

Oakland A's looking to sign a designated hitter

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A's general manager Billy Beane said Friday that he's hoping to sign a designated hitter to anchor the middle of the lineup.

He declined to address Manny Ramirez or Magglio Ordonez — two players who have been linked to the A's — but his comments were the most specific he's been on the record about wanting to add an impact bat.

"With our middle of the lineup, there's obviously a big hole," Beane said. "I think finding a guy that can hit in the fourth spot is not easy right now."

David Forst, the A's assistant GM, said during the team's FanFest on Jan. 29 that the A's were "open" to signing Ramirez, who would have to serve a 50-game suspension for violating Major League Baseball's drug policy for a second time.

Beane also said the A's might look to add a reliever. They've been linked in trade rumors to the Texas Rangers' Koji Uehara.

Giants' Larry Baer says A's can have Pebble Beach

Scott Ostler, San Francisco Chronicle

**Pebble Beach --**

This just in: The Giants have surrendered territorial rights to the A's.

Actually this news isn't really *just* in. It broke Wednesday, but it got crowded out of my column that day by bigger news that I can't remember now.

**Larry Baer**, the Giants' president and CEO, is playing the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am. After his round Wednesday at Pebble, he greeted me with a jovial, "You're not going to ask me about territorial rights, are you?"

He was kidding, but we talked about 'em anyway. I can't tell you everything he said, but he reiterated that the Giants have zero intention of yielding San Jose to the A's.

"What about here?" I asked, gesturing to Pebble Beach.

"They can have it," Baer said.

The way the A's are downsizing, teensy-tiny Carmel-by-the-Sea might be a good new home. No tarp needed.

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**Joe Lacob**, co-owner of the Warriors, also played the Pro-Am and like Baer didn't make the cut, which has to be embarrassing, since the tournament is in his front yard.

Lacob owns a home on (or near) Pebble's 14th fairway, one of about 46 homes that are part of the course. All the homes at Pebble are decent, but Lacob's little stretch of fairway is known as the Gold Coast, because the views and homes there make other Pebble denizens feel like pikers. I hear you can get a fixer-upper on the Gold Coast for \$25 mil.

Now that he's out of the tournament, Lacob can stand on his back patio today and yell at **Tiger Woods** and the other golfers, "Hey, you kids, get off my lawn!"

Lacob may have bombed out of the tournament, but he can console himself with the knowledge that in the past two weeks he has saved tens of millions of dollars in salary he won't have to pay for **Jeremy Lin's** next contract.

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There's always tension surrounding Tiger Woods' group. A team of grim security cops walks the ropes ahead of Woods, scanning the gallery for people who might attack Woods with cameras and camera phones.

"Put 'em away, put 'em away," the security soldiers warn.

But inside Tiger's bubble, everything is cool. His playing partner **Tony Romo** helps out, because Romo is not awed by Tiger's aura. Romo has dated bigger - and cuter - celebrities than Tiger Woods.

"I've played plenty of (tournament) golf," Romo said after Saturday's round at Pebble, where he had five natural birdies. "It's still a tournament, and it's important to him - it's not a time for everyone to have fun. That's what makes it enjoyable, you get to compete.

"You play your own game, and in the process you're able to kind of hang out and talk (with Woods) at different times. He's an easy guy to get along with."

As Romo walked the 9th fairway, a gaggle of beer-swillers on the ropes taunted him with, "Forty-niners! Forty-niners!"

It may have slipped the minds of the sudsed-up lads that Romo and the Cowboys beat the 49ers this past season, 27-24 (overtime) at the 'Stick, with Romo throwing for 345 yards and two touchdowns.

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Hoodie made the cut.

**Bill Belichick** not only shot himself into today's action, he did it in style. On the 15th tee at Pebble, he went into his bag for ... a hooded gray sweatshirt, with "Pebble Beach" embroidered on the front.

"My trademark," he said with a smile.

Belichick's dad coached at the Naval Academy, and li'l Bill grew up caddying at the school's Navy Club course.

Has he been doing any football-coach work this week at Pebble?

"Little bit, little bit."

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Who's got it better than **Jim Harbaugh**? The 25 amateurs who made the cut.

The 49ers' coach needed a par on 18 Saturday at Pebble to make the cut with his partner **Ryan Moore**. Harbaugh blasted out of a greenside bunker to about 15 feet, but missed the par putt.

Caddying for Harbaugh was 49ers defensive coordinator **Vic Fangio**, whose clever blitz packages didn't help Harbaugh one bit.

How much did Harbaugh tip his caddie?

"Nothing," Fangio said. "I think that's why he got me to carry his bag, because I'd do it cheap."

Harbaugh's shot of the day was at No. 15, where a large group of fans cheers every amateur's drive, no matter how crappy.

"He piped a good drive there," Fangio said.

Harbaugh said recently he would caddie for **Alex Smith** at next year's AT&T, but Saturday the coach hedged.

"One way or another," Harbaugh said, evasively. "We'll see if I'm invited back (to play). If not, I'll carry the bag for Alex."

What does Harbaugh have to do to earn a return trip to the AT&T? I hear the cut line for him for next year is 10-6 and a playoff berth.

### **Expectations remain high for re-tooled A's**

#### **Melvin will guide youthful roster against division behemoths**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's manager Bob Melvin has never been a fan of the word "rebuilding."

"You retool, you restructure a little bit, but this is the big leagues, and here you're expected to win," he said.

The A's, then, aren't about to begin Spring Training with subdued expectations. Melvin, for one, won't allow it.

Nevermind that the A's endured significant roster turnover this winter, losing a trio of All-Star pitchers and then some as they look toward the future in a potential new stadium. Nor that they're relying on young, inexperienced talent to battle it out with the likes of division powerhouses Texas and Los Angeles.

"You never know," Melvin said. "Every year, you see teams come out of the pack even though expectations are low. There are always teams that come out and play as a group, and I know it's cliché, but it's all about the name on the front, and if everybody buys into that, you get going in the right direction, you create some momentum, then anything's possible.

"I've never suited up for a Major League game where I've felt we're going to go out there and lose, and this year we're going to go out there every day expecting to win."

It's a similar scene for Melvin, who in 2007 steered the underdog D-backs to a National League West title and NL Championship Series appearance. He'll look to create a similar winning environment with a revamped A's team that faces more than a few questions heading into camp.

### **Pitchers and catchers report**

Feb. 18.

### **Full squad reports**

Feb. 24.

### **First Spring Training game**

Home vs. Seattle Mariners, March 2, 12:05 p.m.

## Opening Day

Home (in Tokyo) vs. Seattle Mariners, March 28, 3:10 a.m.

## Triple play: Three questions that need answers

### 1. Who will win the fourth and fifth spots in the starting rotation?

Plenty of names abound in this race, some old and some new. Right-handers Tyson Ross and Graham Godfrey, who combined for 10 starts in Oakland last year, are both vying for a rotation spot but will face some hefty competition against a handful of newcomers.

Righty Jarrod Parker, the key piece in the Trevor Cahill trade, headlines this list and figures to eventually transform into a frontline starter someday. In the meantime, it's likely he and fellow right-hander Brad Peacock -- acquired from Washington in the Gio Gonzalez deal -- are the favorites to land a job in the rotation behind southpaw Tom Milone, considered slightly ahead of the aforementioned names.

### 2. Who will play first base?

Daric Barton enters camp with perhaps more motivation than any other contender at the position, the same one he claimed his own at the start of last year before losing it as a result of continual struggles at the plate. But in trying to win the job back, he'll have to do so while still rehabbing a surgically repaired right shoulder that's expected to limit him to DH duties until mid-March.

All the while, Brandon Allen, Kila Ka'aihue and Chris Carter will all be looking to make a mark of their own at first base. Of these three, Allen seems most apt to potentially outplay Barton if he can put together a consistent string of at-bats -- something he wasn't able to do during his time in the big leagues last year. Still, Barton represents the best defensive option.

### 3. Who will handle designated-hitter duties?

The A's are hoping Carter can finally grab the reins here, but they have plenty of other options in the event his struggles against big league pitching continue. Allen is also an option if the A's choose to keep both him and Barton on the 25-man roster. Count Ka'aihue in this mix, too, as well as Jonny Gomes.

It's also not out of the question for the A's to bring in another candidate before camp begins, considering they've already been linked to aging sluggers Manny Ramirez and Magglio Ordonez.

## 2011 record

74-88, third in the AL West

## Projected batting order

1. 2B **Jemile Weeks**:  
.303 BA, .340 OBP, .421 SLG, 2 HR, 36 RBI in 2011
2. 3B **Scott Sizemore**:  
.245 BA, .342 OBP, .399 SLG, 11 HR, 56 RBI in 2011
3. CF **Coco Crisp**:  
.264 BA, .314 OBP, .379 SLG, 8 HR, 54 RBI in 2011
4. LF **Seth Smith**:  
.284 BA, .374 OBP, .483 SLG, 15 HR, 59 RBI in 2011
5. DH **Chris Carter**:  
.274 BA, .366 OBP, .530 SLG, 18 HR, 72 RBI in 2011 at Triple-A Sacramento
6. C **Kurt Suzuki**:  
.237 BA, .301 OBP, .385 SLG, 14 HR, 44 RBI in 2011
7. RF **Josh Reddick**:  
.280 BA, .327 OBP, .457 SLG, 7 HR, 28 RBI in 2011
8. 1B **Daric Barton**:  
.212 BA, .325 OBP, .267 SLG, 0 HR, 21 RBI in 2011
9. SS **Cliff Pennington**:  
.264 BA, .319 OBP, .369 SLG, 8 HR, 58 RBI in 2011

## Projected rotation

1. **Brandon McCarthy**, 9-9, 3.32 ERA in 2011
2. **Bartolo Colon**, 8-10, 4.00 ERA in 2011
3. **Dallas Braden**, 1-1, 3.00 ERA in 2011

4. **Tom Milone**, 1-0, 3.81 ERA in 2011
5. **Jarrod Parker**, 11-8, 3.79 ERA at Double-A Midland in 2011

### Projected bullpen

Closer: **Grant Balfour**, 2/7 saves, 2.47 ERA in 2011

RH setup man: **Joey Devine**, 3.52 ERA in 2011

LH setup man: **Brian Fuentes**, 3.70 ERA in 2011

### The new guys

**OF Jonny Gomes:** Gomes signed a one-year, \$1 million deal with the A's in January, giving the club added veteran presence in a young outfield. His skill set should nicely complement the left-handed-hitting duo of projected starting outfielders Seth Smith and Josh Reddick, and he'll likely see plenty of time at DH when not filling in for them.

**OF Seth Smith:** The 29-year-old Smith, acquired from the Rockies in a trade that shipped starters Josh Outman and Guillermo Moscoso to Colorado, immediately slots into left field. That could become a platoon position, though, considering Smith's splits against righties and lefties are drastic. In his career, he's hit .290 against right-handers but just .202 when facing southpaws.

**OF Josh Reddick:** Reddick, the only player brought over in the Andrew Bailey trade with Major League experience, is expected to start in right field. That's where the 24-year-old spent most of his time with the Red Sox, for whom he hit .280 with seven home runs and 28 RBIs in 87 games over two stints last year.

**OF Collin Cowgill:** Long linked to Cowgill, the A's finally landed the 25-year-old outfielder in November's Cahill trade. Known for an all-out style of play and overall skill set comparable to Eric Byrnes, Cowgill will use such facets to potentially make a competition out of the corner-outfield spots this spring, though it's likely he'll enter the season as a fourth outfielder.

**RHP Bartolo Colon:** The 38-year-old Colon, a veteran of 14 Major League seasons, fills a rotation spot for an A's team that traded away top starters Gonzalez and Cahill this winter. Colon, signed to a one-year deal worth \$2 million plus incentives, most recently went 8-10 with a 4.00 ERA in 29 games (26 starts) for the Yankees last year and is in line to slot behind Opening Day starter Brandon McCarthy.

**LHP Tom Milone:** A former teammate of A's prospects Grant Green and Ryan Cook at the University of Southern California, Milone again joins them in the same organization after being dealt from Washington in the Gonzalez deal. Less known for his fastball velocity and more so for his impeccable control and ability to mix pitches, Milone enters camp as a favorite to win a coveted rotation job.

**RHP Jarrod Parker:** Also heavily in the rotation mix following his move from Arizona to Oakland in the Cahill deal, Parker is owner of a power fastball and effective slider, along with a decent curveball and changeup. How he uses them this spring will determine where he lands come Opening Day, but even if he starts the season at Triple-A, it's likely his stay there won't be too long.

**RHP Brad Peacock:** The right-handed Peacock was a solid pickup for the A's in the Gonzalez deal. Should he throw strikes consistently and produce an effective changeup this spring, his name could be found in the rotation come Opening Day. He 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.

### Prospects to watch

**SS Grant Green:** This 2009 first-round Draft pick is entering his third big league camp but first as an outfielder following his move from shortstop last year. Although he's still a work in progress in center field, Green held his own at the position in the Arizona Fall League and figures to be part of the outfield discussion in 2013.

**RHP Sonny Gray:** Gray, Oakland's most recent first-round Draft pick, figures to be on the fast track to the big leagues. The 5-foot-11 righty made five starts for Double-A Midland at the end of last season and only allowed one run in 20 innings of work while fanning 18 next to just six walks. It's believed that once Gray, who has a three-pitch mix, masters his changeup, he'll be ready for The Show.

**OF Michael Choice:** The A's 2010 first-round Draft pick 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. Choice not only offers power but excellent speed and the potential to develop into an above-average defender in center field. He could potentially see big league action by the end of the season.

**C Derek Norris:** Norris, acquired in the Gonzalez trade, figures to be one of the more intriguing new faces in camp, considering his potential to be the heir to Kurt Suzuki in the future. The 23-year-old boasts patience at the plate and a good

dose of power, while his glove work -- though improved -- still needs to make strides before he's deemed Major League ready.

#### **On the rebound**

**LHP Dallas Braden:** The 25-year-old southpaw, who most recently took the mound for the first time since undergoing shoulder surgery in May, figures to be slightly behind the rest of the staff in camp but is expected back in the rotation by mid-April.

**LHP Brett Anderson:** Anderson's rehab from Tommy John surgery, which has allowed the lefty the time to shed more than 20 pounds, will keep him out of the rotation until the second half of the season.

**INF Daric Barton:** Barton, who underwent shoulder surgery in August, won't be at full strength by the start of camp and will likely be limited to the DH role when spring games begin. He's not expected to be throwing at 100 percent until at least mid-March.

**OF Josh Reddick:** Reddick underwent surgery in November to repair torn cartilage in his left wrist but is expected to be at 100 percent when camp begins.

#### **Long gone**

**RHP Trevor Cahill:** Cahill's departure to the D-backs represented the first of many trades made by the A's this offseason. Just 23 and owed \$29 million over the next four years in a deal that also includes two club options, the right-hander will surely fortify a strong D-backs rotation that helped Arizona to an NL West title last year.

**LHP Gio Gonzalez:** Just two weeks after the A's moved Cahill, the club shipped Gonzalez to the Nationals in a deal that netted Oakland four prospects. The 26-year-old has yet to pitch a game for Washington but in January received a contract extension worth \$42 million with team options for 2017 and 2018.

**RHP Andrew Bailey:** Bailey represented the third and final All-Star to be dealt by the A's this winter. Now with the Red Sox, who sent three players to Oakland in the trade, the righty is expected to fill Jonathan Papelbon's shoes.

**LHP Craig Breslow:** The left-handed Breslow, who enjoyed three successful years in Oakland's bullpen, departed for Arizona with Cahill in December's trade.

**DH Hideki Matsui:** Matsui's time with the A's wasn't as productive as anticipated, and while there was speculation that the Japanese veteran slugger could return to Oakland, it's likely the unsigned free agent will land elsewhere in the coming days.

**OF Josh Willingham:** Stuck in wait-and-see mode because of a stadium decision that's been looming for nearly three years, the A's were forced to let Willingham take advantage of his free-agent status without offering him a multiyear deal. Willingham found just that with the Twins, who awarded the outfielder a three-year, \$21 million contract.

**OF David DeJesus:** DeJesus struggled with consistency at the plate during his one year in Oakland, and he'll look to rebound in the National League this season, having signed with the Cubs to a two-year, \$10 million deal with an option for 2014.

**OF Ryan Sweeney:** Having been relegated to a bench role in Oakland, Sweeney now stands a better chance at landing a starting job in Boston following his move with Bailey.

**LHP Josh Outman:** Outman was something of a fan favorite in Oakland thanks to his old-school yellow socks and high green stirrups, but he'll have to look for some purple ones now that he's in Colorado with Guillermo Moscoso via a trade that brought Smith to Oakland.

**RHP Guillermo Moscoso:** Moscoso appeared primed to land a rotation job following a breakout 2011 season, but his services now belong to the Rockies, who took away two pieces of the A's pitching depth.

**RHP Michael Wuertz:** Plagued by thumb issues, the right-handed Wuertz made just 39 appearances in 2011, posting a 6.68 ERA and .280 opponents batting average -- numbers that led to the A's releasing him in October rather than picking up his \$3.25 million option.

**RHP Rich Harden:** The injury-prone Harden, who produced a 4-4 record and 5.12 ERA in 15 starts during his second tour of duty with the A's, will miss the entirety of the 2012 season after undergoing shoulder surgery last week.

## **A's organization preview, Top 20 Prospects**

By Jonathan Mayo / MLB.com

*The future success of every Major League team lies largely in its Minor League pipeline. With that in mind, MLB.com is looking at each team's farm system, from the **Top 20 Prospects** to those who are under the radar.*

Trading away big league talent is never a cause for celebration. In an ideal world, teams would keep those players long term. But faced with the certainty that the A's would not be able to retain Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez as their price tags inevitably escalated, the A's dealt both.

The return from those trades has been a boon for the farm system, with four of the organization's top seven prospects entering the season coming from that crop. It's enough to make even the most veteran of farm directors nearly giddy, even though there are complexities that come with it.

"Any time you get such an infusion of top prospects, you get well-known players throughout the industry, to get to know the players, to see good talented guys is going to be fun," said Keith Lieppman, who has been the A's director of player development for the past two decades. "It can create challenges to get them to adapt to our system and in getting to know them. We're looking forward to it. I've seen video, read the reports. It's exciting to hear about the guys coming in."

Not only was there volume in the talent, but much of it is at the upper levels. Jarrod Parker, now the system's top prospect after coming in the Cahill deal with the D-backs, is just about ready to hit a big league rotation. So is Brad Peacock, who came over from the Nationals for Gonzalez. Tom Milone, also from the Nationals, is another upper-level guy who could be called upon in 2012. And while A.J. Cole (from the Nats) is further away, he might have more upside than any of the other arms.

"That's added along with what I thought was a pretty good Draft," Lieppman said, referring to a class headlined by another advanced arm, Sonny Gray. "The guys we had, then we add more to that, it's kind of a farm director's delight."

It certainly helped fill a void in a system that didn't have much coming in terms of immediate help at the big league level. Much of that hole was created by the fast advancement of young players like Cahill, Gonzalez and Brett Anderson.

"I think there was a gap, when we ran so many young guys to the big leagues," Lieppman said. "It left us with a gap between the next group of guys coming. This is the difference-maker, to get the people we got. That not only will help our Major League club, but it also fills the gap with pitchers who will be able to pitch in the big leagues in the next year or two.

"If they hadn't been so good, that group, they would've gone through the system [more slowly]. We didn't have enough behind them to support that. This combination will help us."

### **Top 20 prospects**

The pitching may get most of the attention, especially with all those arms that came as a result of those two offseason trades, but the bats shouldn't be completely ignored. Eleven of the top 20 are position players and only one -- Derek Norris (the Gonzalez deal) -- came as a result of trade.

The top hitter in the system is Michael Choice, the 2010 first-round pick who had little trouble adjusting to pro ball and hit 30 homers in his first full season in the California League. Another homegrown bat, Grant Green, is next in the pecking order. He's made a good transition to the outfield, and many scouts still like his swing and think he'll be a productive big leaguer. Then comes Norris, followed by 2010 draftee Yordy Cabrera. But it's the final hitter in the Top 10 that Lieppman would ask people not to write off just yet, despite his big league struggles.

"The real potential of Chris Carter, when he puts it all together, he has the chance to be a spectacular player with the power potential," Lieppman said. "He's capable of doing these things. Put him in that group as someone who once they get accustomed to the big leagues, those three [Choice, Green and Carter] are the top three."

### **A's could add Manny to DH mix**

#### **In-house candidates include Gomes, Ka'aihue and Carter**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Though recent reports have suggested Manny Ramirez has narrowed his list of potential new homes to Oakland, Toronto and Baltimore, it appears the A's have yet to offer the veteran slugger a contract.

However, that could happen in the next week, ESPN's Buster Olney reported via Twitter on Friday.

Olney says A's scouts recently watched Ramirez work out and remain "interested," and that the club will make a final decision on whether to sign the embattled star soon.

Ramirez, a 12-time All-Star who will be 40 in May, is a career .312 hitter with 555 home runs spanning 19 Major League seasons. If signed by Oakland, he would likely assume designated-hitter duties following a 50-game suspension stemming from his second positive drug test last season.

The A's have also been linked to 38-year-old veteran Magglio Ordonez, but there appears to be no traction on that front. Meanwhile, the club has several in-house DH options, including Chris Carter, Kila Ka'aihue and Jonny Gomes.

### **Sluggers add new life to American League**

Ron Blum, Associated Press

Tim Lincecum thought about the seismic shifts of baseball's offseason, the ones that saw Albert Pujols and Prince Fielder migrate to the American League.

"I think it's great," the Giants' two-time Cy Young Award winner said. "I won't have to pitch to them anymore."

Just 106 days after the surprising St. Louis Cardinals won the World Series, baseball returned Saturday when pitchers and catchers for the Seattle Mariners reported to spring training in Peoria, Ariz.

There has been a whole lot of change since the Texas Rangers' David Murphy flied out to Allen Craig for the final out of the seven-game Series thriller.

Tony La Russa is gone. Bobby Valentine is back.

And no switch was bigger than Pujols' decision to split St. Louis for a 10-year, \$240 million contract with the Los Angeles Angels. Add Fielder's move from Milwaukee for a nine-year, \$214 million deal with Detroit, and the lives of A.L. pitchers just got 75 homers and 219 RBIs tougher.

"You have offenses that are going to let you know if your pitching is not up to par," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "There's certainly been a sway to some extraordinarily deep lineups in the American League."

The 14 A.L. teams have spent \$776.8 million on major league contracts for players who became free agents after the World Series, and the N.L.'s 16 clubs have committed \$597.3 million. That N.L. lineup looks a lot less fearsome entering the All-Star Game at Kansas City's Kaufmann Stadium on July 10.

And despite a 71-91 record last year, even the Royals are hopeful before the first pitch has been thrown – even with the A.L.'s new additions.

"They make it more exciting and more challenging for all of us," general manager Dayton Moore said. "I'm a fan, too, and like watching them play. It's exciting."

Seattle was first to open because the Mariners start the season in Tokyo with a two-game series against the A's on March 28-29.

"We have to make decisions a little bit earlier because we have to have a club together when we go there, and then you come back and readjust and then have a week of spring training for everyone to get their bearings back," Mariners GM Jack Zduriencik said. "It's almost like going away to football camp in high school."

The cost-conscious A's, who dealt All-Stars Gio Gonzalez and Andrew Bailey and starter Trevor Cahill, opted not to use the extra week.

"There's only so much you can do in the days before games, and players tend to go a little nuts after too many days of PFPs and live BP," Oakland assistant GM David Forst said, referring to pitchers' fielding practice and batting practice.

Other teams start reporting Feb. 18 ahead of the stateside opener, which features the Cardinals at the renamed and now rainbow-colored Miami Marlins on April 4 in the first official game at \$515 million Marlins Park. The Fish were among the offseason's big spenders, reeling in All-Stars Jose Reyes, Mark Buehrle and Heath Bell for a combined \$191 million while failing to hook Pujols.



"I want our team to be important," Marlins owner Jeffrey Loria said, his gaudy 2003 World Series ring sparkling as he spoke.

While the Marlins and Angels stocked up, with Los Angeles spending a combined \$317.5 million on Pujols and left-hander C.J. Wilson, the New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox acted like small-market savers.

Perhaps it was the lack of star starting pitchers on the free-agent market. Or maybe it was the new labor contract, announced in November, that adds incentives in coming years for reigning in the urge to splurge.

There are no such issues for the Los Angeles Dodgers and New York Mets, big-market teams tumbling from turmoil. Put in bankruptcy by owner Frank McCourt last summer, the Dodgers are to be sold by April 30 for what figures to be the biggest price in baseball history. While waiting, the Dodgers didn't lure any splashy stars to Hollywood's bright lights.

Coming off three consecutive losing seasons, the Mets have cut the dimensions of Citi Field along with their payroll, from \$120 million at the start of last season to about \$95 million. Meanwhile, the Wilpon-Katz family that owns the team prepares for a March trial in which the trustee for victims of the Bernard Madoff Ponzi scheme will seek to recover \$386 million for investors.

On the field, New York has downgraded from Gucci-level free agents to Gap-priced players such as Frank Francisco and Jon Rauch.

In an increasingly stronger N.L. East, Washington upgraded by adding Gonzalez and pitcher Edwin Jackson, and Philadelphia added closer Jonathan Papelbon.

As spring training approached, there still were plenty of big names available on the market, including Roy Oswalt, Johnny Damon, Hideki Matsui, Vladimir Guerrero, Magglio Ordonez and Raul Ibanez.

Another uncertainty entering spring training was the status of N.L. MVP Ryan Braun.

Facing a possible 50-game suspension for a positive drug test, the Brewers left fielder was awaiting a decision from arbitrator Shyam Das on his appeal, and the absence of Fielder and Braun might be too much for Milwaukee to overcome.

"Oh yeah, that will be tough," Brewers outfielder Nyjer Morgan said.

As teams head to spring training across Florida and Arizona, they'll find new managers in charge of Boston (Valentine), the Chicago Cubs (Dale Sveum), the Chicago White Sox (Robin Ventura), the Marlins (Ozzie Guillen) and the Cardinals (Mike Matheny).

And nearly a quarter of the clubs have switched GMs, with new baseball bosses running Baltimore (Dan Duquette), Boston (Ben Cherington), the Cubs (Jed Hoyer), Houston (Jeff Luhnow), the Angels (Jerry Dipoto), Minnesota (Terry Ryan) and San Diego (Josh Byrnes).

La Russa, the first manager to retire immediately after leading his team to a World Series title, won't be in uniform for spring training for the first time since 1962 – when he was in high school.

While he has had discussions with Commissioner Bud Selig, he said filling Joe Torre's old job as executive vice president of baseball operations wouldn't make sense for him.

## **A'S AT A GLANCE**

- **Manager:** Bob Melvin (first full season)
- **Last season:** 74-88, third place in the American League West
- **Where:** Phoenix
- **Park:** Phoenix Municipal Stadium
- **First workout:** Feb. 19, pitchers and catchers; Feb. 25, full squad.
- **Arrivals:** Manager Bob Melvin, LF Seth Smith, RF Josh Reddick, OF Jonny Gomes, RHP Bartolo Colon, RHP Jarrod Parker, RHP Ryan Cook, OF Collin Cowgill.

- **Departures:** RHP Trevor Cahill, LHP Gio Gonzalez, RHP Andrew Bailey, OF Ryan Sweeney, LHP Craig Breslow, RHP Guillermo Moscoso, LHP Josh Outman.

- **Camp buzz:** Center fielder Coco Crisp re-signed, and that became quite a bright spot and big deal considering the way new-look Oakland traded away much of its roster this winter in the hopes of landing a new ballpark in San Jose and rebuilding accordingly in anticipation of playing in a new venue. Yet that's still a long way off, with Commissioner Bud Selig yet to rule whether the low-budget A's can leave the run-down Oakland Coliseum and move into the Giants' territory. Owner Lew Wolff, GM Billy Beane and Oakland's brass are preparing as if they'll get the OK – and soon.

- **Outlook:** The rotation will be young with big holes to fill after the A's dealt two top starters in Cahill and Gonzalez and also All-Star closer Bailey. LHP Dallas Braden is working his way back from surgery on his pitching shoulder. It could be tough for the A's early as Melvin figures out whom he can count on regularly in a division that already has drastically improved. They'll face new obstacles with the Angels' addition of Albert Pujols and star Japanese pitcher Yu Darvish joining the two-time reigning A.L. champion Texas Rangers. The A's have another quick spring to prepare before again opening the season in Japan, on March 28 against the Seattle Mariners.

- **Bottom line:** Oakland hasn't reached the playoffs or had a winning season since being swept by the Detroit Tigers in the 2006 A.L. Championship Series. The A's have, however, played in Japan since then – against Boston four years ago – so there's always that.

– Associated Press

## GIANTS AT A GLANCE

- **Manager:** Bruce Bochy (sixth season)

- **Last season:** 86-76, second place in the National League West

- **Where:** Scottsdale, Ariz.

- **Park:** Scottsdale Stadium

- **First workout:** Feb. 19, pitchers and catchers; Feb. 24, full squad.

- **Arrivals:** OF Melky Cabrera, OF Angel Pagan, INF Ryan Theriot, RHP Clay Hensley.

- **Departures:** RF Carlos Beltran, CF Andres Torres, RHP Ramon Ramirez, OF Cody Ross, OF Pat Burrell.

- **Camp buzz:** Star catcher Buster Posey's return from a devastating injury last May will be among the top stories this spring. The 2010 N.L. Rookie of the Year was lost for the season after tearing three ligaments in his left ankle and breaking his lower leg in a frightening collision at the plate with Florida's Scott Cousins on May 25. Second baseman Freddy Sanchez also is expected to be at full strength after his season was cut short following surgery on his right shoulder in August.

- **Outlook:** The Giants are determined to contend in the N.L. West again after they missed returning to the playoffs during an injury-plagued season following that improbable World Series championship in 2010 – and Arizona seems poised to retain its division title. San Francisco gave ace Tim Lincecum a two-year, \$40.5 million contract this offseason with incentives, and slugger Pablo Sandoval was rewarded with a three-year, \$17.15 million contract. The 25-year-old third baseman became an All-Star last season after losing nearly 40 pounds during a rigorous offseason regimen. He batted .315 with 23 home runs and 70 RBIs in 2011. San Francisco hopes for comeback seasons from a few others, too. Aubrey Huff, rewarded with a two-year, \$22 million contract last offseason after hitting .290 with a team-leading 26 home runs and 86 RBIs in 2010, batted just .246 with 12 homers and 59 RBIs in 2011. He has been on a fitness kick this winter and is determined to return to form. LHP Barry Zito begins the sixth season of his seven-year, \$126 million contract looking to prove himself once again. He is slated as the fifth starter entering spring training. Zito – left off the postseason roster for all three rounds in 2010 – is owed \$19 million this season and \$20 million in 2013, and has an \$18 million team option with a \$7 million buyout in 2014.

- **Bottom line:** Will the Giants score enough runs to support Lincecum and Matt Cain and give them enough incentive to stay put for the long haul, as GM Brian Sabean hopes?

## A's owner pushes public, MLB for move to San Jose

By ANTONIO GONZALEZ, AP Sports Writer

Oakland Athletics owner Lew Wolff said Wednesday that 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.

Just not as quickly as he'd like.

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 guest 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 the 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."