

A's News Clips, Thursday, January 13, 2011

A's co-owner Lew Wolff denies interest in buying Dodgers

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A's co-owner Lew Wolff denied all speculation Wednesday that he has any interest in buying the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The idea was floated Tuesday by ESPN national baseball writer Buster Olney. With Dodgers owner Frank McCourt on shaky financial ground as his very public divorce unfolds, and with Wolff's bid to build the A's a new stadium in perpetual limbo, Olney wondered if Major League Baseball might help facilitate Wolff's purchasing the Dodgers.

It was pure speculation, as Olney noted, but by Wednesday the topic was creating buzz. That the A's felt compelled to issue a release denying the notion added fuel to the connect-the-dot fire.

Wolff, attending the owners' meetings in Arizona, said he wanted to head off any thoughts that he was eyeing another franchise.

"It actually came as a one thousand percent surprise to me. I don't even quite get it," Wolff told Bay Area News Group by phone. "I normally don't spend my time denying things, otherwise I'd be doing it constantly. But I wanted to make sure I didn't have any possible interference with what's going on with the Dodgers and (Major League Baseball). The other reason is so everyone knew my target is getting the new venue for the A's."

The idea isn't entirely far-fetched. Wolff lives in Southern California, and his business offices are based there. And Wolff hasn't hidden his frustration as his attempts to move the A's to San Jose have bogged down.

A committee appointed by MLB commissioner Bud Selig nearly two years ago to explore the issue still hasn't released its findings.

Asked if he and the rest of the ownership group would consider selling the A's if a new stadium doesn't come to fruition, Wolff said: "There's no thought of that and no plans of that."

If McCourt does sell the Dodgers, there's no shortage of prospective buyers. Former Dodgers first baseman Steve Garvey reportedly is interested.

Another candidate mentioned is former sports agent Dennis Gilbert, who is a special assistant to Chicago White Sox chairman Jerry Reinsdorf but lives in Southern California. Gilbert and Wolff often socialize when the A's play the Los Angeles Angels in Anaheim.

A's owner Lew Wolff to Frank McCourt: 'No interest whatsoever' in buying Dodgers

Bill Shaikin, Los Angeles Times, 1/12/2011

In the first morning of the baseball owners' meetings, the Oakland Athletics issued a statement Wednesday saying the owner of their team, Lew Wolff, had "no interest whatsoever" in buying the Dodgers and had told that to embattled Dodgers owner Frank McCourt.

As concern grows about McCourt's ability to maintain financial control of the Dodgers through what could be several more years in divorce court, and as Commissioner Bud Selig and the other owners indicate they are in no mood to help McCourt, speculation has run rampant about whether he would be forced to sell the team.

In his ESPN.com column on Tuesday (subscription link), Buster Olney speculated that Selig might solve two problems at once by shepherding a sale of the Dodgers to Wolff. Selig has delayed a decision on Wolff's request to build a new A's stadium in San Jose for more than a year, and Olney suggested that Selig could do with the A's what he did with the Montreal Expos -- get the owner of the troubled team a new team and then let Major League Baseball figure out what to do with the troubled team.

MLB has refrained from any public comment on the Dodgers' situation, and it was no coincidence that the A's statement Wednesday was sent not only to the media but to the commissioner's office.

The statement, in response to Olney's speculation:

"There is no truth to this report. Mr. Wolff has no interest whatsoever in purchasing the Los Angeles Dodgers franchise. Furthermore, he has no knowledge of the source of any such rumor, and he has informed Major League Baseball and Dodgers ownership of his position."

Major Lee-ague: Wolff: "No interest" in purchasing Dodgers

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 1/12/2011

The A's on Wednesday issued a statement in response to a Tuesday column written by ESPN's Buster Olney that speculated whether team owner Lew Wolff could become the next owner of the Dodgers. The thinking behind Olney's curiosity -- it's important to note that it was merely speculation, nothing more -- was that Selig could do with the A's what he did with the Expos and get the owner of a troubled team a new team, subsequently letting Major League Baseball figure out what to do with the other team.

Wolff has been awaiting a report from the three-panel committee which Commissioner Bud Selig appointed almost two years ago to study the A's stadium options. Meanwhile, there's thought that financial pressure will force Dodgers owner Frank McCourt out of the picture. Olney linked the two together, and here's what Wolff had to say via press release:

"There is no truth to this report. Mr. Wolff has no interest whatsoever in purchasing the Los Angeles Dodgers franchise. Furthermore, he has no knowledge of the source of any such rumor, and he has informed Major League Baseball and Dodgers ownership of his position"

MLB changes should be handled methodically

Selig, committees properly evaluate potential rule alterations

By Hal Bodley / MLB.com

PARADISE VALLEY, Ariz. -- When Detroit's Armando Galarraga lost his perfect game last summer because of umpire Jim Joyce's call, there was an outcry for Major League Baseball to use more video replay.

In another corner, assorted general managers said it would be an excellent idea to expand the postseason by adding two more Wild Card teams.

Both are worthy suggestions, with plenty of merit to eventually be adopted.

But the key here is "eventually."

Under Commissioner Bud Selig's watch, MLB has undergone numerous dramatic changes that have improved the game and made it more popular. Selig, however, has never been one to quickly pull the trigger on any change that affects baseball. He's methodical to a fault.

And that's the way he's approaching these latest suggestions -- which is good.

Before the owners and general managers gathered this week in Paradise Valley for the quarterly meetings, Selig made it clear that expanding the playoffs and increasing video replay will not happen in 2011.

The time frame is too short for either to be adopted so quickly, and such changes must be approved by the Major League Baseball Players Association and built into the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The current CBA expires Dec. 11, so it's logical that if MLB is serious about these changes, they can be part of negotiations.

Above all that, these proposed changes should be studied long and hard.

Although there was casual discussion during these sessions, which end Thursday at the Sanctuary Resort, they haven't been agenda items. They're still being discussed at the committee level, mostly by Selig's 14-member special committee for on-field matters.

"We've been very deliberate in any changes we've made and will continue to be that way," Selig said on Thursday.

I believe there should be no rush to make an important change to a game that has stood through three centuries. Change might be good, but by the same token, too much change is not what baseball is all about.

Those in favor of expanding the playoffs point out that MLB has fewer teams in the postseason than any other major sport.

In 1994, when the Wild Card concept was adopted along with the three-division format, I thought it was a terrible idea.

I couldn't have been more out of touch.

The Wild Cards have given more teams hope as their seasons wind down, and it has fueled enormous fan interest to boot.

If two more Wild Card teams are added, another round must be added to the playoffs, triggering a debate as to whether this should be a best-of-one or a best-of-three format.

A one-game playoff for the Wild Card spot is intriguing, but after playing a 162-game schedule to make the postseason, being ousted in one contest seems unfair. And wouldn't the overall product be diluted by adding another round of playoffs?

I pose these questions because they substantiate the belief that any quick change would not be good.

Players union chief Michael Weiner said it perfectly: "It's our sense that the most productive way to proceed on this topic would be for the parties to engage in discussions before settling on any specific proposals."

The Galarraga near-miss is a good example of how one incident can fuel emotions to quickly make a change.

That's not the way it should be done.

It was a major change when video replay was adopted in 2008 for home run calls.

Galarraga would have had a perfect game had the correct call been made at first base. Replay would have reversed Joyce's call, but it seems to me that if replay is used for calls at the bases, it might not stop there. Too much replay would not be good -- it would clutter the flow of the game.

For now, I do not believe replay should be increased.

"When we contemplate changes, we have to make sure we do not react to one specific event," said Orioles president Andy MacPhail. "We have to get the right perspective of things and long view of things and not make a change because of one play."

"The Commissioner insists we take a methodical long view of any possible change. We must do it that way to protect the sport."

Said Selig: "We need to decide what we want to do and then discuss it with the union."

The argument ultimately might be strong enough to use replay in crucial situations other than home runs. But it should not happen just because several high-profile calls were missed in 2010.

New York Mets general manager Sandy Alderson agrees.

"A deliberate approach is useful in anything that has a long, institutional history. Certainly baseball has that," he said. "You cannot have a trigger response to a particular circumstance."

"It may be that that is systematic of a bigger problem. It is important that emotions dissipate before a major change is made."

Baseball has always been slow to change. That is one of the reasons the game is so great.

It's also a reason why changes that have been made have been so successful. They weren't implemented by knee-jerk reaction.