

A's News Clips, Friday, March 9, 2012

Tim Kawakami: Billy Beane and the Battle for San Jose

By Tim Kawakami, Mercury News Columnist

Billy Beane is part of the A's Battle for San Jose, but he hasn't yet been appointed general-in-chief.

Maybe he should be.

After Wednesday's absurd exchange of A's and Giants' "ownership statements" over the rights to San Jose, I wanted to talk to the A's general manager/minority owner about the whole escalating mess.

Could somebody please make their argument on this crucial issue without sounding petulant?

Beane delivered. He got revved up about the A's need for resolution on their desire to move to San Jose, made his points, and underlined why desperate pressure is mounting for both sides.

Most of all, Beane sounded like the designated grown-up here. Partisan for sure, but definitely adult.

"I enjoy building something," Beane said as he sat in the stands during the A's 7-2 loss to the Dodgers. "But it's only fun building something if there's a light at the end of the tunnel.

"And right now the whole delay in this thing has frustrated us all.

"Because we're not in a position to connect with the people who've supported us (in Oakland) since the '60s, and we can't build bridges to a place that may be our home in the future.

"You're just in a complete state of limbo."

If this isn't decided soon, Beane suggested, there might be nothing left to decide.

The A's have had to partially abandon their core fans in the East Bay, and the team still doesn't have anything tangible to show for it in the South Bay.

The A's have nothing permanent. The Giants have almost everything, as they helpfully noted in their statement.

So, in Beane's view, the two franchises have to share the Bay Area's best resources for the A's to survive.

And that's a practical, real argument in the face of delays and indications and false promise.

In fact, a few months ago Beane announced that the A's had received some indication from the commissioner's office that a resolution could come soon.

Cue up spring 2012: No resolution in sight.

"We've been told that for a long time -- that it was very soon," Beane said. "Unfortunately, I guess, the definition of 'very soon' is up for debate at this point.

"I think yesterday is an indication that it's time for us to move forward one way or the other."

Beane didn't want to get into the specifics of the recent flare-up, though I can tell you he 100 percent believes that the Giants' position is technically weak.

In our discussion, Beane's main point was that the A's and San Jose can only wait so long for the commissioner's office to clarify the situation.

As Bud Selig's blue-ribbon panel works toward its third-year anniversary, the details of the rights debate are one thing, and they are certainly under the microscope now.

But for Beane, the fate of an entire franchise should be larger, if that's what this comes down to.

The A's have just gone through another roster purging -- this one, supposedly with an eye toward 2015, the latest target date for an A's stadium in San Jose.

How can Oakland fans embrace a team that won't keep its stars and doesn't want to be in Oakland, anyway?

How can the A's plan for San Jose if there is no way to know if they're going to be in San Jose at all?

That escalates the desperation, which escalates the tension, which escalates the verbiage between the Lew Wolff side and the Larry Baer side.

"I could see this coming," Beane said. "You're just sitting out there and you understand the people have supported you for years, why they would be frustrated.

"And you understand why people in the South Bay, businesses, wouldn't connect with you when they don't even know if you're going there."

I asked: Billy, what if this is delayed another bunch of years and the A's have to turn over the roster one more time?

"Somebody else can do it one more time," Beane said jokingly.

Another grown-up on the scene: A's manager Bob Melvin, a former Giants player and Bay Area native.

I asked him, given his ties to both teams and the region, if he was bothered by the A's and Giants' tension.

"I think it makes for good fodder, to tell you the truth," Melvin said. "It's a nice natural rivalry between the A's and the Giants."

Even with dueling public statements?

"I think that's been the case for a while," Melvin said. "It's just now becoming a little bit more public, it seems like."

This is true. If the statement-squabble proved anything, it's that the A's and Giants both see -- and probably both fear -- the arrival of bad news ahead.

Their stressed-out statements made them both sound like they expect to lose, which is odd, but somehow fitting, for this desperate double-down over San Jose.

Billy Beane on the A's-Giants escalation, Cespedes and much more

Tim Kawakami, San Jose Mercury News

GLENDALE, Ariz.—Caught up with A's GM/part-owner Billy Beane in the stands during the A's-Dodgers game here today.

Lots of sun. Lots of chatting. Beane was revved up and relaxed.

It's not reflected in the transcript, but I told Beane afterwards that he was the designated grown-up in the A's-Giants cold war over San Jose.

Somebody realistic, but also arguing a hard-charging point of view. Someone making a case, but not just trying to score instant public-opinion points.

Beane didn't agree or disagree with my conclusion.

Read the transcript and see what you think.

—I can also add that at the end of it, Beane and I talked about many things—I'm having a running off-the-record conversation with team execs on the proper use of stats in all sports, I guess—and he made sure to tell me I should pay attention to the Indian Premier League of cricket.

This starts with a discussion of Yoenis Cespedes' impressive early work this spring.

—BILLY BEANE interview transcript (moved some questions around to put similar topics together)/

-Q: What kind of things do you want to see from Cespedes that would tell you he's ready to play in the majors?

-BEANE: I think we're going to take it day-by-day. Obviously with the type of contract we signed him to, the sooner the better. So we're certainly not going to hold him back.

But I think we've got to be sensitive to the cultural exchange he's going to have. He doesn't speak any English at all. Listen, there is a certain level of communication that you need to have.

We're going to be aggressive in pushing him up there, but we're also going to be aware of the adjustments he's making not just professionally, but personally as well.

The sooner the better is the best way to put it.

-Q: Have you been able to get to know him much personally?

-BEANE: He's a very serious young man. He goes out every day with a purpose since he's been here. You could kind of see it in his eyes at the press conference—there's not a lot of wasting time.

He wanted to get out on the field. We had to drag him off the field the other day. He was hitting extra and nobody knew it. He just wanted to keep hitting. A little concerned he was doing too much too soon physically.

It's obvious he's very, very serious and committed to his career. At least that's been my first impression.

-Q: Have you seen any of his live hitting?

-BEANE: No, no, I didn't want to jinx him today. He tore it up yesterday. So I may never see him play, if he keeps hitting.

David went over there and I said there's no sense in me jinxing him. If he plays his cards right, I'll never see him play.

-Q: He's got those quick wrists.

-BEANE: Yeah, he's a live-bodied kid. He's very athletic and he's physical. He's got muscle and he's got speed as well. It's a unique combination.

The challenge, like for every position player, is hitting at the highest level.

-Q: Do you have to figure out Cespedes' role before you can figure out the rest of that outfield?

-BEANE: No, not necessarily. We've got some established major leaguers, but I'm not sure any of our players combine the speed and power that this guy has.

Once again, I don't want to put any restrictions on him, but I also don't want to put a strict timetable on him—the sooner the better, though, because we've got him on a four-year deal.

-Q: So it's definitely Saturday?

-BEANE: Yeah, I talked with Bobby yesterday and Bobby mentioned that, at least baseball-wise, he might be ready.

But we really want to be careful from a conditioning standpoint—because we've had to hold him back—that we don't push him out there and maybe he's baseball ready, maybe his legs aren't ready and he pulls a quad or a hamstring.

That can set you back two or three weeks at least. We're going to get the baseball approval and then we'll get the trainer's approval. Trainer will get the final say.

-Q: So when Cespedes starts playing, it'll be center field?

-BEANE: That was the idea. That was what he played. And we'll sort of work off that. We haven't seen him play lot of defense, obviously, because he hasn't played in any games. But he's always played center field.

-Q: What happened with those dueling statements from you guys and the Giants yesterday? Was this inertia leading to a big blow up?

-BEANE: Yeah, I think this is the case. It's gone on a long time. Nobody wants to see it go public, certainly. But I think as a national writer wrote today, it's a 1,000-plus days and it's gone on longer than the Warren Commission.

-Q: You'd mentioned months ago that you had indications this could be decided soon...

-BEANE: Well, we've been told that for a long time; that it was very soon. Unfortunately, I guess, the definition of "very soon" is up for debate at this point.

I think yesterday is an indication that it's time for us to move forward one way or the other.

-Q: Did you guys hear anything from the commissioner's office after yesterday's exchange? Were you told to settle down?

-BEANE: Lew communicates with the commissioner's office more than I, so if it did, it would come to him. But I haven't heard anything.

It's inevitable something like this is going to happen when something goes on this long. Hopefully for both sides we get some resolution.

-Q: When do you say, 'that's enough of this, I'm not doing it again as a GM'?

-BEANE: Not yet. Listen, I do enjoy the challenge of this and the process. I've never sort of feared making what I thought was the tough or the right decision.

Because the fact of the matter is if we were sitting in June and didn't do anything, everyone would've been writing, 'why didn't they tear this thing down?'

You either do your math homework first period or you wait 'til fifth period.

I enjoy building something. But it's only fun building something if there's a light at the end of the tunnel.

And right now the whole delay in this thing has frustrated us all. Because we're not in a position to connect with the people who've supported us since the '60s and we can't build bridges to a place that may be our home in the future.

You're just in a complete state of limbo.

-Q: Purgatory.

-BEANE: Yes, as a Catholic, yes.

And I could see this coming. You're just sitting out there and you understand the people have supported you for years, why they would be frustrated.

And you understand why people in the South Bay, businesses, wouldn't connect with you when they don't even know if you're going there.

-Q: You've just gone through another turnover period. Is your roster stable for now?

-BEANE: Listen, it's no fun. But we had to turn back the clock.

There's two things, I think when we did it there was this perception that we had some sort of a nod and a wink that we knew where we were going. That's absolutely false.

That being said, if we do move into a new stadium, this was a process that we would've had to take anyway.

You only get to open a stadium once and the right way to do it is still the way the Cleveland Indians did it—a new stadium is no panacea for attendance and interest unless there's a good team playing in it.

If in fact we do get a decision, it's something we probably would've embarked on, anyway. And in our current situation, it was something we needed to do as well, given our payroll, where it was going.

The fact is, we have a third-place team that I didn't envision, with the money we had left, was going to be better than it was last year. It was going to be worse than it was.

So I didn't see any sense in sort of floating around and hoping to get to third place. Seemed like the obvious decision to make.

-Q: This is either the third or fourth total make-over. Does it get easier when you're doing it in three or four-year cycles, multiple times?

-BEANE: What I guess I'm more surprised by, I guess, is the reaction to it. We have done this the entire time I've been here. We've had to do it.

It's not because I wake up in the morning and say, 'Let's try and create some news.' My life would be a lot easier if all I was doing was adding. But that's just not the case.

As long as we're currently in this state of limbo—if we're here in three years, we'll be doing the same thing. It's a fact. It doesn't make our jobs any easier.

We're going to be 30th in the league in revenues. And the consequence of that is that you have higher turnover.

-Q: Even if you get the stadium, you maybe might have to do another make-over between now and then, right?

-BEANE: Somebody else can do it one more time—he said jokingly. (laughs.)

My feeling as the general manager is that some of the guys you see here, if we get a new stadium, will be playing in a new stadium. It's a very young team and so it's hard to believe that we wouldn't have some resolution by then.

-Q: Can you compete this year... say, get to .500? Is it based on the injured pitchers coming back?

-BEANE: We've got Brett coming back at some point. That was a big loss and it'll be a big addition when he comes back.

I think with this team, I'm never going to make any predictions, but this team has a chance to be better as the season goes along.

Where we start and where we finish, I can't say—I don't know enough about them yet. These young pitchers—the Parkers, the Peacocks, the Millone's, Tyson Ross—those guys are important.

But their track record, at least the level they've pitched at, is higher than when Anderson, Gio and Cahill were on the club. So you can bring young guys up, they can give you a chance.

But once again, I think their progress will determine it as much as anything.

And we've got some young kids coming up—Choice is moving up the system, we've got four high picks, one first-rounder and three comp picks, essentially four first-round picks... we saw this as an opportunity to really bring in a lot of young players, not just through trade but by the draft. Might as well try to do it in one swoop.

-Q: Did you need to rebuild the farm system because you've had a fall off in your drafting over the last five or six years?

-BEANE: The highest pick we've had since the '90s is 10—Choice was 10. In baseball, there's a big difference between the top three picks and the ones after that...

We haven't had the premium-premium picks in a long time. And a lot of the small-market teams are built on them, those first and second picks in the draft.

The reward... excuse me, the problem is, when you're drafting first and second, that means you've probably lost 100 games, which we haven't come close to doing. Not that we're going to or are trying to do that.

But you can pay for mediocrity as well. And we haven't had a lot of extra picks because we haven't lost free agents.

-Q: Because you keep trading them before they're free agents.

-BEANE: Yeah, the thing is, as the cost of salaries goes up, the time that you're allowed to keep them is less and less.

If you look at the sequence, it used to be guys would go through free agency, the Giambis, the Tejadas. Then the Hudson, Mulders were four-plus, five-plus. Then the Harens, the Swishers were three-plus.

And now you're going zero to two. So it just keeps shrinking and shrinking.

-Q: So you're saying you have to avoid the deep arbitration years now, too?

-BEANE: No, it's just the window is shorter because the costs in arbitration are higher and teams are willing to give up a lot less for players the further down, which is obvious.

But you used to be able to trade a five-plus player and get a good return. Now, very few people want to give up young players for that. Then it was four-plus, now it keeps shrinking and shrinking.

The key for us is to make sure we get some return...

Sports time capsule: Mark McGwire bares soul about off-field struggles

By Pedro Gomez, Mercury News Staff Writer

It was March, 8, 1992. Long before there were historic home run chases and whispers of a substance called Androstenedione, Mark McGwire was an A's slugger who hadn't slugged so well the previous season. Then-Merc reporter Pedro Gomez got Big Mac to open up about why in a story headlined: 'An Emotional Rescue - McGwire hopes '91 problems are all behind him'

PHOENIX -- Not many people outside the A's clubhouse knew the emotional pain Mark McGwire faced last season.

Sure, everyone knew about his on-the-field agonies, which included a .201 batting average, 22 home runs and 75 RBIs, all career lows. But only a few close friends knew about the suffering McGwire went through at home.

The truth is McGwire's season-long slump and domestic problems were linked in 1991.

The first baseman struggled through the equivalent of a bitter divorce when a 2 1/2-year relationship with a woman ended and she left the home they shared. "The last 3-4 years, my personal life has been pretty screwed up," McGwire said. "The worst thing you can do in a relationship is stay with it when you're unhappy. You have to know when to break away."

The couple broke up for good in September, and since then McGwire says he has learned to have fun again, in and out of baseball. It was a different story last season, though.

At times, he arrived at the ballpark in a quandary and the last thing on his mind was baseball. His thoughts wandered from an oncoming Roger Clemens fastball to the argument awaiting him at home to the sadness of ending a relationship. McGwire's season ended with his average in decline for the third time over the past four seasons, but most significantly his home-run and RBI totals were about one-third lower than the previous season.

"To put it lightly, Mark went through his share of problems," said catcher Terry Steinbach, one of McGwire's closest friends on the team. "I know it was a difficult year for him."

Mention that athletes get little public sympathy because of the huge amounts of money they earn and McGwire rages.

"If I get anything across, it's that athletes are human; we're not robots," McGwire said. "When the average guy on the street has problems with his wife, try and tell me it doesn't carry over to his work."

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With each passing game in '91, fans increasingly dogged him. Columnists dissected everything from his swing to his mental capacity. It got so bad that baseball people privately began to wonder if McGwire's career was over.

McGwire, 28, changed his batting stance almost daily. At one time the 6-foot-5 power hitter used a stance in which he was in a crouch, with his weight shifted back and his hands behind his right shoulder. It was a stance more suited for a singles hitter.

On top of that, hitting instructor Rick Burleson publicly ridiculed McGwire and suggested even more tinkering with his swing.

"You get into such a hole that you'll try anything, " McGwire said. "And believe me, I tried everything."

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Few of the changes worked. McGwire, whose 175 home runs in the past five seasons are a major league high for that period, saw his average dip below .200 for much of August and September.

McGwire's season went so bad that he willingly took a \$200,000 pay cut for 1992.

"For the year I had, I didn't think I deserved to ask for more, " he said. "I've never been a money player."

The off-season provided the necessary time for McGwire to purge the distractions of 1991. He caddied for his buddy, PGA golfer Billy Andrade, at an Australian tournament.

He did whatever he wanted whenever he wanted and loved it.

"I've been with someone since I was 18, " said McGwire, who went through a divorce from his first wife three years ago. "This winter was the first time I've really enjoyed life. I went to L.A. a lot to see my son. I learned so much about myself this winter."

He also became eager to get back to baseball. Even though the A's players were not required to be in camp before March 4, McGwire arrived in late January to work out with other players.

He has been the first player on the field and the last off it daily.

"He's a very determined and proud person, " Manager Tony La Russa said. "I have no reason to believe he won't be the Mark McGwire of old again. One thing about last season I admired is Mark didn't dodge what was going on. He took the embarrassment without hiding. He's a tiger."

Of course if McGwire, who says he wants to stay in Oakland, comes back to have a 30-homer, 100-plus RBI year, many will say it's because he's eligible for free agency after the season.

One major league general manager characterizes 1992 as McGwire's most important season since 1987, when he set the major league rookie record for home runs at 49.

"He'll be just another player if he hits .200 again, " the general manager said. "He started off his career in grand fashion, but he's regressed."

But now it's time for a fresh start.

"I was very happy to see that last game end in '91, " McGwire said. "Now I can't wait for the first game of this season. It's going to be fun again; I can feel it."

Pedro Gomez, who now works for ESPN, is best known for his coverage of Barry Bonds.

Oakland A's notebook: Yoenis Cespedes continues to hit the ball hard

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

For the second straight day, much-touted Cuban signee Yoenis Cespedes upstaged the A's players participating in the scheduled spring training game by tearing it up in another simulated game.

Cespedes, who might play in his first Cactus League game this weekend, took six at-bats against minor league pitchers Thursday and had three more hits, including his second home run in as many days at the club's Papago Park minor league complex.

Facing A's minor league pitchers Blake Hassebrock and Shawn Haviland, Cespedes hit the ball solidly every time up. His home run, against Haviland, was a low line shot down the left-field line and over the wall. He also singled hard to center and had a sharp grounder back of third base for an infield hit.

In two simulated games, Cespedes is 7 for 12 with two homers.

Manager Bob Melvin, who watched part of the simulated session but missed the home run, said it's likely Cespedes could play in a game Saturday or Sunday but didn't want to get locked into it.

"We want to make sure he makes progress (Friday) and feels comfortable in the outfield and feels comfortable running the bases," the manager said. "But I think there's a good chance this weekend he's in there."

A's general manager Billy Beane, who attended Oakland's game against the Dodgers in Glendale, Ariz., on Thursday, has purposely avoided seeing Cespedes' hitting sessions.

"No, no, I didn't want to jinx him," Beane said.

"I know he tore it up yesterday. So I may never see him play if he keeps hitting."

Despite the early caution with Cespedes, Beane said the team will be aggressive in advancing their prospective starting center fielder.

"Obviously with the type of contract we signed him to (four years, \$36 million), the sooner the better, so we're certainly not going to hold him back," Beane said. "But we're also going to be aware of the adjustments he's making - not just professionally, but personally as well."

☐ It was a rocky day for A's starter Jarrod Parker against the Dodgers' predominately starting lineup. Parker, a candidate for one of the club's three rotation vacancies, gave up three hits, walked three and also hit a batter but only surrendered two earned runs in a 7-2 defeat to Los Angeles. He threw only 20 strikes in 41 pitches.

Parker bailed himself out of jams in both of his innings. In the first, he escaped when he got Juan Uribe to hit into a double play. Then after putting the first two men on in the second, he recorded three straight outs, including a called strikeout of Matt Kemp to finish his outing.

"It's a good way to simulate a jam and whatnot, but obviously, I put myself in it -- I don't want to walk guys like that," Parker said. "It was a good thing to battle through it and take some positives out of it."

□ The A's may have a fresh left-handed relief candidate in Jordan Norberto, who had a brief but rough stint with Oakland last year after coming over in the Brad Ziegler trade with Arizona. Norberto struck out the side in the third inning -- Andre Ethier, Juan Rivera and James Loney.

"I feel like I have a good opportunity," Norberto said. "I worked hard in the offseason to try and win a spot."

Norberto was 2-0 with a 2.45 ERA in the 2011 Dominican Winter League, appearing in 16 games, including six starts. He also was picked to start the first playoff game with his team, Escogido, and pitched 62/3 innings with six strikeouts.

"He's definitely a candidate," Melvin said. "The stuff is there. If he can throw the ball over the plate, he's got the tools to be a situational lefty or long lefty."

□ After being scratched from the lineup Wednesday with back stiffness, Manny Ramirez was much improved Thursday and participated in the simulated game at Papago. Melvin said Ramirez should play Saturday.

Daric Barton, trying to come back from shoulder surgery, also took a few at-bats in the simulated game.

□ The A's announced their first two regular-season games in Japan will be televised on a tape-delayed basis on the MLB Network March 28-29. Each game will be shown twice, at 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. The games will be broadcast live at 3:10 a.m. on 95.7-FM The Game.

□ Oakland announced it will bring back Spanish radio broadcasts this year, at least for 69 weeknight and weekend home games. The games will be aired on KIQI (1010 AM), KATD (990 AM) and KWRU (1300 AM).

A's job for Ramirez: looking out for Céspedes

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Yoenis Céspedes hasn't played a Cactus League game, but he's the biggest story in A's camp.

Manny Ramirez? He's merely in Céspedes' shadow. In more ways than one.

Part of Ramirez's role with the A's, apparently, is looking out for Céspedes. In the long, narrow clubhouse at Phoenix Municipal Stadium, Ramirez and Céspedes share the only four lockers against a back wall. They're often seen together, and they batted back-to-back in simulated games at the A's minor-league complex the past two days.

"He has been a resource," manager **Bob Melvin** said of Ramirez, who regularly chats with Céspedes between at-bats.

"Anything bad I do," Céspedes said of his mechanics at the plate, "Manny tries to talk to me to try to help."

Céspedes hasn't done much bad. Thursday at Papago Park, he hit another home run and is 7-for-12 with two homers. He'll play the outfield in today's simulated game and could make his Cactus League debut Saturday against the Reds.

General manager **Billy Beane**, after missing Céspedes' first hitting clinic, was sure to miss Thursday's. "I don't want to jinx him," he said, smiling, before heading to the A's-Dodgers exhibition in Glendale, Ariz.

It's possible Ramirez, despite his 50-game suspension, could spend time with Céspedes during the season. Ramirez is expected to spend most of his suspension in extended spring training in Arizona but could work out with the A's before games - so long as he's off the field before fans enter the gates, per MLB's rule for suspended players.

"If I was dropped into another country and didn't know anybody and didn't know the language and had high expectations on me, that's a lot of pressure," Melvin said. "So we want to make sure he's not only comfortable on the field but off the field and is comfortable with his teammates."

Melvin said minor-league pitching coach **Ariel Prieto** could remain with the team during the season in part to continue his role as Céspedes' interpreter.

Good, bad: Two ex-Diamondbacks prospects looked altogether different in a 7-2 loss to the Dodgers. While **Jarrod Parker** struggled in his first start - 21 of his 41 pitches were balls - lefty **Jordan Norberto** struck out all three batters in the third: **Andre Ethier**, **Juan Rivera** and **James Loney**, two with his slider, a pitch he struggled with last year.

"I feel confident throwing it in any count," said Norberto, a candidate for a bullpen job.

As for Parker, who was coming off two scoreless relief innings, he issued three walks and hit a batter in two innings and said, "I was trying to be a little too fine, not letting it go. I felt like I rushed it and battled myself."

Briefly: **Dallas Braden** isn't projected to join the rotation until early May, Melvin said. The lefty is expected to begin throwing breaking balls soon. ... **Adam Rosales** (left shoulder) got in his first exhibition, and **Daric Barton** (right biceps) took some simulated-game hacks. ... Ramirez was OK one day after feeling back stiffness. He should be the designated hitter Saturday. ... The A's will broadcast 69 home games in Spanish on three AM stations. The broadcasters: **Amaury Pi-González** and **Manolo Hernández-Douen**.

Dodgers 7, A's 2

Notable: **Mark Ellis**, facing his old mates for the first time, doubled down the right-field line to drive in the Dodgers' first run. Ellis drove in another run on a fielder's choice. ... The Dodgers scored four runs in the fourth off **Joey Devine** and former first baseman **Sean Doolittle**. ... Ex-Dodger **Travis Schlichting**, who signed an A's minor-league deal in December, pitched two innings and gave up a homer to **Alex Castellanos**. ... **Josh Donaldson**, the favorite to win the third-base job, went 0-for-3 and is 2-for-18 in six games. ... Trailing 7-0, the A's scored on **Michael Taylor** and **Grant Green** sacrifice flies.

Quotable: "I think it makes for good fodder, to tell you the truth. Yeah, it's a nice, natural rivalry between the A's and the Giants."

- **Bob Melvin**, responding to the team ownerships' criticizing each other over territorial rights to San Jose.

Today's game: A's (**Brandon McCarthy**) at Rockies (**Juan Nicasio**), 12:05 p.m.

Drumbeat: News on two biggest names in A's camp: Yoenis Cespedes and Manny Ramirez

John Shea reporting from Phoenix Muni Stadium . . . 3/8/2012, 8:57am

Even though the man will miss the first two months of the season, here's an update on Manny Ramirez's stiff back: It's not so stiff anymore, and he'll join Yoenis Cespedes in today's simulated game at Papago Park.

Cespedes went 4-for-6 in his first crack at real pitchers in yesterday's sim game, and this time he'll do some baserunning. The A's still target this weekend for his Cactus League debut. Both Saturday and Sunday, they're at home, facing the Reds and Royals, respectively.

Asked how Cespedes is blending in, manager Bob Melvin said, "You have to understand what the player is going through. If I was dropped into another country and didn't know anybody and didn't know the language and had high expectations on me, that's a lot of pressure. So we want to make sure he's not only comfortable on the field but off the field and is comfortable with his teammates."

Melvin said minor-league pitching coach Ariel Prieto could remain with the team during the season in part to continue his role as Cespedes' interpreter. Melvin managed Ichiro Suzuki in Seattle, but here's the difference: "Ichiro at that point, you could have a conversation with, and he understood everything. The reason he needed an interpreter is he likes to be really precise with what he's saying and doesn't like to get anything wrong. He always understood everything I said."

Melvin isn't committing a position for Cespedes, a center fielder by trade. "Well, there's three spots out there," Melvin said. "I'm not sure yet. At this point, I'm not going to be locked into that."

At yesterday's sim game, Ramirez spoke with Cespedes between every at-bat. The same is expected today.

"He has been a resource," Melvin said of Ramirez.

Ramirez's next game will be Saturday, a day later than expected. It's because tomorrow's game is at the Rockies' complex, and no DH will be used.

With Ramirez ineligible for the first 50 games because of his suspension for performance-enhancing drugs, the A's plan to keep him in extended spring training. Toward the end of the suspension, he can play 10 minor-league games.

"He can't be in a game where there's a gate, a paid attendance, and that's why extended spring training is the only spot for him," Melvin said. "Now he can come back and do some work with us in Oakland as long as he's off the field by the time the gates open."

So it seems Ramirez would spend most of the suspension working out in Arizona.

"Talk about Groundhog Day," Melvin said.

Parker hangs tough in first start for A's

By Barry M. Bloom / MLB.com

GLENDALE, Ariz. -- Jarrod Parker didn't have the first start he wanted in an A's uniform, but hey, the sky was blue at Camelback Ranch on Thursday, and he's feeling healthy.

"I backed off on all my throwing this winter," Parker said after his two innings of shaky work in the A's 7-2 loss to the Dodgers. "I worked out and tried to put on some weight. I'm about 200 pounds, which is good. It's hard for me to put on weight."

Parker is about 2 1/2 years removed from the Tommy John surgery on his right elbow that forced him to miss the entire 2010 season, when he was in the D-backs organization. So please excuse him for not being overly anguished.

He was money in his first relief appearance this past weekend, but not so much spare change against the Dodgers on Thursday.

He walked three, including Dee Gordon, the first batter he faced, who promptly stole second. He allowed two runs on three hits, struck out a batter and hit another. It could have been worse, but Juan Uribe hit into a bases-loaded double play to end the first inning, and Matt Kemp struck out looking with runners on first and third to end the second.

"Obviously, the first inning wasn't great, but I do like the way he finished," manager Bob Melvin said. "You can cash it in and say it's going to be a bad Spring Training outing, but he got better and finished up strong. He seems to be a tough kid. It's always nice to end your day by striking out Kemp. There you go."

Parker exited having thrown 41 pitches, fewer than half of them for strikes. But the 23-year-old right-hander tried to take as many positives as he could from the outing.

"It was rough," he said. "I didn't have as good a command as I had wished. I kind of battled through and rushed my delivery a little bit. I'm working through some things. I'm a little stiff. But it's early. I feel healthy. That's what's important at this point."

Parker is vying for one of the three spots that are open in the rotation, which right now consists of Brandon McCarthy and Bartolo Colon. He was the ninth overall pick by the D-backs in the 2007 First-Year Player Draft, and was deemed almost untouchable until he was included in a five-player trade this past Dec. 9 that sent former All-Star Trevor Cahill to Arizona.

The trade came as a stunner for Parker, but Melvin knew what he was getting and has pegged Parker as a top candidate for one of those big league slots. Melvin was the manager of the D-backs in 2007, the year the organization scouted Parker, the year the club went to the National League Championship Series and was swept by the Rockies.

"He was one of the top pitching prospects in the country," Melvin said prior to the game about a kid who was once named "Indiana Mr. Baseball" as a high school player. "When I was with Arizona, we felt like we were lucky to get him. Watching him a couple of times before the surgery, you could see what all the hoopla was about. He's got a plus fastball, plus changeup, plus breaking ball. It's all about repeating the delivery and making sure the command is there.

"Once you come off Tommy John, sometimes it's maybe difficult to let the breaking balls go. Now I think he's past that."

As far as Parker is concerned, it's all good. He knows that if he was still with the D-backs, he would have had a tough time cracking their rotation, what with their solid five and Trevor Bauer, their third overall pick in this past year's Draft, making a strong push to stay in the big leagues.

But that's definitely not the issue for Parker now.

"He's good. He's definitely part of this whole thing," Melvin added. "He's absolutely in the mix for one of those three spots."

Norberto throws perfect frame in relief

A's eighth-inning rally not enough against Dodgers

By Ken Gurnick / MLB.com

GLENDALE, Ariz. -- Starter Chris Capuano (two innings) and relievers Todd Coffey and John Grabow (one inning each) made scoreless Dodgers debuts, and Andre Ethier and Mark Ellis drove in two runs apiece in a 7-2 win over the A's on Thursday.

Capuano, in his first start of the Spring, struck out three without a walk. Coffey struck out two in a perfect inning.

Ethier doubled in a pair of runs in a four-run fourth inning, his third extra-base hit in four games. Alex Castellanos, obtained last summer for Rafael Furcal, homered off former Dodger Travis Schlichting.

A's starter Jarrod Parker struggled from the beginning, walking leadoff hitter Dee Gordon. Gordon stole second and was doubled home by Ellis, who was later singled home by Matt Kemp.

Oakland left-handed reliever Jordan Norberto was the opposite of Parker, striking out big leaguers Ethier, Juan Rivera and James Loney in the third inning.

Wildness caused more trouble for the A's in the fourth, when Joey Devine walked the first two hitters and Adam Kennedy followed with an RBI single.

Up next: The A's play the Rockies on Friday at Salt River Fields in a battle of right-handers: Brandon McCarthy for the A's and Juan Nicasio for Colorado. Manager Bob Melvin said that both Yoenis Cespedes and Manny Ramirez should play this weekend, with Cespedes making his A's debut. Ramirez was scratched from Wednesday's game with a sore back and should be the DH on Saturday vs. the Reds.

Cespedes' Athletics debut just days away

By Barry M. Bloom / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- Yoenis Cespedes is only days away from his debut in the A's lineup, manager Bob Melvin said on Thursday morning hours before his club traveled west to Glendale, Ariz., to play the Dodgers in a Cactus League game at Camelback Ranch.

For the second consecutive day, the Cuban-born Cespedes played in a simulated game at the nearby Papago Park complex while his new Major League team competed elsewhere. He was expected to be joined in Thursday's game by Manny Ramirez (back spasms) and Daric Barton (right shoulder).

If Cespedes, who homered in Wednesday's simulated game, continues to make strides, Melvin said he'd be in the lineup either when the A's play the Reds on Saturday or the Royals on Sunday. Both games are at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

"That's what we're looking at," Melvin said during his morning media briefing. "We really don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves. We want to take this day to day and make sure we pick the right day. If you guys are forcing my hand, this weekend would probably be a decent time for it."

Melvin said earlier this week that he's not concerned about the outfielder's physical condition, but he is concerned that he is not in baseball shape. Cespedes played in only eight games in the Dominican Republic since defecting from Cuba last year.

Melvin also isn't sure whether Cespedes will open as a designated hitter or in the outfield, and even to that end, he wouldn't make a commitment to which outfield position.

"There are three of them," he said. "We have a couple of days here to see him do some outfield work. I'm not going to be locked into that one."

Melvin is also reviewing how Cespedes is adjusting to the entire experience.

"It's been great, but that all plays into this, too, in making sure he's ready when we throw him out in the field," Melvin said. "I'd like to think that we understand what the player is going through. If I was dropped into another country where I didn't know anybody, didn't speak the language and had high expectations on me, that's a lot of pressure."

"I want to make sure that he's not only comfortable on the field, but he's comfortable off the field, that he's comfortable with his teammates. That's why we're going to err on the side of his being ready as opposed to some doubt that he's not."

The A's signed Cespedes last month to a four-year, \$36 million contract.

Manny to rest sore back and play sim game

PHOENIX -- Manny Ramirez will take a few more days off from game action to rest the sore back that made him a late scratch from Wednesday's Cactus League game against the Dodgers at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

Ramirez was left behind to play in a simulated game at the nearby Papago Park complex along with newcomer Yoenis Cespedes and Daric Barton (right shoulder) when the A's traveled to Glendale for Thursday's rematch with the Dodgers at Camelback Ranch.

Manager Bob Melvin said that Ramirez would not play on Friday against the Rockies at Salt River Fields but that he should be back as the designated hitter on Saturday against the Reds. The DH will not be used in the road game against the Rockies, Melvin said.

"He's better today," Melvin said of Ramirez, who is 0-for-5 with a strikeout in the two games he's played this spring. "He took a lot of swings [in batting practice] yesterday. He took some swings over here and felt it a little bit."

Ramirez, 39, sat out the entire 2011 season after testing positive for the second time in his career for a performance-enhancing drug, and he will sit out the first 50 games of the season as part of the agreed-upon suspension. During that time he can't play in any games attended by paying fans until a 10-day rehab period just before the end of the suspension.

He's eligible to return on June 2, at Kansas City, and at that point would be the team's DH. But that's a long way off, as far as Melvin's concerned.

"That's a process, too," Melvin said. "We have to get through Spring Training evaluating him. Then it gets to the next step and the next step ..."

Starting nine lined up to compete in Fan Cave

Finalists will be challenged while watching games, meeting celebs

By Mark Newman / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- Major League Baseball announced on Thursday the starting nine for its 2012 MLB Fan Cave experience, and now is a good time to get familiar with them because it will be up to fans to decide who will stay there through the season and who will be sent packing.

Ashley Chavez (Giants), Benjamin Christensen (A's), Lindsay Guentzel (Twins), Shaun Kippins (Braves), Gordon Mack (Phillies), Ricardo Marquez (Angels), Ricky Mast (Braves), Eddie Mata (Yankees) and Kyle Thompson (Cardinals) were chosen from an initial pool of 22,000 applicants.

Each of them will relocate later this month to the **MLB Fan Cave**, a 15,000-square-foot location being redesigned at Fourth Street and Broadway in the heart of New York's Greenwich Village. Supported by MLB Advanced Media, they will watch every game each day, chronicle their experiences via social media, try to watch all 2,430 regular-season games and compete with each other for the right to stay.

"The MLB Fan Cave in 2011 accomplished our goals of engaging fans via social media in an entirely new way, and now it's time to take it to the next level," said Tim Brosnan, MLB executive vice president of business. "Choosing these nine fans out of the 30 amazing finalists in Arizona last week was a difficult decision, but we've arrived at a truly entertaining group representing a wide range of our fan base. We think fans are really going to enjoy following their adventures online throughout the season while playing an active role in determining who gets to stay in the Fan Cave all season long."

The nine fans campaigned extensively to be among 30 finalists who earned a trip to Spring Training in Arizona last week, then survived two days of interviews, challenges and other activities there to be selected by MLB for the Opening Day cast. It is a different approach from last year, when Mike O'Hara and Ryan Wagner watched every game, and each would love the opportunity given recently to Wagner, who was just named the Orioles' public-address announcer.

They will compete with one another over the course of the season in a series of challenges, with fans online helping decide who gets to stay in the MLB Fan Cave and who gets eliminated, with one eventual winner crowned before the end of the World Series.

In addition to watching games and creating social media content, the contestants will mingle frequently with Major League personnel and celebrities. More than 50 current players -- including 32 All-Stars -- already have confirmed to visit the Fan Cave in 2012, including Jose Bautista, Matt Kemp, Evan Longoria, Joe Mauer, Andrew McCutchen, Justin Verlander and Shane Victorino.

Here is a closer look at the starting nine, including their Twitter accounts:

Ashley Chavez (@smashleychavez), 24, is from Lathrop, Calif. As a child she owned multiple stuffed animals named Will Clark and at age 12 once bypassed a series of All-Stars in order to seek the autograph of current MLB.com columnist Peter Gammons. She is leaving behind her job as operations/formalwear manager at The Men's Wearhouse in Stockton, Calif., to move to New York. She studied fashion design at City College of San Francisco. In her submission video, she shares her experiences following the Giants' 2010 World Series run.

Benjamin Christensen (@shakabrodie), 29, is from Bakersfield, Calif. He has tattoos depicting 38 MLB mascots and logos past and present in a variety of cartoon poses arranged on either side of his torso (American League teams on the right, National League on the left), earning him national media attention last month. He has been working as a bartender/cook/trivia writer at a local pub while completing a two-year B.S. program in news/editorial journalism and magazine journalism at the University of Oregon.

Lindsay Guentzel (@lindsayguentzel), 25, is from Minneapolis. She is an aspiring sports journalist who has worked at multiple TV and radio stations throughout Minnesota, covering the Twins and other local sports teams. Last fall, she broke the news of Joe Mauer's engagement on her blog, earning the attention of regional media outlets.

Shaun Kippins (@SkippinsYNN), 25, is from Latham, N.Y., and thus as a Braves fan he endured the pain of the 1996 and 1999 World Series among many friends and family rooting for the Yankees. Currently an assistant sports producer at YNN Hudson Valley, he earned a degree in sports communications from Marist College in 2009. While at Spring Training last week, Kippins was the unwitting recipient of a **prank by Troy Tulowitzki** while attempting to interview the Rockies slugger about an endorsement deal.

Gordon Mack (@GordonMack), 24, is originally from Bethlehem, Pa., and recently worked as a video editor in Manhattan. He initially drew the attention of the judges by balancing a chair on his chin while rapping in his submission video. Mack graduated from Johns Hopkins University in 2010 with a degree in mechanical engineering. His original dream job was to design roller-coasters until he learned the MLB Fan Cave existed and he could watch baseball as a profession.

Ricardo Marquez (@iBlogBetter), 26, is from Covina, Calif., and describes himself as a "failed comedian" in Los Angeles. After his initial MLB Fan Cave submission video, he followed up with a video featuring Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn, Stephen Strasburg, Tony Gwynn Jr., and other players working out at San Diego State, advocating his candidacy. Marquez also contributed to Yahoo!'s Big League Stew blog last month, offering his "10 Best Things About Being an Angels Fan."

Ricky Mast (@RickyMast), 28, is from Rockbridge Baths, Va. He is leaving behind a job as a hazmat cleanup specialist (working with his father, former NASCAR driver Rick Mast). A self-described academic overachiever, Mast spent the better part of a decade completing his education at James Madison University. His MLB Fan Cave submission video included multiple musical impressions.

Eddie Mata (@EddieMata), 36, is originally from Brooklyn and more recently has worked as a hitting instructor in Los Angeles while pursuing a career in acting and entertainment. In 2007, Mata earned the opportunity to work the red carpet at the Emmy Awards alongside Ryan Seacrest for E! Entertainment News, and also was on the YES Ultimate Road Trip. While campaigning for the MLB Fan Cave, he received many endorsements from celebrities, including Michael Rapaport, Jon Lovitz and Jerry Ferrara.

Kyle Thompson (@Kyle_D_Thompson), 25, is from Lawton, Okla. His submission video was a spoof of the popular Saturday Night Live skit "Like a Boss," and at the Spring Training auditions he persuaded Aaron Boone to pose with him using the 2003 AL pennant-clinching homer pose and called it "A-Booneing," a trend that caught on. With hopes of a career in the sports industry, Thompson earned an MBA from the University of Central Oklahoma in December, graduating with honors and a 4.0 GPA. He married his college sweetheart nearly three years ago, and she will move with him to New York.

"You can't trade an experience like this for anything," Thompson said. "This has never happened before. This is great for the future of baseball and I'm glad to be a part of it."

Marcos Breton: It's time again to play name these A's

Marcos Breton, Sacramento Bee

PHOENIX – Who are these guys? I looked in the A's clubhouse Thursday morning and drew a blank on almost every face in sight.

Are these the A's or a new crop of River Cats we'll see this season in Triple-A Sacramento? Or is there really much difference between the two?

Not much.

While the Los Angeles Angels and Texas Rangers spend hundreds of millions on marquee stars – and the cross-Bay Giants flaunt several budding icons – the A's are almost faceless.

You know you have team identity issues when your coaches and instructors – Chili Davis, Scott Hatteberg, Bob Melvin – have more name recognition than "name" players such as Coco Crisp and Kurt Suzuki.

You know you have team identity issues when your most celebrated players – Manny Ramirez and recently acquired Yoenis Cespedes, a defector from Cuba – haven't officially made the team yet.

In the past two days, there has been as much interest in Cespedes and Ramirez hitting in simulated games at the team's minor-league facility than there has been in A's preseason games.

This team is blessed with many great longtime employees who bleed green and gold. It has a personable manager in Melvin.

Baseball boss Billy Beane was the focus of an Oscar-nominated film and was portrayed by Brad Pitt for crying out loud.

But everything else about the A's – starting with bush-league ownership – is mired in a weird state of limbo.

Stuck in a decrepit football stadium in Oakland, and blocked by the Giants and baseball from moving to San Jose, this once-great franchise of four world titles operates by trading its name players for young, cheap talent.

And if angry blasts on Twitter were any judge, the fan base was outraged this winter.

Beane traded talented starters and fan favorites, Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez. He also traded All-Star closer Andrew Bailey.

What the A's got in return was a stockpile of highly touted pitching prospects that are now Exhibit A of the A's search for any identity.

With starters Dallas Braden and Brett Anderson still coming back from injury, the A's have not one, not two, but three open spots in their starting rotation.

By comparison, the Giants' five-man rotation is pretty much set. It's not unusual to have one starting spot open to competition. Two open spots aren't out of the ordinary.

But not knowing for certain who will make up a majority of your starting rotation mere weeks before the start of your season?

This is the epitome of franchise uncertainty. It could be exciting. It could be miserable. We're going to find out, while the affable Melvin remains a calm spokesman amid all the questions.

"It doesn't bother me, but maybe three spots is one more than you usually get," he said Thursday. "But we have some good young talent."

The most celebrated of the A's young guns is Jarrod Parker, a 23-year-old right-hander who came over from the Arizona Diamondbacks in the Cahill trade. Parker throws hard and has electric stuff when he's on, but he also missed the entire 2010 season after having Tommy John surgery.

Parker blew away the Seattle Mariners in his first spring start, but against the Los Angeles Dodgers on Thursday he showed what could happen to a young pitcher learning on the fly.

"Adrenaline got the best of me," said Parker, who gave up two earned runs, walked three and hit a batter in two innings of a 7-2 A's loss.

"I was really excited to get the start. (But) I put myself in a rough spot (in the first inning)."

Parker couldn't find the strike zone. He missed high and low, and only got his first pitch over for a strike against three of the 11 batters he faced. But he did end the second inning by striking out Matt Kemp, the outstanding Dodgers slugger.

Competing with Parker for the A's three open rotation spots are Brad Peacock, Tyson Ross, Graham Godfrey and Tommy Milone.

Heard of any of them? Me neither.

And unless the team is allowed to move to San Jose and presumably benefit from increased revenues and attendance – or unless the franchise is sold – you can be sure that these young men will be shipped away just when you are getting to know them.

It's the A's way today.

GIANTS CHAT

Wish you were in Arizona for spring training? Bee columnist Marcos Breton and photographer José Luis Villegas will share sights and sounds from today's Giants game in Scottsdale, where Buster Posey and Freddy Sanchez return to the lineup after 2011 season-ending injuries. Join them today at 1 p.m

Parker struggles; A's fall to Dodgers 7-2

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. -- Chris Capuano was pleased with his first spring outing for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Capuano threw two scoreless innings as the Dodgers breezed to a 7-2 win over the visiting Oakland Athletics on Thursday.

"I felt pretty good throwing the ball," Capuano said. "I thought I had pretty decent stuff. I thought it was a good first outing."

"The first inning I had some jitters," he said. "I think I crossed my poor catcher Tim (Federowicz) a couple times.

"He came out and apologized to me, but I told him I was actually messing up the signs and not to worry about it.

"The second inning, I felt much more relaxed and under control throwing the ball."

Also for the Dodgers, Alex Castellanos hit a solo homer.

For the A's, top prospect Jarrod Parker, acquired in an offseason trade with Arizona for Trevor Cahill, gave up two runs in two innings.

"It was rough," Parker said.

Also for the Dodgers, Adam Kennedy went 2 for 2, while Mark Ellis and Andre Ethier both drove in a pair of runs.

Parker missed the 2010 season after undergoing Tommy John surgery. He made his big-league debut Sept. 27 and pitched five shutout innings for the Diamondback against the Dodgers.

He is battling for a rotation spot for the A's.

Pitching to the Dodgers' first four hitters, Parker allowed two walks and run-scoring hits by Ellis and Matt Kemp before retiring the side.

"It's a good way to simulate a jam," he said.

"But I put myself in it. I don't want to walk guys like that. But it's a good to battle through it and take some positives out of it."

In the second inning, he hit the leadoff batter and allowed a hit to Kennedy before getting the next three batters.

"I didn't have as good a command as I'd wished. I kind of rushed through and battled with my delivery. But I'm healthy. That's what's important right now."

"Obviously, not his best outing," manager Bob Melvin said. "But I like the way he came back in both innings and was able to finish."

NOTES: For the A's, the debut of Cuban outfielder Yoenis Cespedes could take place as soon as Saturday, against Cincinnati. Cespedes, who signed a four-year, \$36 million contract, has seven hits in two simulated games at the A's minor league fields, including a line-drive homer on Thursday. "I don't want to lock myself into it," Melvin said. "We want to make sure we make progress and he feels comfortable in the outfield, feels comfortable running the bases. But I think there's a good chance this weekend he's in there." ... Ethier, who played at Arizona State, and the Dodgers hosted Cory Hahn, a top prep baseball player in California who was paralyzed from the chest down playing in one of his first games at ASU last year. ... The Dodgers added two players to their roster: pitcher Brent Leach, who made his big league debut for the Dodgers in 2009 and played in Japan last year; and pitcher Javier Solano. ... Josh Fields, the former Chicago White Sox third baseman, is off to a 4-for-5 start for the Dodgers. "I'm going to throw him over at third base a little more," manager Don Mattingly said. "His swing really looks good."

An A's-Giants territorial rights play by Ray Ratto

Ray Ratto, CSN Bay Area, 3/8/2012

Because we want you to fully understand all the issues involved in the new A's-Giants spitfest, and because you and we want you to get maximum enjoyment out of it, we have put together a little play to help explain it.

We would have gotten the principals in a room to explain their positions in a calm and rational manner, but since Charlie Johnson and John Fisher are too busy with their invisibility shields to make their cases, and we couldn't really endure Lew Wolff and Larry Baer going at each other for an hour at the same time in an enclosed room, we thought this might offer some clarity.

So we begin, in a seemingly quiet suburban home, in an upstairs playroom, where two obnoxious children are arguing yet again.

A'S: Shut up!

G'S: You shut up!

A'S: No, you shut up! You started it!

G'S: No, you started it!

BUD SELIG (in the role of DAD): What the hell's going on in there?

A'S: He's being mean to me!

G'S: He deserves it!

BUD: Do I have to get up?

A'S and G'S: No, Dad.

BUD: Then both of you shut up! I'm watching a game!

A'S: Stop going on my side of the room!

G'S: You're on my side of the room!

A'S: No I'm not. You can't have the whole room!

G'S: Yes I can. I'm bigger than you. You can have the garage. Or the treehouse. Or the middle of the freeway. This is mine!

A'S: Bite me. I'm taking my share!

G'S: Not if I kick your butt you won't!

A'S: I'll kick your butt! In fact, I'll wait until you're sleeping and brain you with the lamp!

G'S: Oh yeah?

A'S: Yeah!

G'S: Look, you gave me your side of the room a long time ago, and I made plans to clean up my side of the room based on that.

A'S: That was two brothers ago, dumb ass. I don't care what your deal was with them, I'm here now and I want my share back.

G'S: Well, you're not getting it.

A'S: Bite me again, yes I am. You only want my side of the room so that I can't live here any more.

G'S: Well, duh. If I could convince Mom and Dad to stop feeding you so you would die and I could bury you in the backyard, I would.

A'S: You don't even want my side of the room.

G'S: No I don't, but I don't want you to have it. I don't want you to have the same fun I'm having. Besides, you don't want to have friends. You chase everyone you know away because you're such a slob.

A'S: I'm NOT a slob.

G'S: Shut up. You let your playroom turn into an eyesore because you think you can just fix up this room now. You break your toys, or you give them to other kids in exchange for some crappy toy you get rid of the next day. Nobody wants to play with you.

A'S: And all your friends are snotty braggards who dress up like animals and wear fake beards like that's supposed to be cool. Your friends are lame.

G'S: Yeah, well, they have money that they give me because I've convinced them I'm their friend. So you can bite ME. Besides, I was here first.

A'S: And you did a crappier job with your side of the room until Mom and Dad painted your half and put in new carpeting.

G'S: Well, that's because I know how to suck up to them.

A'S: Look, why is this such a big deal to you? Why can't you just share?

G'S: because I hate your guts and I want you out. I've always hated your guts. I've only hated you a little less lately because it seemed like you didn't give a damn and just wanted to stay out of my way. Now you're pissing me off again.

A'S: Yeah, and I hate your guts. You got your part of the room fixed up and now you act like you're the king of the world. Well, now I want my side fixed up so that you'll shut up for awhile.

G'S: And if you fix it up, then you'll stay, and I don't want you here.

A'S: There's nowhere else to go!

G'S: Well, you could wander into the woods and be killed by a bear. I'm fine with that.

A'S: You couldn't kill me. You're a big candy, and you always have been. I'll fix up my room, and I'll start screwing with you every day like I used to.

G'S: That's my room, and you're not touching it.

A'S: Shut up!

G'S: You shut up!

A'S: Daaaaddd!!

G'S: Daaaaddd!!

BUD SELIG: DAMN IT, WHAT DID I TELL YOU TWO NOT FIVE MINUTES AGO? I SAID SHUT UP, RIGHT? WE WILL DEAL WITH YOU TWO BABIES WHEN WE'RE DAMNED GOOD AND READY! NOW YOU SIT ON YOUR SIDE, YOU SIT ON YOUR SIDE, AND I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANOTHER PEEP OUT OF EITHER OF YOU!

A'S: HE'S BEEN DOING THIS SINCE I GOT HERE!

G'S: I GET TO DO IT! I'M BETTER THAN YOU!

A'S: NO YOU'RE NOT! YOU SUCK!

G'S: YOU SUCK!

BUD: I'M TAKING OFF MY BELT, AND THE NEXT PERSON WHO EMITS A NOISE IS GOING TO FEEL IT!

A'S: I WANT TO TALK TO MOM!

G'S: YEAH! WE WANT MOM!

BUD: MOM IS OFF FIXING THE DODGERS AND THE METS RIGHT NOW, AND WE LIKE THEM BETTER BECAUSE EACH OF THEM ARE WORTH MORE BY THEMSELVES THAN YOU ARE TOGETHER!

A'S: BUT THEY'RE AWFUL!

G'S: AND THEY'RE THIEVES!

A'S AND G'S: AND THEY'RE ALWAYS IN COURT!

BUD: AND THEY PAY MORE RENT THAN YOU, SO THEY MATTER AND YOU DON'T! YOUR MOTHER WILL BE HOME WHEN SHE'S HOME, AND THEN WE'LL FIX THIS, YOU WHINY LITTLE CREEPS! UNTIL THEN, EITHER KEEP IT DOWN, OR I'LL TAKE THE BELT TO BOTH OF YOU! GOT IT?

A'S AND G'S: Yes Dad.

BUD: God, I hate children sometimes.

A'S: Pssstt. I hate Dad.

G'S: Pssstt. I hate Dad, and I hate you too.

A'S: You starting up again?

G'S: Yeah. Wanna make something of it?

Who Has Moral High Ground In A's-Giants Dispute?

By [Rob Neyer](#), SB Nation

The Oakland A's really want to move to San Jose and the San Francisco Giants really don't want the A's to move to San Jose. We've got an impasse, and now we've got both teams arguing through press release. Is anyone "right"?

Follow [@sbnbaseball on Twitter](#), and Like [Baseball Nation on Facebook](#).

Mar 8, 2012 - There are few things more entertaining, from a distance anyway, than internecine squabbles. As long as nobody's actually getting hurt. So yesterday was a lovely day, as the [Oakland Athletics](#) and [San Francisco Giants](#) released dueling press releases. The subject? An obscure baseball subject known as "territorial rights". The Giants have San Jose and Silicon Valley in their *territory*, and the Athletics want some of that high-tech action. Specifically, they want to build a new baseball stadium in Santa Clara County's San Jose.

First, from the A's:

Of the four two-team markets in MLB, only the Giants and A's do not share the exact same geographic boundaries. MLB-recorded minutes clearly indicate that the Giants were granted Santa Clara, subject to relocating to the city of Santa Clara. The granting of Santa Clara to the Giants was by agreement with the A's late owner Walter Haas, who approved the request without compensation. The Giants were unable to obtain a vote to move and the return of Santa Clara to its original status was not formally accomplished.

One might, upon reading that, draw the conclusion that Walter Haas agreed to grant Santa Clara County to the Giants because he was approximately a saint, his heart as pure as the driven snow.

Perhaps. Or perhaps, with his Athletics routinely going to the World Series and out-drawing the Giants by huge margins, he saw an opportunity: If the Giants moved to San Jose, would the fans in San Francisco and the rest of northern San Mateo County make the long trek south to see the Giants in their new home?

Perhaps not. Perhaps most of them would choose the shorter trek across the Bay and visit the hyper-successful A's, instead. My guess -- and I should stress that this *is* just a guess -- is that Haas and the A's didn't "formally" accomplish "the return of Santa Clara to its original status" because there was still some hope that the Giants would ultimately move south, leaving The City wide open to enthusiastic marketing from the Athletics.

And before long, it was too late. From the Giants' press release:

The Giants territorial rights were not granted "subject to" moving to Santa Clara County. Indeed, the A's fail to mention that MLB's 1990 territorial rights designation has been explicitly re-affirmed by Major League Baseball on four separate occasions. Most significantly in 1994, Major League Baseball conducted a comprehensive review and re-definition of each club's territories. These designations explicitly provide that the Giants territory include Santa Clara, San Francisco, San Mateo, Monterey, Santa Cruz and Marin Counties and the A's territory included Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

The MLB owners unanimously approved those designated territories and memorialized them in the MLB Constitution. Since then, the MLB Constitution has been re-affirmed by the MLB owners – including by the A's – on three different occasions (2000, 2005 and 2008), long after the Giants won approval to build AT&T Park. Mr. Wolff and Mr. Fisher agreed to these territorial designations and were fully aware of our territorial rights when they purchased the A's for just \$172 million in 2005.

Wait a minute. Look at that first sentence. The Giants essentially are accusing the Athletics of lying. But wouldn't it be great if we all could see the "MLB-recorded minutes" and decide for ourselves? But again, all of that is sort of irrelevant. The A's voluntarily gave up the rights to Santa Clara County, they didn't get them back, and the new territories apparently have been reaffirmed multiple times. *Memorialized*, even.

Now look at that last sentence, and see if you can spot the little dig ... Yeah, that's right: Mr. Wolff and Mr. Fisher bought the A's for *just* \$172 million. As in, "If the A's had any reasonable or enforceable claim to a better territory, the A's would have been worth a lot more than \$172 million."

Which might well be true. Probably is true.

It's easy to rail against the Giants for protecting their territory at the expense of another franchise, and I have absolutely no doubt that they're greatly exaggerating the negative impact of a club playing in San Jose. But there almost certainly would be *some* negative impact, so why should the Giants roll over? Because they're good guys?

They're not good guys. They're millionaires trying to protect their interests, just as the Athletics are millionaires trying to protect *their* interests. Fundamentally, this is an argument between two rich kids about which gets the bigger bedroom in the family mansion. Except the Giants are the older kid, with more stuff. So he's got a pretty good claim to the big room.

Except the analogy breaks down when we consider it's not just two kids; it's 30 kids, and all 30 theoretically have some say in this dispute. As I understand things, the Giants' territory can be stripped from the Athletics if three-fourths of the MLB franchises agree. I'm pretty sure the A's would vote for that, while the Giants wouldn't. Three-fourths of 30 is 23: the Athletics + 22.

Are there 22 votes for the A's moving to San Jose? If there were, it presumably would have happened already. Why aren't there 22 votes? According to Bill Madden ([whose column precipitated this recent battle](#) of press releases):

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...

I don't know. I suppose that's right; [Neil deMause thinks so](#). I just can't quite understand why *precedent* would really be an issue. The owners could elect to redraw the Giants' and Athletics' territorial boundaries this time, but not the Yankees', Mets' or Phillies' next time, right? From what I can tell, three-fourths of the owners can do just about anything they want, regardless of whatever *precedent* might have been set.

But even granting the point, how many teams are really worried about this? Let's assume the Yankees, Mets, and Phillies. Are the [Cubs](#) or [White Sox](#) worried about territorial issues? The [Dodgers](#) or [Angels](#)? The [Royals](#)? The [Rays](#)? The [Astros](#)? I do suspect the Angels would vote against the A's, because they prefer the A's poor. Same for the [Rangers](#), and for the [Mariners](#) (who do have territorial issues, as they hope to keep Major League Baseball out of Portland, Oregon, forever). So that's seven votes, including the Giants', against.

You need eight to thwart the Athletics' ambitions. And I suspect it's not all that difficult for the Giants to find another friendly team somewhere.

Everybody wants to know why Bud Selig hasn't simply stepped in and resolved this matter, once and for all. My guess is that he would love to resolve it, and in the favor of the Athletics because a) Major League Baseball is stronger if the A's aren't destitute, and b) he and Lew Wolff go way, *way* back. But Commissioner Bud is a consummate vote-counter, and I strongly suspect that he simply doesn't have the votes. And probably won't get them.

