

**A's News Clips, Wednesday, January 4, 2012**

**Source: A's re-sign Coco Crisp to two-year, \$14 million deal**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's have agreed to a two-year, \$14 million contract with center fielder Coco Crisp, a source with knowledge of the situation confirmed to this newspaper.

Final details are still being ironed out, but an announcement might come as soon as Wednesday. Crisp will get \$6 million in 2012 and \$7 million in 2013. The team holds a \$7.5 million option for 2014 but can buy Crisp out for \$1 million. The outfielder gets a \$250,000 bonus if he's traded.

For a team that has traded away three All-Star pitchers -- Gio Gonzalez, Trevor Cahill and Andrew Bailey -- in the past month, the re-signing of at least one recognizable name should come as refreshing news to fans.

It certainly was welcomed by A's shortstop Cliff Pennington, who admitted he was surprised to hear Crisp will return given how many veterans have been shipped off.

"We've been losing a lot of guys," Pennington said. "To get a guy like that to come back is awesome."

The 32-year-old Crisp -- who hit .264 with eight homers and 54 RBIs last season and tied for the American League lead with 49 stolen bases -- said in September that signing with a contending team was important to him as he entered free agency.

The A's don't seem to fit that mold given their roster dismantling, which makes Crisp's decision rather surprising.

Crisp was not available for comment, and neither his agent, Steve Comte, nor A's general manager Billy Beane, would discuss the deal because it hasn't been formally announced.

But Comte was asked how Crisp viewed the A's franchise given the core players that have been traded.

"Billy always finds a way to piece it together," Comte said. "I think we've seen a few teams with young talent that have probably exceeded expectations."

Beane hinted during the winter meetings that re-signing Crisp was a long shot, and Comte claimed more than a dozen teams showed interest in him.

The Chicago Cubs were viewed as a possible destination, but Comte said the Cubs weren't willing to sign Crisp until their other potential moves played out.

"Chicago would have been a great place for Coco, but we just can't wait indefinitely," Comte said.

"He was going to decide New Year's Day, and that's what we did."

It's also possible that no teams were willing to offer the injury-prone switch hitter as much money as the A's, particularly on a two-year commitment.

Oakland had just \$22.9 million committed to its 2012 payroll before agreeing to terms with Crisp, according to the Cot's Baseball Contracts website.

The departure of free agents Josh Willingham and David DeJesus left the A's lacking outfield depth, and Crisp's return provides them a sure-handed center fielder.

Might his signing also help their image? The A's have taken a beating among their fan base for unloading players such as Gonzalez and Bailey and seemingly throwing in the towel on 2012.

It remains to be seen what other moves might come. As the roster stands, Josh Reddick, whom the A's acquired from Boston in the Bailey deal, will play right field. Michael Taylor and Collin Cowgill are among those competing in left. The A's, who finished 12th out of 14 A.L. teams last season in runs (645) and homers (114), still lack any sort of proven power hitter.

Also Tuesday, the A's traded outfielder Jai Miller to the Baltimore Orioles for cash considerations. Miller was designated for assignment by the A's on Dec. 23.

### **Report: Coco Crisp may return to Oakland A's**

By Joe Stiglich, Bay Area News Group

The A's traded outfielder Jai Miller to the Baltimore Orioles on Tuesday, but the bigger news is the player who might return to their outfield.

There are strong indications that free agent center fielder Coco Crisp will return to the A's for a third season. ESPN's Jim Bowden reported the sides are near an agreement, though he attributed that to an unconfirmed source.

Crisp's agent, Steve Comte, said in a phone interview Tuesday that Crisp had chosen a team and that he expected an official announcement from that team by Wednesday, at the latest.

Crisp has maintained that playing for a contender is important to him, which would seem to exclude the rebuilding A's as an option. Comte would not comment on whether Oakland was the team Crisp chose, but asked how Crisp viewed the A's in terms of being a contender, Comte replied:

"(GM) Billy (Beane) always finds a way to piece it together. ... I think we've seen a few teams with young talent that have probably exceeded expectations."

Beane declined comment when asked if a deal with Crisp was in the making, but said: "The outfield is an area certainly of immediate need, and Coco in my opinion was a very productive player the past couple of years."

Comte ruled out the Chicago Cubs as Crisp's landing spot. They were considered a candidate for his services. The Los Angeles Dodgers have also been linked to Crisp, who is a Los Angeles native.

Miller, designated for assignment by the A's on Dec. 23, was traded for cash considerations.

### **Coco Crisp to re-sign with A's for 2 years**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Oakland's winter of departures was interrupted Tuesday, when free-agent center fielder Coco Crisp agreed to a two-year deal to re-sign with the team.

The deal, confirmed by two sources, will not be announced until today or Thursday as final details are worked out, but Crisp - who tied for the league lead in steals with 49 last season - will receive a guaranteed \$14 million. The A's will hold a team option worth a reported \$7.5 million for 2014, with a \$1 million buyout.

The A's had lost two-thirds of their starting outfield this offseason, with Josh Willingham (Twins) and David DeJesus (Cubs) leaving as free agents. Oakland then traded its only other experienced outfielder, Ryan Sweeney, to Boston in the Andrew Bailey deal.

Oakland also has traded All-Star pitchers Bailey, Gio Gonzalez and Trevor Cahill in the past month, so the thought of a key contributor returning was welcomed by remaining players.

"That is great news right there," second baseman Jemile Weeks said. "That's obviously a positive to have that caliber of player stick around. It feels like everyone is getting shipped, but to have him possibly back is great."

Catcher Kurt Suzuki said, "Coco brings another whole level offensively, especially with Weeks, and he gets everything in the air."

For more outfield depth, the A's will continue to talk to other free agents, such as Ryan Ludwick, Cody Ross and Conor Jackson, according to a team source.

On Tuesday afternoon, the team traded Jai Miller, designated for assignment Dec. 23, to Baltimore in exchange for \$45,000. Miller was at one point considered a potential option for Oakland's 2012 outfield.

**Japan trip takes shape:** There had been discussions about having the A's play exhibition games in other parts of Japan, including Sendai and Osaka, before their season opening series against Seattle at the end of March, but instead the team will play two exhibition games at the Tokyo Dome, one against Yomiuri on March 25 and the other versus Hanshin on March 26.

### **A's give fans little hope for 2012**

Bruce Jenkins, Chronicle Columnist

Returning home from a long vacation, you look for some encouraging news.

Maybe there's no sign of that neighboring dog who barked at nothing for 18 hours a day. Maybe there are signs of life from the Warriors, or a ban on radio ads in which some chatterbox rattles off a phone number four times.

As unlikely as it seemed, the Oakland A's actually got worse while I was away. While the Angels and Rangers spend wildly, separating themselves from Oakland in a manner reminiscent of Microsoft vs. Ted's Bakery, the A's have essentially told their fans that the 2012 season will be a sort of minor-league carnival, complete with minuscule crowds, low-budget promotions, vaguely familiar names and the occasional shred of hope.

Just don't tell Billy Beane that *he's* given up. Rail to your heart's content against Lew Wolff and John Fisher, who represent one of the most bitterly disappointing ownership structures in the history of Bay Area sports. Boycott the team, ridicule the San Jose obsession, wonder if Major League Baseball should just eliminate this decaying franchise altogether. But show a measure of objectivity toward the man who has bypassed big money, high-stakes action and personal satisfaction to stay right here, in the Coliseum's decrepit hallways.

With a little planning and a thirst for change, Beane could be running the Angels right now, or the Cubs or the Red Sox. He could be in the *real* game, with real money, making it clear that the Brad Pitt character of "Moneyball," a veritable mystery to so many film buffs, is every bit that charismatic and influential.

Personally, I find it astounding that Beane's still in Oakland - even if the A's do get the go-ahead for San Jose. This is a 49-year-old man in the prime of life, absurdly overqualified to supervise three or four more years of utter irrelevance in the American League.

But I'm done lobbying for his freedom. This is a different kind of cat. As Beane weighs the elements of lifestyle and family, he's obviously willing to trade prestige for a challenge.

And this is one *hell* of a challenge.

"I'm too competitive to 'punt' anything," he said by telephone this week. "It's not part of my DNA. I've got an emotional investment in this team, and if we're playing in Oakland, then let's make the best of the situation. I don't leave for clear skies as soon as I start seeing the clouds. I keep thinking something will get better."

Beane isn't part of the discussion when it comes to the A's payroll, projected to be around \$55 million and dead last among the game's 30 teams. He plays the hands he's dealt. Grim example: As he pondered the inevitable departures of David DeJesus and Josh Willingham, plus the impending arbitration cases and the funds necessary to sign next year's three first-round draft picks, Beane figured he had about \$4 million to rebuild his outfield. And he's poised to spend some of that money by resigning Coco Crisp, according to The Chronicle's reporting Tuesday.

But that's a drop in the bucket compared to the players that are leaving. Few of the game's general managers can even relate to Beane's predicament.

So there went Trevor Cahill, then Gio Gonzalez, then Andrew Bailey in trades, with only prospects arriving in return. If you're looking for reasons to follow the A's next year, there aren't many sure things beyond catcher Kurt Suzuki - whose days in Oakland could be numbered - and the mercurial young second baseman, Jemile Weeks.

Think about it, though: The A's didn't trade away a pennant. They didn't have a chance to finish higher than third, even *with* those three pitchers. They're also coming off a season in which only their most fervent admirers saw the team as anything beyond a crashing, unwatchable bore.

"I've never liked being mediocre," Beane said. "Either you're good, which we've been in the past, or you're trying to build something really good. If the idea is to just tread water until June, you'll never *get* good. I'd rather be willing to make difficult decisions than just kick the can down the road.

"Listen, this is the most challenging position we've ever been in, and when you're moving good players, year after year, there is going to be some backlash. You're in the wrong business if you think everyone is always going to pat you on the back, so if I'm part of the dartboard, so be it, it's in the job description. But I want a team that has a chance to be better tomorrow, as opposed to worse. I understand the risk, but when you are coming off a third-place finish, I don't see it as much of a risk."

Among those who follow the minor leagues and evaluate talent, Beane isn't taking much heat for his recent deals. There's tremendous "upside," as they say, for the likes of pitchers Jarrod Parker and A.J. Cole, outfielder Josh Reddick and catcher Derek Norris. One of the players acquired from Boston, 19-year-old Raul Alcantara, could be a special pitcher down the road.

It's all conjecture, to be certain, but that's a staple of this franchise's ongoing disgrace. What an image: oblivious ownership, a ghost town looming, ticket sales at a crawl, and a general manager full of boundless energy, still rolling up his sleeves.

### **Drumbeat: Coco Crisp returns to A's on a two-year deal**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 1/3/2012 3:02pm

As I reported this morning, the A's very much hoped to re-sign center fielder Coco Crisp, and I have had it confirmed that it has happened: Crisp comes back to the team for a two-year deal worth a guaranteed \$14 million that includes a team option for 2014.

The A's value Crisp's defense highly – and with an ever younger pitching staff, good defense up the middle becomes all the more vital.

The deal will not be announced until tomorrow or Thursday.

Earlier in the day, the A's traded outfielder Jai Miller to the Orioles for cash. Miller was designated for assignment Dec. 23 in order to create roster room after the Gio Gonzalez deal.

### **A's reportedly ink Crisp to two-year contract**

### **Club yet to confirm deal, which has team option for 2014**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- In the midst of a complete roster makeover, the A's retained a familiar face on Tuesday, reportedly re-signing Coco Crisp to a two-year deal worth \$14 million.

According to ESPN's Buster Olney, Crisp's deal will award him \$6 million this year and \$7 million in 2013. The A's also hold a \$7.5 million option for 2014, with a \$1 million buyout.

The A's have not confirmed the deal, which is said to be awaiting a physical.

The speedy outfielder's return is refreshing news for A's fans, who in the past month have watched the organization trade a trio of All-Star pitchers -- Gio Gonzalez, Trevor Cahill and Andrew Bailey -- along with lefty Craig Breslow and outfielder Ryan Sweeney as part of a rebuilding effort.

The A's also let former free agents Josh Willingham and David DeJesus go without much fuss, making Crisp's return something of a surprise after they made it clear they were taking the youth route this year.

General manager Billy Beane even hinted at the Winter Meetings in early December that signing Crisp was a long shot, and the switch-hitter proceeded to garner interest from several other clubs, including the Giants, Cubs, Dodgers and Cardinals.

But the 32-year-old Crisp nonetheless lends the A's a veteran presence, a needed asset for such a young clubhouse and -- more specifically -- young outfield. With Crisp in center, the A's are likely to play Josh Reddick in right field and either Michael Taylor or Collin Cowgill in left.

Crisp hit .264 with eight home runs, 54 RBIs and a career-high 49 steals in 136 games last season, his second in Oakland. He'll again pair nicely with Jemile Weeks at the top of a new-look lineup that remains without any proven power hitter.

### **Orioles send cash to A's for outfielder Miller**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's parted with a piece of their outfield depth on Tuesday, trading Jai Miller to the Orioles for cash considerations.

Miller was designated for assignment on Dec. 23 following the Gio Gonzalez trade, which represented something of a surprising move by the A's, who held the outfielder in high regard and continually mentioned him in talk of the 2012 season.

Miller spent most of last year with Triple-A Sacramento, where he hit .276 with 32 home runs and 88 RBIs in 110 games. He appeared in just seven games as a September callup with the A's, going 3-for-12 with a home run and two RBIs, making a strong impression in little time.

The 26-year-old is now headed for his fourth home -- he also spent time with the Marlins and Royals before his tenure in Oakland.

### **Crisp returning to A's**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Free agent center fielder Coco Crisp agreed to a two-year contract to return to the Athletics, filling one key void in the Oakland outfield heading into the 2012 season.

A person with knowledge of the negotiations on Tuesday confirmed Crisp would return to the A's, a deal worth \$14 million, first reported by ESPN. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the team hadn't made a formal announcement and details were still being finalized. The contract also includes a club option for 2014.

Crisp, who generated inquiries from about half of the major-league clubs this winter, had hoped to continue playing on the West Coast. The A's already lost left fielder Josh Willingham and right fielder David DeJesus in free agency earlier this offseason, then outfielder Ryan Sweeney was traded to the Boston Red Sox last week along with closer Andrew Bailey.

Earlier Tuesday, the A's announced they had traded outfielder Jai Miller to the Baltimore Orioles for cash considerations. Miller was designated for assignment by Oakland on Dec. 23 after the A's received four players in a trade with Washington that sent starting pitcher Gio Gonzalez to the Nationals.

Crisp, 32, has batted .269 with 16 home runs, 92 RBIs, nine triples and 81 stolen bases in two seasons with Oakland, which is in rebuilding mode in hopes of being able to relocate to San Jose, construct a new ballpark and become a big spender — though the San Francisco Giants hold the territorial rights to Santa Clara County. As is customary with the low-budget A's, general manager Billy Beane has unloaded several star players in recent weeks, including starting pitchers Gonzalez and Trevor Cahill, Bailey and fellow reliever Craig Breslow.

Crisp is likely to have newly acquired Josh Reddick playing alongside him. Reddick came to the A's in the trade with Boston last week.

Reddick, 24, who began last season at Triple-A Pawtucket before being promoted in late May, batted .280 with seven homers and 28 RBIs in 87 games for the Red Sox in 2011. He can play any outfield spot.

Crisp played four seasons with Cleveland, three with Boston and one with Kansas City prior to joining the A's. He appeared in only 75 games during an injury-plagued 2010 season, when he went on the disabled list in April with a broken pinkie finger and was placed on the DL again in May with a strained ribcage muscle. Crisp broke the pinkie a second time on Sept. 18 and missed the remainder of that season.

The A's exercised their \$5.75 million option on Crisp for 2011, when he played in 136 games and stole a career-high 49 bases to lead the American League.

The A's went 74-88 last season but made strides after Bob Melvin came aboard as manager in June in place of Bob Geren. They haven't posted a winning record or earned a playoff berth since being swept in the 2006 AL championship series by Detroit.

### **Crisp re-signs with A's for two more years, but why?**

By Sam McPherson, Oakland A's Examiner

The Oakland Athletics will re-sign free-agent centerfielder Coco Crisp to a two-year contract, with a club option for a third year -- even though the team has no realistic shot at competing in the American League West any time soon.

Crisp will make \$6 million in 2012 and \$7 million in 2013, while the A's hold the option for \$7.5 million in 2014 with a \$1 million buyout, according to ESPN.com sources.

In the past two years with Oakland, Crisp has hit .269 with 16 home runs, 92 RBI and 81 stolen bases -- while scoring 120 runs in only 211 games.

The move by the A's is somewhat surprising in light of the team ownership's contention of financial hardship in Oakland: spending \$13M+ on a player who has only appeared in 58% of his teams' games in the past four seasons is just careless and wasteful.

The A's would be better off spending that \$13M elsewhere: scouting, for example, could use some more resources so the Oakland organization could actually take advantage of its poor finishes in the regular season and the resulting high draft picks that come with finishing well under .500 the year before.

Instead, the A's pay a 32-year old outfielder with a history of injury problems \$13M to miss more than 40% of the team's games over the next two seasons if Crisp holds to form.

Sure, he's a good player when he's healthy, but he's not someone who will carry this moribund franchise to the playoffs any time soon.

Which also begs the question of why Crisp signed with Oakland: either he couldn't get more money from a contender or he doesn't want to play for a contender.

Both possibilities are very worrisome for the A's: why would any team want a player like that? And for \$13M?!

Oakland would be better off letting a rookie making the major-league minimum man centerfield for the next two years.

Instead, they continue to show they have little fiscal consistency in their planning as they trade away real talent (Gio Gonzalez and Andrew Bailey) and then waste money on an injured, over-the-hill, irrelevant player like Crisp.

Once again, the A's dynamic duo of Lew Wolff and Billy Beane show they have little interest in actually winning ballgames right now.

That alone ought to be enough to motivate MLB Commissioner Bud Selig to act in the best interest of baseball, ignore the hypocritical whining of the San Francisco Giants and enable the A's to move to San Jose.