

A's News Clips, Sunday, March 4, 2012

Lew Wolff dismisses report that Oakland A's likely won't be allowed to move to San Jose

Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A's owner Lew Wolff dismissed a report that the A's likely will be denied permission to pursue a move to San Jose.

The New York Daily News' Bill Madden wrote Saturday that Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig is likely to uphold the Giants' territorial rights to San Jose, ending the A's drive to build a new ballpark in that city.

"I spoke to Bud today on another matter, he didn't bring it up," Wolff told this newspaper Saturday night. "I think he would have told me if that's the case. We talked about something else. I think he would have alerted me or the Giants if he had made a decision."

The New York Daily News story did not cite sources with direct knowledge of Selig's plans. But it does quote a lawyer who predicts that other owners would not vote to overturn the Giants' rights to San Jose, for fear that doing so could open the gates to their own teams' losing territorial rights in the future.

Wolff said he wasn't aware of the story, as did A's general manager Billy Beane, who declined to comment.

The A's have been waiting nearly three years for Major League Baseball to rule whether they can build a new ballpark in downtown San Jose, which the Giants vehemently oppose.

A "no" vote would be devastating to the A's, given that so much of their decision-making has revolved around a potential move to the South Bay.

Beane traded three All-Star pitchers over the winter in exchange for a stockpile of young prospects -- which he hopes will form the core of a team ready to flourish if and when a new stadium is built in San Jose.

The A's maintain that they can't realistically compete while playing in the outdated O.co Coliseum. They finished last in home attendance in 2011. The Giants contend that much of their fan base and corporate sponsorship is based in the South Bay and is key to their revenue.

Right-hander Jarrod Parker, pitching his first game in an A's uniform, struck out four in two shutout innings as the A's beat the Seattle Mariners 9-2 on Saturday.

Manager Bob Melvin was asked if Parker, 23, has a shot to break camp in the A's rotation, given that he's made just one career big league appearance.

"He has to be a guy you consider," Melvin said. "The stuff is just too good."

A's starter Tyson Ross threw 33 pitches in his one inning, walking two and allowing a run.

Jonny Gomes and Jemile Weeks each homered for the A's.

The A's are expected to broadcast a large majority of their home games on three Spanish radio stations -- KIQI 1010, KATD 990 and Fresno-based 1330 AM. Amaury Pi-Gonzalez and Manolo Hernandez-Douen will call the games.

Cuban star Yoenis Cespedes set to join Oakland A's

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's will finally find out what they have in Yoenis Cespedes.

The much-hyped Cuban outfielder passed a physical Saturday, and the team officially announced his four-year contract, which will pay him \$36 million.

Cespedes, 26, agreed to the contract Feb. 13, but he missed the first two weeks of spring training while awaiting a worker's visa after defecting from Cuba and establishing residency in the Dominican Republic.

He will join his teammates for a pregame workout before Sunday's exhibition against the Chicago Cubs, though manager Bob Melvin didn't give a date for when Cespedes will appear in his first game.

The A's scheduled a 9 a.m. news conference Sunday at Phoenix Municipal Stadium with Cespedes and general manager Billy Beane, who offered no comment Saturday about his new acquisition.

"I actually met him briefly this morning," Melvin said after a 9-2 victory over the Seattle Mariners. "We'll work him out and see what he looks like on the baseball field. I'm not going to stick him in the game, though, until we feel like he's ready."

According to Baseball Prospectus, Cespedes has a combination of power and speed that makes him perhaps the best all-around player to come out of Cuba in a generation.

Baseball America ranks him as the A's top prospect -- though labeling him a "prospect" is somewhat misleading given his age -- and that same publication rates him 14th overall among all major league prospects.

The A's, who scouted Cespedes for several years, must be curious to see him on the field in a major league environment. Cespedes hit 33 homers in 90 games during the 2010-11 season Cuban National Series, tying the single-season record for Cuba's top baseball league.

He also hit .458 during the 2009 World Baseball Classic as Cuba's starting center fielder.

A's players have only been exposed to his play through a highlight video that reached YouTube, showing numerous home runs and other feats -- including footage of Cespedes allegedly performing a 45-inch vertical jump and leg-pressing 1,300 pounds.

"I think everybody is excited to see what kind of player he is," A's shortstop Cliff Pennington said. "Besides the video, that's the only time I've seen him."

The 20-minute video is comical at times -- part of the highlights are set to the song "Sailing" by Christopher Cross.

"It's quite theatric," Melvin said. "I'm sure that probably wasn't his idea, probably more his agent's. But it shows you the athletic ability the kid has."

But that's no indication of how he'll fare in the majors, where the competition will be tougher and scrutiny more intense than what he faced in his homeland.

Plus, Cespedes will be adjusting to a new country and culture. To help ease his transition, the A's will have fellow Cuban Ariel Prieto -- their short-season Single-A pitching coach -- come to big league camp and spend time with Cespedes, sources confirmed to this newspaper.

Prieto himself defected from Cuba before the A's drafted him in the first round in 1995. He went just 15-24 with a 4.85 ERA in his six-year big league career, an example of a highly touted Cuban player who didn't pan out as expected.

Other Cuban defectors to come to the majors in recent seasons include hard-throwing Reds left-hander Aroldis Chapman and White Sox shortstop Alexei Ramirez.

Oakland A's officially announce signing of outfielder Yoenis Cespedes

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's officially announced the signing of outfielder Yoenis Cespedes to a four-year contract Saturday.

Cespedes, 26, agreed to a \$36 million deal on Feb. 13, but he missed the first two weeks of camp while awaiting a worker's visa after defecting from Cuba and establishing residency in the Dominican Republic. He took his physical at Phoenix Municipal Stadium on Saturday, the final step in finalizing his contract.

The A's have scheduled a 9 a.m. (PT) press conference at Phoenix Muni featuring Cespedes and general manager Billy Beane. Beane said he wouldn't be commenting until then.

The A's play the Cubs in Mesa on Sunday afternoon but it's unknown when Cespedes will appear in his first exhibition.

A's manager Bob Melvin discussed his team's closer situation and said that choosing a ninth-inning man will depend partly on what the full composition of the bullpen looks like. He said spring results for veterans such as Grant Balfour and Brian Fuentes won't factor so much into the decision because of those pitchers' vast experience.

He stopped short of labeling those two front runners to be closer. Fautino De Los Santos and Joey Devine are also under consideration.

But one factor in the decision will be how many left-handed relievers the A's break camp with. If Fuentes is the only lefty in the bullpen, for example, it might be tough to use him as closer because he might be needed for matchup situations earlier in the game.

Manny Ramirez originally was going to serve as D.H. on Sunday against the Cubs in Mesa. Instead, Chris Carter will play that entire game at D.H. and Ramirez will start Monday's split-squad home game against the Angels on Monday.

"Carter's the one guy, he had just one at-bat (Friday) and he's not starting (Saturday)," Melvin said. "So I'll give him several at-bats (Sunday)."

Céspedes arrives in Phoenix, will play when ready

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Yoenis Céspedes arrived at Phoenix Municipal Stadium on Saturday, but the Cuban outfielder is unlikely to appear in a game with the A's until late this week.

Two sources familiar with the A's thinking said it will be five to seven days before Céspedes gets into the lineup, but there is no suggestion that his late arrival - it took him two weeks to get a visa - will keep the newcomer from making the Opening Day roster. The A's have planned all along to have Céspedes open the season with the team unless his spring performance were to be extremely poor.

Still, two weeks of spring games will be slim preparation for the big leagues and the A's season opener March 28, and scant time for the A's coaching staff to evaluate a player they never have seen.

Manager **Bob Melvin**, asked about Céspedes after the signing became official Saturday afternoon, said he will not play in a game until he is ready.

When Céspedes strolled through the clubhouse en route to the trainer's room, several of his new teammates - **Kurt Suzuki, Jemile Weeks** - shouted "*Céspedes esta aqui!*"

"I'm excited to see him," Suzuki said. "We've been talking about him for a month already - to have him officially on the team will be great."

Céspedes will work out with the team today and will address the media, with an interpreter, this morning.

Parker impressive: Melvin said right-hander **Jarrod Parker**, 23, "has to be a guy considered" for the A's rotation, though he missed the entire 2010 season after Tommy John surgery.

"The stuff is just too good," Melvin said, noting that Arizona had Parker on the postseason roster last year.

Parker pitched two scoreless innings and struck out four, including **Ichiro Suzuki** with a slider. He was hitting mid-90s on the radar gun.

Briefly: When the A's said they were beefing up their scouting, they weren't kidding: Among their hires was pro scout **John McLaren**, the former Mariners manager and interim Nationals manager. ... Bill Madden of the New York Daily News wrote that MLB is likely to uphold the Giants' territorial rights in the South Bay, although he did not give any sources. A's owner Lew Wolff said in an e-mail that he spoke Saturday with Commissioner Bud Selig "on a different matter, and he did not mention any change in the process."

A's 9, Mariners 2

Notable: Jarrod Parker, obtained in the Trevor Cahill deal with Arizona, pitched two hitless innings, striking out four, including Ichiro Suzuki. ... Another pitcher from the Cahill deal, Ryan Cook, had a perfect inning, and an outfielder from that trade, Collin Cowgill, contributed an RBI single. ... Jonny Gomes and Jemile Weeks each hit two-run homers to left. ... Seth Smith, Wes Timmons, Derek Norris (Gio Gonzalez trade), Eric Sogard and Brandon Moss had RBI singles.

Quotable: "Coming into the spring, there's always that thought in the back of your head, 'Oh, no, I've lost it,' so it's good to get on the board."

- *Jonny Gomes, outfielder, after a two-run homer, a single and a walk Saturday*

Today's game: A's (Brandon McCarthy) at Cubs (Rodrigo Lopez), 12:05 p.m. Radio: 95.7 FM.

Fuentes, Balfour top candidates for A's closer

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Unlike position battles elsewhere on the roster, the A's closer competition features entirely known quantities, experienced relievers with long track records.

One of them, Grant Balfour, has a history of extremely poor springs, and he said Saturday that while he'd very much like the closer job, he doesn't want to have to rely on his Cactus League performance to get it.

"I would love to close," Balfour said, "but I'm not going to try to make the team as a closer. I feel like I've had pretty good success the past four years. ... Do you make the decision based on three weeks or past history?"

"I've already told them if they want me to compete for the closer spot, I'm not going to change anything this spring. I'm terrible during the spring, but I'll be ready when the season starts; 162 games is totally different."

Brian Fuentes, the other top candidate for the spot, could have an edge by virtue of being a four-time All-Star closer. He has come into camp in shape, having dropped 10 to 15 pounds this offseason by changing his workout routine and lifting fewer heavy weights.

"Either he's lost weight or Fuentes bought some Spanx," said A's starter Dallas Braden, referring to the brand of slimming underwear.

Fuentes, who will pitch today in Mesa, said he spent the offseason preparing hard, and he said, "I do realize there is a vacancy. But it doesn't give me extra motivation, I am just trying to be game-ready for March 28, getting into tip-top shape."

Manager Bob Melvin applauded Fuentes' focus this spring and said, with a smile, "I'm sure there are some potential carrots he thinks are dangling out there."

Melvin said that a number of variables will go into the final closer decision, including the total number of left-handers in the bullpen. If there is only one other lefty, Jerry Blevins, then Melvin might want Fuentes to be more available to face lefties when needed.

In addition, the A's have continued to look at the reliever market; they have had talks with free-agent lefty Mike Gonzalez and have explored a trade for a closer, Texas' Koji Uehara.

Fuentes had some rough outings in the closer's role last year when Andrew Bailey was out with an elbow injury, going 1-8 with 12 saves, three blown saves and a 5.09 ERA in the first three months. Balfour had a poor finish to the season, with a 5.40 ERA in September. As a whole, Fuentes said, the bullpen probably didn't perform up to expectations.

"On paper, we should have been better," he said. "In the second half, we turned it around, pitched more the way we're capable." This season, Fuentes said of the bullpen, "I don't want to say we're the strength of the team, but what you don't want is to be the weak link. We want to give Bob the confidence that we can pick up three, even four innings."

Stat wiz Jay Jaffe's take on the A's and Giants

Al Saracevic, Chronicle Columnist

Spring training has sprung, and you know what they say about hope.

It's an emotion of the eternal variety.

Out on Little League fields across America, arms are loosening and gloves are popping. Fantasy leaguers are poring over statistics in advance of their drafts. And a lucky few have traveled south, basking in the sun and sounds of the infant season.

Fans are hoping this will be a memorable summer.

Removed from these hopeful and sometimes irrational emotions - feelings that baseball inspires above any other sport - are the technicians of the game. The people who crunch the numbers and see the game through a matrix of 1s and 0s. To them, the numbers don't lie. Baseball is a science that deserves earnest study and analysis.

At the core of the movement lies Baseball Prospectus, a website and annual print publication that painstakingly breaks down the game's statistics. It is the direct descendant of **Bill James'** Baseball Abstract, the publication that spawned the numerical analysis of the game known as sabermetrics.

For those of us who don't have the pleasure of smelling the lawn clippings or throwing the ball around this weekend - and those who may want an emotionally detached analysis of the Bay Area's teams - we tracked down **Jay Jaffe**, co-author of Baseball Prospectus and the group's longest-tenured cruncher of numbers.

He pointed out some key stats and observations for the A's and the Giants this year.

First, the Athletics:

Inexperienced starters. Besides **Brandon McCarthy**, none of the candidates for the A's Opening Day rotation pitched more than 36 innings or made more than six starts for the A's last year. That includes **Brad Peacock**, **Jarrod Parker**, **Tom Milone**, **Tyson Ross** and the much-traveled **Bartolo Colon**. **Brett Anderson**, who surpassed both of those benchmarks last year, is expected back midseason. **Dallas Braden** is supposed to be back by mid-April, but Jaffe is highly skeptical. He says expect Braden in mid-May.

Power shortage. With the departures of **Josh Willingham**, **David DeJesus** and **Hideki Matsui** and the season-ending injury to **Scott Sizemore**, only one returning player (**Kurt Suzuki**) hit more than 10 homers last year. "Some of it was the ballpark, which reduced homers for lefties by 41 percent last year, compared to other major-league parks," said Jaffe. The A's will depend on **Yoenis Céspedes**, **Manny Ramirez** and **Jonny Gomes** to turn on the power.

Who's on first? Last year, the A's first basemen hit for a combined .219 batting average, compiled a .294 on-base percentage and produced a measly .316 slugging percentage. That was the worst in the majors at the position. "That's bad for a shortstop, much less a first baseman," said Jaffe. This year, **Brandon Allen**, **Chis Carter** and **Kila Ka'aihue** are battling to improve those numbers. "They've all been waiting for their shot," said Jaffe.

The bottom line: "I think it's going to be a tough year for them. I think Billy Beane is rebuilding for the long term."

Now, the Giants:

Solid starters. The Giants were the only team in the major leagues last year that had four starters with better-than-league-average ERAs and at least seven strikeouts per nine innings. Those were, of course, **Tim Lincecum**, **Matt Cain**, **Madison Bumgarner** and **Ryan Vogelsong**. Three other teams had three such pitchers, and all made the playoffs (Phillies, Rangers and Brewers).

Weak corners. The Giants ranked 13th in the National League in offensive production from both left field (.222/.310/.374) and first base (.258/.318/.414). The team is hoping the addition of **Melky Cabrera** and a resurgent **Aubrey Huff** will fix that. Jaffe disagrees. "They couldn't figure out how to get **Brandon Belt** in the lineup, and they still really haven't," he said. "Belt has the chance to be the best of those hitters, and he's got the least guarantee of playing time. I think that's backwards."

Short at short. The Giants' shortstops had the worst offensive production in the National League (.210/.265/.299). **Ryan Theriot** won't be a big help there. And projected starter **Brandon Crawford** struggled mightily at the plate last year. "The one mitigating thing here, getting back to the quality of the starters, is that defense is less of an issue for the Giants," said Jaffe.

The bottom line: "When I look at this team, I'm surprised they haven't been more aggressive in upgrading their offense. That's championship pitching. If they were willing to invest, they'd be the team to beat in the NL West. They haven't chosen that route."

Save Oakland sports: A grassroots group has formed in the East Bay with the intent of keeping the Raiders, Warriors and A's from moving out of town.

It's calling itself Save Oakland Sports, and you can find it online (saveoaklandsports.org).

As we've written in this space before, the task at hand is immense. The A's want to move to San Jose. The Warriors have their eyes on San Francisco. And the Raiders are a prime target of the Anschutz Entertainment Group, the outfit that hopes to build a stadium and lure an NFL franchise to Los Angeles.

That's not stopping the Oaklanders.

"Our fundamental goal is to create a game plan to convince the Raiders, A's and Warriors to stay long term and build new world-class stadiums in Oakland that would benefit the fans, the franchises and the economy of the entire East Bay," said **Jim Zelinski**, a Raiders season-ticket holder and lifelong Oakland fan who is one of the co-founders of the group. "We believe that Oakland represents the best new stadium location in the country. We have a great fan base, economic stability and tremendous resources to attract players long term."

The group has met with Oakland Mayor Jean Quan and some City Council members and believes it has their support. Best of all, from a civic perspective, they're trying to do it without tapping into the general fund.

"We all understand that we have to be more than a cheerleading organization," said Zelinski, who runs a public relations consultancy.

All the best to Zelinski and his group. If Oakland loses its pro sports teams, the Bay Area loses all around.

Brazilian brothers: As speculated upon in this space in recent weeks, Formula One superstar **Rubens Barrichello** has found the sponsorship money needed and will join fellow Brazilian **Tony Kanaan** on Bay Area-based KV Racing's IndyCar team.

Barrichello is the most experienced driver in Formula One history with 322 starts in a 19-year career. The 39-year-old was the runner-up in the Formula One championship in 2002 and 2004. He has earned 11 victories, 14 poles, 68 podiums, 106 top-five finishes and 172 top-10 showings.

And now he's a rookie all over again.

SF Giants' Buster Posey highly valued

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

As a sophomore in college, **Buster Posey** moved from shortstop to catcher because physically he was a better fit behind the plate than the middle infield. **Mike Martin Jr.**, an assistant at Florida State, suggested the idea, knowing it would boost his program as well as Posey's future value.

Right on both accounts.

Five years later, Posey has far more value as a catcher than at any other position, including first base, where it's generally easier to find premium hitters.

Consider **Yadier Molina's** new contract extension: five years, \$75 million.

Over the past five seasons, the St. Louis catcher hit .289 and averaged eight homers, 51 RBIs and 130 games. Pedestrian stuff. If he put up those numbers as a corner infielder or outfielder, he'd get nothing close to those dollars. But factor in his importance as a four-time Gold Glove catcher - how he defends the position and works with pitchers - and his value soars.

The Cardinals overpaid, sure, especially because Molina will be 36 when the contract expires. Yadier's big brother, **Bengie**, was out of baseball at 36, though the other Molina brother, **Jose**, remains a Rays catcher at 36. In the Cardinals' defense, they saw Yadier Molina as a huge asset who helped them win two World Series, so they offered the extension a year before free agency.

It helped that they had leftover money after failing to re-sign **Albert Pujols**.

Giants management couldn't have been thrilled with the Molina news, knowing Posey will be due a long-term contract with four arbitration-eligible years awaiting, beginning in 2013. Other teams took notice, too. Atlanta catcher **Brian McCann**, a six-time All-Star, can be a free agent in two years, and Arizona's **Miguel Montero** - whose talks for an extension were shelved last week - can be a free agent next winter.

So can Texas' **Mike Napoli** and the Yankees' **Russell Martin**.

Molina's deal is the second largest for a catcher, trailing **Joe Mauer's** \$184 million over eight years. **Victor Martinez** makes \$50 million over four years, though he mostly was a DH in 2011.

Posey has a long way to go before hobnobbing with the big-money guys. Giants fans like to consider him one of the majors' best overall catchers, recalling his contributions down the stretch in 2010, but he hasn't played a full big-league season and needs to prove he can catch regularly after missing most of 2011 with ankle and leg injuries.

While his numbers weren't tremendous at the time of the May 25 injury (.284, four homers, 21 RBIs), he proved to be one of the few Giants effective in the clutch. While the rest of the team hit .168 in two-out, runners-in-scoring-position at-bats, Posey hit .280.

The Mauer and Posey injuries reaffirm the high risk of catching. Mauer was the game's best overall catcher and reigning MVP when he signed his historic deal, coupling his Gold Glove defense with a league-leading .365 in 2009, but he went backward the past two seasons and last year was limited to 82 games.

While Posey is expected to play some first base this year, he still sees himself as a long-term catcher, where his value is strongest. The Giants are on board, especially with **Brandon Belt** the first baseman of the future, and hope Posey re-emerges as a two-way threat at a position in which demand for premium talent far outweighs the supply.

Another chance: Giants fans learned last season that **Carlos Beltran**, who played right field in his San Francisco fling, no longer is a Gold Glove defender, but the Cardinals actually considered moving him back to center field, where he played in his prime.

Realistically, he'll open in right. If Beltran had returned to the Giants, he would have played left because **Nate Schierholtz** is a better defender in right.

With Pujols' departure, the main reason the Cardinals signed Beltran is his bat. Beltran, who waived his no-trade clause to join the Giants in late July, thinking they were a good bet to reach the playoffs, is seeking his first World Series.

"It's a rare opportunity to be with a team that's probably going to have a chance to be in the playoffs," Beltran told reporters after reporting to the Cardinals' camp. "Being able to play this game for a long time, I was just looking for that opportunity."

Playoff consequences: Besides traditionalists and the anti-**Bud Selig** brigade, which criticizes the commissioner's every move, the extra wild card was welcomed by the baseball world, from owners to players to managers to TV execs. More teams could be in the playoff hunt, which would intrigue more fans.

The biggest objections will come from teams that endure the grind of 162 games only to get bounced in a one-game wild-card playoff.

As if this is the NFL.

The cure: win your division.

Around the majors: The Red Sox's new spring-training ballpark in Fort Myers, Fla., is a Fenway replica, and manager **Bobby Valentine** is having **Cody Ross** learn the dimensions and quirks in right field. ... Another example of why huge contracts for pitchers can backfire: In Year 2 of **John Lackey's** five-year, \$82.5 million contract with the Red Sox, he posted a 6.41 ERA. This is Year 3, and he won't throw a pitch after Tommy John surgery. ... The Red Sox are paying Lackey \$15.25 million and another \$10 million to **Daisuke Matsuzaka**, who's also coming off Tommy John surgery. No wonder their biggest offer to a free-agent pitcher was to **Roy Oswalt**, for about \$6 million. ... Before the Giants landed **Melky Cabrera** and **Angel Pagan**, there was talk of signing **Grady Sizemore** despite his physical woes. It was a good non-signing. Sizemore, who re-signed with Cleveland for \$5 million, will miss two or three months following back surgery, his sixth operation since 2009. ... Happy 22nd birthday to former Giants GM **AI Rosen**, who's actually 88 but was born in a leap year: Feb. 29, 1924.

Drumbeat: Pitchers from Cahill deal shine; A's outthomer Mariners

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Peoria 3/3/2012, 3:36pm

The A's took a lot of heat for trading All-Stars Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez and Andrew Bailey this winter, but they did get a haul of top-notch talent back, and two pitchers from the Cahill deal with Arizona, Jarrod Parker and Ryan Cook, looked terrific today in a 9-2 victory over the Mariners.

Parker, a candidate for the rotation, pitched two hitless innings and struck out four, including Ichiro Suzuki, and Cook, a strong candidate for the bullpen, had a 1-2-3 inning with two groundouts and a pop-up.

Parker missed the 2010 season after Tommy John and worked his way back slowly last year, but he's completely 100 percent and throwing as well as he did before the surgery. Coming into the spring, the feeling was that he might go to Triple-A Sacramento to keep getting back into a good rhythm, but he looks pretty ready. OK, it's one outing, but Parker looks as sharp as any of Oakland's other starters, and most scouts believe he could be a frontline starter.

Parker said he was locating his fastball on both sides of the plate, his changeup was working well, and he got Ichiro with a slider.

Cook, a hard thrower, has impressed throughout the spring, and his name is mentioned often as a possible bullpen option.

Jonny Gomes hit a two-run homer, singled and walked, and Jemile Weeks also hit a two-run homer. Seth Smith (who came from Colorado in an offseason trade) had an RBI single, as did Collin Cowgill – who was part of that Cahill deal. That ex-Arizona bunch had a pretty nice day here.

Wes Timmons also had a good day. The non-roster candidate for third base had a double and an RBI single.

Drumbeat: Cespedes arrives – updated, he's officially A's player

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Phoenix Muni, 3/3/2012, 8:55am

Yoenis Cespedes strolled through the clubhouse and into the trainer's room this morning, accompanied by a friend, and he's getting his A's physical right now. He looks to be in good shape from the 15 seconds I saw of him, but he won't work out with the team or do anything in any official capacity – including speaking to the media – until tomorrow. He has to pass his physical first, paperwork must be processed. As I wrote the other day, he'll wear No. 52.

UPDATE: Cespedes passed the physical, we can assume. The A's officially announced his four-year deal and put Scott Sizemore on the 60-day DL, as expected, to put Cespedes on the 40-man roster. Cespedes will meet with the media tomorrow morning with the help (for us) of an interpreter.

"Cespedes esta aqui!" Kurt Suzuki and Jemile Weeks shouted after Cespedes walked by. "Big day," said outfielder Jonny Gomes. Really, though, Cespedes is a bigger story for the media; players are used to new additions coming to a team, they're used to guys departing. If a new player is from Cuba, great, but they really don't put a lot of thought into it unless, maybe, the newcomer plays their same position. "Yeah, we don't really care that much," one player told me with a shrug.

In honor of Cespedes' arrival, his "Showcase" video, especially because Brett Anderson was walking around the clubhouse asking if Cespedes had done any box-jumping yet:

Manny Ramirez – now that was a big deal for the A's players. Many of them grew up idolizing him or watching his at-bats to pick up tips. His help to A's hitters is now extending to pitchers; Dallas Braden said he listened to Ramirez breaking down timing mechanisms for Kurt Suzuki – watching for certain things pitchers do to help time the start of the swing – and Braden said he learned a few things just by paying attention to that session.

What impressed Braden the most: Ramirez's ability to express exactly what he wants to get across, his clear explanations of very technical hitting ideas. Some great athletes can't explain what they're doing or how, or at least not all that well. Braden said that Ramirez can talk hitting all day in minute detail.

Also, Ramirez is calling Braden "209" already. I think those two are going to be a fun Odd Couple this year. Last year, Braden was the first to gravitate to Hideki Matsui, now he's clicking with Manny. You might not find more extreme opposites in terms of personality than Matsui and Ramirez, but Braden can connect with anyone.

Here's today's lineup for the game at Peoria against the Mariners, with Tyson Ross starting and Jarrod Parker following him: Weeks 2B, Cowgill CF, Smith LF, Gomes DH, Ka'aihue 1b, Donaldson 3B, Taylor RF, Recker C, Sogard SS.

And the A's coaching staff is so efficient, bench coach Chip Hale already has tomorrow's lineup at Mesa posted: Crisp CF, Pennington SS, Reddick RF, Carter DH, Allen 1B, Suzuki C, Sogard 2B, Cowgill LF, Timmons 3B. Brandon McCarthy is starting against the Cubs.

Manager Bob Melvin said that he'd considered DHing Ramirez tomorrow but he wants to get Chris Carter a DH start and some at-bats; Ramirez will DH at home on Monday. Bartolo Colon will start one of Monday's split-squad games, Brad Peacock the other.

The closer battle, which is essentially between Brian Fuentes and Grant Balfour right now, with Joey Devine and Fautino De Los Santos sort of on the edges, won't really be decided on spring results, given Fuentes' and Balfour's long track records. Melvin said that a lot of variables will go into the decision, including the number of total left-handers in the bullpen (if there's only one other lefty, he might need Fuentes to be available earlier than the ninth inning), health issues, all sorts of things. He emphasized that either Fuentes or Balfour is very much capable of filling the role, there is no doubt about that. It sounds as if it's going to come down to where Melvin feels each of his relievers can best help the team, and who's going to argue with that?

A's make deal with Cespedes official

Cuban defector to be introduced in news conference Sunday

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PEORIA, Ariz. -- Yoenis Cespedes officially became a member of the A's on Saturday, as the club finally announced the Cuban defector's four-year deal.

The A's will introduce him alongside general manager Billy Beane at a news conference Sunday, to be held at 9 a.m. PT at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

Cespedes, whose arrival was delayed by 19 days as he waited in the Dominican Republic for a worker's visa, made his first appearance in the A's clubhouse Saturday morning and underwent a physical. He also briefly spoke with manager Bob Melvin, who says he won't play the \$36 million outfielder in a game "until we feel like he's ready."

"We'll work him out tomorrow and see how he looks on a baseball field," Melvin said.

Cespedes will wear No. 52 for the A's, and his presence leaves the club facing several questions. Veteran Coco Crisp has stated he wouldn't be in favor of moving to left field, but such a scenario could shape up should the A's choose to keep Cespedes at his natural position in center.

Moreover, it remains to be seen how the A's utilize Cespedes in the lineup in the early going -- ultimately, he's expected to slot into the No. 3 or 4 spot -- and whether he'll get the needed at-bats to begin the season in Oakland or begin the year at Triple-A Sacramento.

"My first goal is to make the team and stay healthy all season, and little by little, I'll make more goals," Cespedes told MLB.com in February. "I've been preparing every day for this, and I 100 percent believe that I am ready for the Major Leagues. I have a lot of international experience and experience at a high level. I'm very confident in my abilities."

The 6-foot, 215-pound Cespedes played eight seasons for Granma in the Cuban League, tallying a record 33 home runs to go along with a .333 average and 99 RBIs in 90 games during the 2010-11 campaign. He was also Cuba's starting center fielder during the 2009 World Baseball Classic, batting .458 in six games.

Weeks, Gomes go deep to lead A's offense

Top prospect Parker deals two shutout innings in Oakland win

By Greg Johns / MLB.com

PEORIA, Ariz. -- Jonny Gomes and Jemile Weeks each cranked two-run home runs Saturday as the A's topped the Mariners, 9-2, in their second Cactus League meeting in two days.

Seattle rode five home runs to victory in Friday's opener, but the A's returned the favor with a couple long balls among their 16 hits in the rematch at Peoria Stadium as both teams continued preparations for their late-March trip to Tokyo for a season-opening two-game series.

Seattle didn't manage much offense other than a home run by designated hitter Carlos Peguero, his second in two days. Peguero launched a fourth-inning solo shot just over the right-field fence off reliever Jerry Blevins.

Right-hander Hector Noesi was impressive in his first Mariners start, throwing two scoreless innings and giving up just two walks while striking out two. Noesi, obtained from the Yankees in the Michael Pineda trade, threw 36 pitches in his two frames as he works toward landing a spot in Seattle's rotation.

But the A's got busy after Noesi's departure. Veteran right-hander Kevin Millwood, another rotation contender for Seattle, gave up a two-run shot to Gomes in a three-run third. Weeks followed with his own two-run pop off reliever Hong-Chih Kuo in the fifth for a 5-2 lead. Gomes and Weeks both finished 2-for-3 on the day.

Oakland starter Tyson Ross needed 33 pitches to get through his one inning as the right-hander gave up a run on two walks and an RBI single by Mariners first baseman Justin Smoak.

Jarrod Parker, acquired from the D-backs in the Trevor Cahill trade in December, made his A's debut in the second inning and pitched an impressive two innings. The 23-year-old right-hander, rated as the A's **top prospect** by MLB.com, allowed only one baserunner -- via an error -- while striking out four.

Both Ross and Parker are among a handful of A's competing for the fourth and fifth spots in the rotation.

"Definitely this early, having that command is a good sign," Parker said. "The changeup felt good today and I was able to throw a couple sliders. Being 100 percent fresh and healthy is huge coming into the year."

The game marked the debut of Chone Figgins in the leadoff role for Seattle with Ichiro Suzuki dropped to third in the order. Figgins went 0-for-3, while Ichiro was 0-for-2 with a walk and two strikeouts.

A's up next: Opening Day starter Brandon McCarthy gets his first taste of Cactus League action Sunday when he faces the Cubs at HoHoKam Park in Mesa for a 12:05 p.m. PT start. Fans will also get a look at prospect Sean Doolittle, who has made the transition from position player to pitcher. Fellow lefty Brian Fuentes, in the mix for the closer's job, along with right-hander Andrew Carignan, are also among A's hurlers scheduled to pitch. Meanwhile, Chris Carter is slated to DH all nine innings.

Mariners up next: Jason Vargas makes his Cactus League debut on Sunday against the Padres in the annual charity game at Peoria Stadium at 12:05 p.m. PT. Vargas already has pitched five innings in a pair of intrasquad games as the Mariners are stretching him out early in preparation to pitch the second game of the regular season in Tokyo on March 29.

Closer Brandon League will follow Vargas on the mound, with Charlie Furbush, Forrest Snow, Jeff Marquez and Matt Fox also scheduled to pitch.

Parker leaves A's, opposing hitters buzzing

Vying for rotation, top prospect fans four in two innings

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PEORIA, Ariz. -- For Jarrod Parker, the question was never *if* he was going to be a big league mainstay but *when*.

One spring performance surely can't provide all the answers, but Parker used his first outing to reaffirm the A's thinking that his time could come soon -- very soon. After the righty fanned four in two no-hit innings against the Mariners in a 9-2 A's victory on Saturday, manager Bob Melvin said there's no question Parker has the chance to break camp in the rotation.

"He has to be a guy you consider for that," Melvin said. "His stuff is too good."

Parker, ranked by MLB.com as the A's **top prospect**, reached 96 mph on his fastball and demonstrated pinpoint command -- often difficult to achieve in the early stages of spring -- while also showing off a changeup and slider, the latter which hadn't seen much action since he underwent Tommy John surgery in October 2009.

"Definitely this early, having that command is a good sign," said Parker, the key piece in the deal that sent Trevor Cahill to Arizona this winter.

"You want to see that, absolutely," Melvin said. "To go out there and throw three pitches for strikes, going forward that's a good confidence boost for him, not that he needs it."

Parker threw just 25 pitches -- 16 for strikes -- and noted he especially felt good about being able to get back up for a second inning "since you never know how that's going to feel." Among the four to fall victim to his strikes was Ichiro Suzuki.

"You look in [the Mariners'] dugout," Melvin said, "and you can see them talking about him, too."

"He's a guy you know the other organization has always taken care of. I let him know nothing's changed awhile back. He's a guy we covet. For him to be able to go out in his first outing like that is pretty impressive."

Worth noting

- Right-hander Tyson Ross, also battling for a starting job, struggled with command in his Cactus League debut, walking two and giving up a run in just one inning. Ross was forced to throw 33 pitches, of which just 16 were strikes.

"Unfortunately I had a little too much movement," Ross said. "I was kind of missing some spots there, and I definitely have to make an adjustment next time out. I felt like I was coming out pretty easy and free, though, and threw some good changeups and a slider, so definitely some positives out of today."

- Jemile Weeks' continual work from the right side of the plate paid off Saturday, when he hit a home run to left field against Mariners lefty Hong-Chih Kuo.

- Monday's split-squad action will take right-hander Bartolo Colon to Tempe, Ariz., to face C.J. Wilson and the Angels, while Brad Peacock, the team's **third-ranked prospect**, stays at Phoenix Municipal Stadium for a matchup with the Cubs under the watch of manager Bob Melvin.

- Melvin said Friday he won't rely on Brian Fuentes and Grant Balfour's spring performances to decide who is best fit for the closer's role, given their long track records. Other moving pieces in the bullpen will affect his decision. For

instance, if Fuentes exits camp as the only lefty in the bullpen, Melvin will likely go to a righty for the ninth-inning role. Right-handers Joey Devine and Fautino De Los Santos are also in the mix.

Major Lee-ague: Cespedes arrives

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 3/3/2012, 9:12am

Cuban outfielder Yoenis Cespedes made his first appearance in the A's clubhouse this morning, but don't expect to see him on the field today. His four-year deal won't be made official until he undergoes a physical, as he's scheduled to do by day's end. So A's officials like manager Bob Melvin still can't even comment on him until tomorrow, when Cespedes is expected to finally join the team for workouts and speak to the media. He'll be wearing No. 52.

It will be interesting to watch Cespedes acclimate to his new surroundings and to big-league competition. Perhaps equally intriguing is how Melvin and Co. decide to work him into games in the early days and how intent they are on keeping him in center field (Coco Crisp has said he wouldn't be in favor of moving to right). Also, do they hurry to get him the needed at-bats to start the season in the Majors? I initially believed that Cespedes would be on the Opening Day lineup, but considering he's missed the first two weeks of camp, it's hard to envision a guy who has never faced big-league pitching get the playing time needed in the next three weeks to be handed an everyday job by the time the team leaves for Japan.

Nevertheless, all of these questions will be addressed tomorrow, so in the meantime, a handful of other notes from around camp this morning:

- Melvin initially planned to start Manny Ramirez at DH tomorrow in Mesa, but instead he's chosen to play Chris Carter there for the duration of the game and start Ramirez against the Angels at home on Monday in split-squad action.
- Josh Donaldson was kept in the game longer than any other player in Friday's Cactus League opener, and Melvin said the aspiring everyday third baseman will see a lot of playing time over there during the next few weeks, as officials continue to evaluate his progress at the position.
- The closer job is still unsettled, and expect it to stay that way for awhile. Melvin said he won't necessarily take into consideration the spring performances of Grant Balfour and Brian Fuentes when making his decision, given the fact he's already quite familiar with the veterans' strengths, etc. And while Melvin said he hasn't narrowed his decision down to those two guys, it would seem that they are the early favorites to land the role, though I'd keep an eye on Joey Devine. Ultimately, Melvin's choice will be affected by the other moving pieces of the bullpen, and where needs lie in other innings. So, if he exits camp with just one lefty in Fuentes, for example, he would likely peg a righty as his closer to start the year.

Today the A's head to Peoria for a rematch with the Mariners. Here are the lineups:

A's: Weeks 2B, Cowgill CF, Smith LF, Gomes DH, Ka'aihue 1B, Donaldson 3B, Taylor RF, Recker C, Sogard SS (Ross SP)

Mariners: Figgins 3B, Ackley 2B, Suzuki RF, Smoak 1B, Carp LF, Olivo C, Peguero DH, Saunders CF, Ryan SS (Noesi SP)

Rubino: Recalling three career-altering injuries

By ROBERT RUBINO, The Press Democrat

There is no reason to think Buster Posey can't come back — as strong and healthy as ever, and as effective. Steady hitting. Clutch. More than a little pop in his bat. Expert handling of pitchers. And the intangible that's so obvious it's darn close to tangible: his positive influence on Giants teammates.

Still, when thinking of Posey and the devastating season-ending ankle injury (broken bone, torn ligaments) he sustained when Scott Cousins of the Marlins thought the game they were playing was football, it's hard not to recall some of the notorious big-impact injuries in baseball history.

Herb Score comes to mind. Score was a 22-year-old Cleveland Indians rookie left-handed pitcher in 1955 when he won 16 games and lost 10, with an earned-run average of 2.85 and an American League-leading 245 strikeouts. The next season he went 20-9 with a 2.53 ERA, a league-leading five shutouts and AL-best 263 strikeouts.

In his third season, 1957, in a game on May 8 against the Yankees, Gil McDougald's line drive crashed into Score's face, severely injuring his right eye, scrambling his depth perception.

By the following season, though, his vision, including depth perception, was back to normal. He told reporters he never felt better. On April 23, he threw a three-hit shutout, struck out 13 and lowered his ERA to 2.91. His career looked to be back on track.

Except it wasn't. Over the next five seasons, results were discouraging. At 29, he was done as a player. He never blamed the eye injury.

"I hurt my elbow (during the '58 season), and I overcompensated for it and ended up with some bad habits," he told Cleveland sportswriter Terry Pluto. Score, who died in 2008 at 75, went on to a long career broadcasting Cleveland games, and in several interviews over the years (a few of which are available via YouTube) he seemed a happy man with no regrets.

Tony Conigliaro comes to mind. While Score's story may evoke wistfulness, Conigliaro's is flat-out tragic. At 20 years old and already in his second full big-league season, Tony C., as Red Sox faithful called him, led the AL with 32 homers. He reached 100 career homers when he was 22. Then, in Boston's pennant-winning season of 1967, a Jack Hamilton fastball hit him in the face, fracturing his cheekbone, dislocating his jaw and damaging his left retina.

"I certainly wasn't throwing at him," Hamilton told reporters. "I was just trying to get the ball over. Tony stands right on top of the plate. He hangs over the plate as much as anyone in the league."

Conigliaro missed all of the following season but in 1969 made one of the most memorable comebacks in the sport's history, hitting 20 homers with 82 RBIs and following that with his best-ever season, 36 homers and 116 RBIs. But as miraculously as his talent had returned, it vanished. He was traded, and headaches and vision problems ended his career with shocking suddenness. A comeback attempt in 1975 with the Red Sox didn't work out. He became a successful TV sports anchor in the Bay Area, but a massive heart attack while he was still in his 30s was the prelude to living the last several years of his life in a vegetative state. Conigliaro died in 1990 at 45.

Ray Fosse comes to mind. Fosse was a 23-year-old Cleveland Indians All-Star catcher

in his first full-time big-league season in 1970. In the All-Star Game at Cincinnati's new Riverfront Stadium in the bottom of the 12th inning, local hero and future gambling addict Pete Rose, in a preview of what Cousins did to Posey some 41 years later but this was worse because it was an All-Star game, an exhibition, barreled into Fosse, who was about to grab Amos Otis' throw from center field, scoring the game-ending run and injuring Fosse's left shoulder. Fosse went on to have an outstanding 1970 season (.307, 18 homers in 120 games). Significantly, though, he hit only two homers after that All-Star Game. He followed that with another solid campaign in '71 (12 HRs, .276). But the shoulder injury forced him to alter his swing, reducing his power.

"I still feel it (shoulder pain). From time to time, I wake up and it's killing me," Fosse told the San Francisco Chronicle's Ron Kroichick in 1999.

He went on to make significant contributions to the Oakland A's World Series championship teams of 1973 and '74, and has been a mainstay in the A's broadcast booth for more than 20 years.

What do these memories have to do with Posey?

Hopefully, nothing at all.

Gomes, Weeks homer, Athletics beat Mariners

The Associated Press

Jonny Gomes and Jemile Weeks hit two-run homers to help the Oakland Athletics' backups beat up the Seattle Mariners' regulars.

Gomes connected in the third off Kevin Millwood, Weeks homered in the fifth against Hong-Chih Kuo and the Athletics had 16 hits in their 9-2 exhibition victory Saturday.

"We talk a lot about these guys really wanting to be part of their new teams," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said about Gomes. "When you do have a nice day, it makes you feel closer to everybody."

Gomes signed as a free agent in January after spending last season with Cincinnati and Washington. The outfielder figures to platoon at designated hitter until Manny Ramirez returns from his 50-game suspension,

Carlos Peguero homered for the second straight day for Seattle.

On Friday, Seattle's backups hit five home runs in an 8-5 win over a top Oakland lineup in the spring opener for both teams. The Mariners and Athletics will open the major league season on March 28 with a two-game series in Tokyo.

Mariners starter Hector Noesi, acquired with catcher Jesus Montero from the New York Yankees for pitcher Michael Pineda, struck out two and walked two in two hitless innings.

"Stuff looked good," A's manager Eric Wedge said. "He has some presence out there about him as well."

Montero was out of the lineup, a day after he was hit in the jaw by two foul balls. He ran sprints on a side field during the game Saturday.

The Mariners' new-look top of the order featuring Chone Figgins, Dustin Ackley and Ichiro Suzuki went hitless in seven combined at-bats. Ackley stole a base and scored after walking in the first inning.

The Mariners were without center fielder Franklin Gutierrez. Expected to be sidelined four to six weeks, he returned to the club Saturday after partially tearing his right pectoral muscle Tuesday and going back to Seattle for medical tests.

Right-hander Jarrod Parker, acquired from Arizona in the offseason, pitched two impressive innings in his A's spring debut, striking out four.

"It was good to get back in or that second inning," said Parker, who replaced starter Tyson Ross after one inning and struck out Suzuki as one of his four strikeouts. "Good to get back up and see how it felt."

Notes: The A's will hold a news conference to introduce Cuban outfielder Yoenis Cespedes on Sunday morning. Cespedes signed a four-year contract. "Not going to stick him in a game until we feel like he's ready," Melvin said Saturday. ... Former Mariners manager John McLaren attended the game. McLaren, who managed in Seattle in 2007 and 2008, is scouting and working with China's national baseball program. ... Before the game, the crowd observed a moment of silence for longtime Mariners scout Frank Mattox and former outfielder Greg Halman. Mattox died last week, and Halman died late last year.

MLB likely to uphold San Francisco Giants' territorial rights in San Jose, leaving the A's stuck in Oakland

Baseball to tell Oakland ... no way, San Jose

BILL MADDEN, NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

TAMPA - After a whirlwind winter of wheeling and dealing, in which he traded three All-Star pitchers and signed both Cuban expatriate, Yoenis Cespedes, and MLB renegade Manny Ramirez, Billy Beane went to Hollywood for the Oscars last week as a guest of Brad Pitt (who played him in a 2011 film) and Sony Pictures, with visions of one day soon taking his revised on-field version of "Moneyball" to San Jose.

Unfortunately, the "Moneyball" film came up empty with the Academy Award voters, and the same fate beckons for Beane and Oakland A's owners Lew Wolff and John Fisher in their determined effort to move to a new stadium in Hi-Tech haven. The latter prospect, in which, for a variety of reasons, MLB is going to uphold the San Francisco Giants' territorial rights in San Jose, will be especially disheartening for Beane. The man behind "Moneyball" essentially blew up his pitching staff, trading his 1-2 starters, Gio Gonzalez and Trevor Cahill, to the Washington Nationals and Arizona Diamondbacks, respectively, and shipped closer Andrew Bailey to the Red Sox — for a bushful of prospects and young players. All the deals were designed to have a contending-ready team in three years when, presumably, the A's would be liberated from the gloomy, outmoded Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum and on their way to San Jose.

"For the last 15 years it's been business as usual in Oakland except the cycles are closer payroll-wise versus revenues," Beane said by phone from Arizona. "We had a two-fold problem. We needed payroll room to put together

an entire new outfield (after the free-agent departures of Josh Willingham, David DeJesus and Hideki Matsui) and we needed to replenish our farm system. So we traded our three best assets and got back 10 young players plus payroll room to sign (center fielder) Coco Crisp (signed for two years, \$14 million) and Cespedes.

Though most scouts contend Cespedes has a lot to learn about hitting a major league breaking ball, Beane says the 26-year-old Cuban center fielder is in camp competing for a job in the outfield that now also includes Josh Reddick, the erstwhile top Red Sox prospect who came over in the Bailey deal; Collin Cowgill, a .354 hitter in 98 games at Triple-A Reno last year who was part of the Cahill deal with Arizona; Seth Smith, whom Beane obtained from the Colorado Rockies for two other pitchers, Guillermo Moscoso and Josh Outman; and rookie Michael Taylor. As for Ramirez, believed to be a baseball pariah after he walked away from the Tampa Bay Rays last spring and tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs, Beane defends: "It's a non-guaranteed, no risk (\$500,000) contract for the DH spot where we didn't have a young player ready to slip in. If he can't do it, we can turn the page in one hour and release him."

With or without Manny and Cespedes, however, the A's are looking at another long, dreary season in Oakland as Wolf grows increasingly impatient with Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig's interminable delay in ruling on the Giants' territorial rights to San Jose. There are two reasons why Selig hasn't ruled:

1. The Giants' territorial rights to San Jose are part of the MLB constitution as a result of former A's owner, Levi-Strauss heir Wally Haas agreeing to cede them in 1989 to Giants owner Bob Lurie, who, frustrated in his efforts to get a new stadium in San Francisco, was looking to relocate the team.
2. Even if Selig did invoke his "best interests of baseball" powers and allowed the A's to move to San Jose, he probably doesn't have the votes.

Lurie never did try to move the Giants to San Jose, but the fact that he now held those territorial rights to the rich high-tech Silicon Valley enhanced the Giants' value, and was a prime reason why Lurie, who bought the Giants in 1976 for \$8 million, was able to sell them for \$100 million in 1993 to a group headed by former Safeway magnate Peter Magowan. The San Jose rights were also the reason why Magowan was able to secure financing for the new ballpark in San Francisco, as the Giants now maintain the crux of their constituency — season box and suite holders — is from the Silicon Valley.

To strip the Giants of their territorial rights to San Jose would require a three-quarters vote of the clubs, and as one baseball lawyer observed: "Clubs would realize what a terrible 'there but for the grace of God go us' precedent that would create in which all of their territorial rights would then be in jeopardy." As an example of that, one can't imagine the Yankees, Mets or Phillies voting to take the Giants' territorial rights to San Jose away when it could conceivably open the doors for a team seeking to re-locate to New Jersey.

So, with no way to San Jose, where does this leave the A's and Beane, who recently signed a contract extension through 2019 when he conceivably thought he'd be operating there? With the Giants adamant against making any financial settlement with the A's on San Jose, Wolff and Fisher would appear to have only two options: Find a suitable site for a new stadium in their own (East Bay) territory, possibly right next door to the Coliseum, or sell the team. At least, if they choose the latter, the likely \$1.5 billion-plus the Dodgers figure to fetch will help boost the value of the A's well past the \$172 million they paid for them in 2006.

Or, if everyone concludes the A's financial survival anywhere in their own territory is untenable, there is the final solution: Contraction. In noting the similar plight of the Tampa Bay Rays, whose ironclad lease with Tropicana Field holds them hostage in St. Petersburg until 2027, one baseball official said darkly: "The A's and Rays are both in hopeless situations, and there's no place to move these teams. Hard as this might be to swallow for a lot of us, it would be in the best interests of baseball to contract both of them. You'd have a better game, and it would be two less teams we all have to subsidize."