually transform the small-budget club into a big spender. That plan, which would have been in partnership with Cisco Systems Inc., fell through because of a variety of complications -- including public transportation issues.

There also are similar environmental and transportation concerns that could derail the San Jose project with a series of lawsuits, including one against the Silicon Valley city from a Giants-supported group called "Stand for San Jose." Wolff believes all those issues will be resolved and that lawsuits are often part of the process.

"If you have a cure for cancer in California, somebody is going to be against it," he joked.

Wolff declined to go into specifics about what is holding up a decision from the Selig-appointed committee. But he said everything has been researched and discussed by the club and all that's needed now is a decision.

"If baseball is hiding some magic formula," Wolff said, "I wish they'd tell me."

Major League Baseball returns to Sacramento in March

by Brett Ransford, Sacramento Press, 2/9/2012

Before the Sacramento River Cats begin the 2012 season in defense of their 10th division title in 12 years, one of the most successful American professional sports franchises will host one of Major League Baseball's most storied champions.

For the first time in half a decade Major League Baseball will be played in Sacramento as the River Cats host their parent affiliate Oakland Athletics on March 31, 2012. Following a successful 2011 season, in which Sacramento won its 10th Pacific Coast League South Division title, the River Cats kick off the 2012 season against some familiar faces who have found success at the Major League level.

The River Cats will host the four-time World Series champion Oakland A's for a fifth time -- the first four were sellouts -- at Raley Field in West Sacramento.

Since moving to Sacramento in 2000, the River Cats have been one of Minor League Baseball's most successful franchises -- winning two Triple-A Championships (2007, 2008), four PCL Championships (2003, 2004, 2007, 2008) and drawing more fans than any other Minor League team over the past 12 seasons.

The roster of former Sacramento River Cats who had successful careers with the A's and the rest of Major League Baseball is an elite one.

Sacramento has graduated more than 200 players to the Majors, including 2002 Cy Young Award Winner Barry Zito, 2002 American League Rookie of the Year Eric Hinske and Dallas Braden, who famously pitched the 19th perfect game in MLB history for the A's on May 9, 2010. Braden, pitcher Brett Anderson, shortstop Cliff Pennington, catcher Kurt Suzuki and second baseman Jemile Weeks are among current A's players who passed through Raley Field.

The March 31 exhibition game will be the first time a Major League team has played in Sacramento since the River Cats last hosted the A's in 2007. In 12 years, Raley Field has hosted eight Major League games – four between the River Cats and A's (2001, 2003, 2006, 2007), twice against the San Diego Padres in 2001 and the Colorado Rockies in 2004.

The A's will hit the bags at Raley Field against the River Cats just two days after a five-game tour through Japan.

Shoulder surgery sidelines Harden for season

By Evan Drellich / MLB.com

Right shoulder surgery will sideline Rich Harden for the 2012 season as the free-agent pitcher tries to clear up a long-standing issue.

Dr. James Andrews repaired a torn capsule in the free agent's shoulder last week, MLB.com's Peter Gammons reported.

"I understand that I have to sit out this season as I rehab the shoulder," Harden said. "That's fine. I know what I have to do, and I am hopeful that at this time next year I'll be healthy and ready to try to come back with someone. To be honest, I'm relieved to have it over and move forward. It's been a long time since I felt the way I should. It's been five years of inconsistency."

Harden's shoulder injury dates to 2007, and his innings total has declined progressively every season since '08, when he threw 148. He was limited to 82 2/3 last year while pitching in his second stint for the A's. It was his third team in the past three seasons.

Harden went 4-4 with a 5.12 ERA last season and was nearly traded to the Red Sox before the deal fell through due to the right-hander's medical records. Harden is 59-38 with a 3.76 ERA in his career, always showing strong ability when he is healthy enough to pitch.

"I hope and believe that if I do the work and everything Dr. Andrews tells me to do, I can have the game be fun again," Harden said.

39 Social Media Statistics to Start 2012

By [Erik Qualman](#), socialnomics.net

A kind and loyal reader reminded me I never posted a list of all the statistics in my [Social Media Revolution 3](#) video which I normally do. Below are the statistics. Happy New Year to all of my readers and thanks for making my newest book [Digital Leader](#) already a top seller in 2012!

Stats from Social Media Revolution 3

1. Over 50% of the world's population is under 30-years-old
2. In 10 years over 40% of the Fortune 500 will no longer be here
3. Social Media has overtaken porn as the #1 activity on the Web
4. Facebook tops Google for weekly traffic in the U.S.
5. 1 in 5 couples meet online; 3 in 5 gay couples meet online
6. 1 in 5 divorces are blamed on Facebook
7. What happens in Vegas stays on YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, Facebook...
8. 2009 US Department of Education study revealed that on average, online students out performed those receiving face-to-face instruction
9. If Facebook were a country it would be the world's 3rd largest and 2x the size of the U.S. population
10. 80% of companies use social media for recruitment; % of these using LinkedIn 95%
11. A new member joins LinkedIn every second
12. We don't have a choice on whether we DO social media, the question is how well we DO it."

13. Lady Gaga, Justin Bieber and Britney Spears have more Twitter followers than the entire populations of North Korea, Australia, Chile...Israel, Sweden, Greece,
14. Over 32 million have watched the Volkswagen Darth Vader Kid advertisement on YouTube
15. Child actor has never seen Star Wars
16. Ford Explorer launch on Facebook more effective than a Super Bowl Ad
17. 50% of the mobile Internet traffic in the UK is for Facebook...people update anywhere, anytime...imagine what that means for bad customer experiences?
18. Generation Y and Z consider e-mail passé – some universities have stopped distributing e-mail accounts
19. 69% of parents are “friends” with their children on social media
20. eReaders have surpassed traditional book sales
21. Groupon will reach \$1 billion in sales faster than any company in history
22. There were over 75 million more people playing Farmville than there were real Farmers
23. Social Gamers to buy 6 billion in virtual goods by 2013; movie goers only buy 2.5 million in concessions
24. The #2 largest search engine in the world is YouTube
25. While you watch this 100+ hours of video will be uploaded to YouTube
26. If Wikipedia were made into a book it would be 2.25 million pages long
27. Because of the speed in which social media enables communication, word of mouth now becomes world of mouth
28. 25% of search results for the World's Top 20 largest brands are links to user-generated content
29. 34% of bloggers post opinions about products & brands
30. Do you like what they are saying about your brand? You better.
31. 90% of consumers trust peer recommendations
32. Only 14% trust advertisements
33. Only 18% of traditional TV campaigns generate a positive ROI
34. 90% of people that can TiVo ads do
35. 93% of marketers use social media for business
36. We will non longer search for products and services, they will find us via social media
37. Social Media isn't a fad, it's a fundamental shift in the way we communicate
38. The ROI of social media is that your business will still exist in 5 years
39. Babies have been named Facebook in Egypt

Social Media Statistics Sources:

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22. 2008 number of US farmers: 1,522,033: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/statefacts/us.htm> | 80 million Farmville Users <http://www.allfacebook.com/farmville-about-to-cruise-past-80-million-users-2010-02>
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