

MLB owners meet in Arizona, but decision on A's move to San Jose still up in the air

By Tracy Seipel, San Jose Mercury News, 1/11/2012

It's not on their official agenda, but when the owners of Major League Baseball's 30 teams gather Wednesday in Scottsdale, Ariz., for their first meeting of 2012, observers say a proposed relocation for the Oakland A's to San Jose is an almost unavoidable topic of discussion.

Many believe a decision on a move is expected soon -- and that the A's are running out of time for an up-or-down nod from commissioner Bud Selig over breaking the San Francisco Giants' territorial rights to the South Bay. Three-quarters of the owners also must agree.

Timing is crucial for a variety of reasons: The A's would like an answer before the season begins in March; they've recently cleared their roster of much of its high-priced talent in anticipation of assembling a more competitive squad once they get their new ballpark -- whether in San Jose or Oakland; and their contract at the O.co Coliseum runs out next year.

Here's a recap of the situation for A's fans in Oakland and the South Bay.

Q A's co-owner Lew Wolff has said a discussion about the relocation is not scheduled nor is any vote expected during his visit to the desert. But is a decision imminent?

A Rumors have been swirling that the A's may soon get their wish, and Wolff last month even purchased the Sainte Claire Hotel in downtown San Jose for about \$17 million. Real estate experts say the savvy developer got in early on the hunch that downtown San Jose land prices likely will soar if MLB allows the A's to move here.

Q How long has this decision been in the making?

A Since late March 2009 when Selig appointed a three-member committee to study the A's options.

Q So, are they about done?

A Sources say that the report has been transmitted by the committee to Selig and is now in the hands of a small group of team owners.

Q Why has this been such a torturous process?

A Selig is a painstaking, methodical consensus builder, and sources say he's not going to call for a vote unless he knows he'll get a favorable outcome.

Q Why don't the Giants want to allow the A's to move?

A They say they built their \$357 million AT&T Park in the mid-1990s with Major League Baseball's promise that the Giants would own the lucrative South Bay market. They insist the A's should honor that rule and find another place to play within their East Bay territory.

Q Would any baseball owners balk over the deal?

A Possibly. Some observers say messing with territorial rights makes certain owners nervous, particularly those in the other two-team markets of New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. "Once it starts, how do you protect your franchise?" said one source close to the league. Yet sports economists Roger Noll at Stanford University and Andrew Zimbalist at Smith College contend there's likely no cause for worry.

Q Which teams would likely be in favor of such a move?

A Noll said he wouldn't be surprised if support comes from the 10 teams with the largest revenues who are "tired of paying all this money" into a revenue-sharing pool for the weaker teams, including the A's.

"The guys in the bigger markets would like to see the A's go to a place where they make substantially more revenue," said Noll, who believes the A's in San Jose could take in \$25 million to \$30 million more annually than they do now.

Q Could the Giants convince a group of owners to block the vote?

A Maybe not, said Zimbalist. "(Selig) has very cleverly managed important decisions in such a way that it's unlikely people would go against his recommendation," Zimbalist said. "He has a variety of ways of rewarding cooperation."

Q What could make the A's move more palatable to either the Giants or other team owners?

A Sources close to the league say that in exchange for a vote, Selig could grant certain owners a range of favors, from promising to schedule a moneymaking All-Star Game in their stadium, to moving their training camp, or changing something in a team's minor league operation, among other possibilities.

Q Are Wolff and Giants CEO and President Larry Baer trying to lobby other owners?

A Wolff said Selig has not told him he can't, but Wolff said he believes it's "in the best interest of baseball" to refrain from doing that. A Giants spokeswoman declined to comment. But observers say it would be naive not to think that it's happening.

Q What else could be holding up a decision?

A Noll and Zimbalist both agree that money is at the heart of the matter -- even though the Giants have publicly said a deal that would allow the A's to move is not even negotiable. Though there is no confirmation about what price the A's might have to pay to move to San Jose, Noll believes it's in the \$25 million to \$35 million range.

Q What does Noll base his figure on?

A First, precedent: the fees that have been paid in the past when one team invaded the home territory of another. Second, it's an upper estimate of the effect of the A's move to San Jose on the revenues of the Giants. Like others, he believes the Giants stand to benefit almost as much by gaining fans from the East Bay as they lose from the South Bay. Noll said the most important factor affecting the Giants' revenues always has been and will continue to be the quality of the Giants, not the quality or location of the A's.

Q What has Wolff agreed to shell out for a ballpark in San Jose?

A In 2009, the A's co-owner said he would pay for the \$461 million to build a stadium (now likely closer to \$500 million). San Jose recently offered to sell him about 5 acres of city-owned land on the site for a discount price of \$6.9 million.

Q If the A's get the nod, could anything hinder their move?

A Lawsuits could be filed by groups related to the Giants.

More crucial is a vote by San Jose residents, who will be asked if they agree a ballpark should be built using public land.

Oakland A's Prospect Profile: Brad Peacock

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Jan 9, 2012

In trading Gio Gonzalez to the Washington Nationals, the Oakland A's dealt a durable starting pitcher with excellent velocity and a swing-and-miss curveball. Did they get one back in return for Gonzalez?

Name: Brad Peacock

Birthdate: 02/02/88

Height/Weight: 6'1"/175 pounds

How Acquired: Traded along with Derek Norris, A.J. Cole and Tom Milone for Gio Gonzalez and Robert Gilliam on December 22, 2011. Originally drafted by the Washington Nationals in the 41st round in 2006.

Background

Peacock's rise to top prospect and 2011 September call-up has hardly been conventional. The Florida native didn't even take up pitching full time until after he was selected in the 41st round of the 2006 draft by the Washington Nationals. A third baseman in high school, Peacock occasionally served as his team's closer, but amassed less than 15 innings as a pitcher during his high school career. He did get some on-the-mound experience during a summer league, but he was essentially a pitching novice when he enrolled in Palm Beach Community College for the 2007 season.

Part of the last "draft-and-follow" class (baseball's signing deadline for players drafted the previous year used to be just before the next year's draft, allowing teams to select players who would attend junior college for the following year before deciding whether or not to sign), Peacock pitched well enough during his one year of community college for the Nationals to buy him out of a commitment to [Florida Atlantic University](#). He would make his professional debut in the Gulf Coast League in 2007. In 39.1 innings, Peacock posted a 3.89 ERA with a 34:15 K:BB ratio.

The next season the Nationals pushed Peacock to full-season baseball with Low-A Hagerstown. The right-hander proved not quite ready for that level. In eight starts, he had a 9.09 ERA and his command was all over the place. He walked 21 and allowed eight homeruns in 33.2 innings. At the start of short-season, Peacock was sent to Vermont, where he fared much better. Against New York-Penn League hitters, he had a 3.12 ERA with a 54:27 K:BB ratio and only three homeruns allowed in 75 innings.

Given another shot with Hagerstown in 2009, Peacock showed some improvement with his command. He made 17 starts and two relief appearances for the Suns and in 100 innings, he posted a 4.05 ERA and a 77:32 K:BB ratio with 10 homeruns allowed. He spent the final month of the season with High-A Potomac and had a 4.34 ERA with a 27:10 K:BB ratio in 47.2 innings with the P-Nats.

The 2010 season was another campaign of gradual progression for Peacock. He began the season with Potomac, and while his ERA was actually higher than in 2009, the improvements he made with his location were noticeable. In 103.1 innings for the P-Nats, Peacock had a 4.44 ERA, but he struck-out 118 and walked only 25. The Nationals rewarded that performance by giving him a promotion to Double-A for the final month of the season. In seven starts with Harrisburg, Peacock continued to post solid strike-out numbers (30 in 38.2 innings), but his command regressed (22 walks). He would pitch out of the bullpen during the 2010 Arizona Fall League and opened some eyes by hitting 96 MPH on the radar gun. His strong 2010 regular season and AFL performance led some scouts to predict a breakout season for Peacock going into the 2011 campaign.

Although much was expected of Peacock in 2011, no one could have predicted just how well he would pitch last season. Beginning the year with Harrisburg, Peacock dominated the Eastern League. In 16 appearances (14 starts), the right-hander posted a 2.01 ERA and a 123:29 K:BB ratio in 98.2 innings. He allowed only four homeruns and kept opposing batters to a .179 average. He would earn numerous accolades for his Double-A performance, including MLB.com's Double-A Starting Pitcher of the Year, a Topps Double-A All-Star nod and the Eastern League's Pitcher of the Year award. Peacock was also the Nationals' MLB Futures Game representative.

Peacock's season didn't end at Double-A, however. He spent the final six weeks of the minor league season with Triple-A Syracuse. Although Peacock's command wasn't quite as good with the Chiefs as it had been at the Double-A level, he still held his own during his first tour of Triple-A. In nine starts, Peacock posted a 3.19 ERA with 48 strike-outs and 24 walks. He flirted with a no-hitter in one game and held opposing batters to a .205 average.

In September, Peacock completed his journey from 41st-round draft-and-follow flier pick to major league pitcher. He appeared in three games with Washington, a relief appearance and two starts. In 12 innings, he allowed only one run on seven hits with four strike-outs. He did show signs of nerves, however, walking six.

Before being traded to the A's in December, Peacock was considered a strong contender for a spot in the 2012 Washington rotation.

Scouting Report

Although they share initials, a first name and the ability to throw hard, no one will ever confuse Peacock with [Brad Penny](#). While not quite a "diminutive righty" in the Tim Hudson-sense, Peacock is relatively small for a right-handed pitching prospect. He is a 6'1", 180-pounder with a solid lower-half that allows him to get power on his pitches despite not being 6'3".

Peacock's fastball generally sits in the 92-94 MPH range, although as a reliever he has been clocked in the higher-90s. He

has a sharp knuckle-curveball that is his second-best pitch and a developing change-up. In the A's system, Peacock will likely spend a significant amount of time working to refine that change-up.

Because Peacock was mostly an infielder in high school, his learning curve for pitching mechanics was a little longer than most pitchers. He has gained more consistency with his throwing motion, but he can lose his release point on occasion, especially on his secondary pitches. Peacock's fastball command was excellent in 2011.

Durability has never been an issue for Peacock as a professional, as he has thrown at least 140 innings in each of the past three seasons. Because his change-up rates behind his fastball and curveball, some scouts view Peacock more as a future closer or set-up man than a starter, but others believe that the change-up will come around and will give him enough of an arsenal to succeed as a number two or three starter in the big leagues.

Outlook

Although the A's have traded away two of their top starters this off-season (Gonzalez and [Trevor Cahill](#)) and are expecting ace [Brett Anderson](#) to miss much of the season, it isn't a foregone conclusion that Peacock will slot into the A's 2012 Opening Day starting rotation.

Even with Gonzalez and Cahill gone and Anderson out with injury, the A's still have Brandon McCarthy, [Dallas Braden](#), [Guillermo Moscoso](#), [Josh Outman](#), [Graham Godfrey](#) and Tyson Ross returning from last year's rotation. The A's have also signed major league veteran [Edgar Gonzalez](#) to a minor league deal and acquired major league ready starting pitching prospects Tom Milone and [Jarrod Parker](#) in the Cahill and Gonzalez deals. A's 2011 top pick [Sonny Gray](#) is also an outside candidate for a rotation spot .

The A's view Peacock as a piece of their rotations of the future, however, so if he comes into spring training and blows away the competition, he will likely win a spot out of camp. The key for Peacock this spring will be whether he can throw strikes consistently and if his change-up is effective. Even if he starts the year with Triple-A Sacramento, Peacock figures to see significant time at the major league level at some point during the 2012 season.

Red Sox solidify bullpen with Bailey

Keith Law, [espn.com](#), 12/28/2011

In [acquiring right-handed pitcher Andrew Bailey](#) from the Oakland A's, the [Boston Red Sox](#) get a Proven Closer on the cheap, giving up nothing they're likely to miss, while the Oakland A's get a package that probably represents fair value but might seem like a weak return given the way the industry and fans alike tend to overvalue that ninth-inning role. I'd do this deal if I'm Red Sox general manager Ben Cherington rather than give [Jonathan Papelbon](#) the deal he got from Philadelphia.

Bailey has had trouble staying healthy the last two years, and had Tommy John surgery in college (when he was overworked like he was a disposable item). But when he's pitched, he's been an above-average reliever, helped by a good ballpark and very good defenses behind him.

He works mostly with his low to mid-90s fastball, which has a little natural glove-side run, and offsets it with a short, downward-breaking cutter that he used a little less often this year after hurting his elbow again in spring training. He's slightly weaker against left-handed hitters, without a real changeup or anything that can break in under a left-handed hitter's hands. I don't think he'll ever be an elite-level closer worth three or so wins above replacement per year. But he could be worth a win and a half over a full, healthy season, and adds to an increasingly deep Boston bullpen.

Boston also receives outfielder [Ryan Sweeney](#), who is a plus defender anywhere in the outfield and puts on a show in batting practice but has never seen that power translate to the games -- and it's not just Oakland's stadium causing the power outage. He's a great fourth outfielder who can fill in at all three spots and can hold his own against right-handed pitching. If [Ryan Kalish](#) is healthy, he should be Boston's right fielder, but Sweeney's an adequate alternative if Kalish can't play every day.

The A's appear to have capitulated to the realities of an offseason market that is either suddenly getting religion on the relative value of 70-inning relievers, or just seeing prices drop due to an oversupply of closers coupled with limited demand. For a pitcher whose potential ceiling probably is two wins of value plus a good defensive outfielder who hits only at five o'clock, they got back another fourth outfielder with more years of control and two second-tier prospects.

[Josh Reddick](#) is that fourth outfielder, a hitter with bat speed and good plate coverage but poor plate discipline who has made little or no progress over the past three seasons. Frankly, the length to his swing will limit his offensive upside. He can

catch up to a fastball, and he can hit a mistake, but there's no reason for pitchers to throw him hittable strikes. Reddick got some fans overexcited with a hot start after his call-up early in 2011, but when word got around about how to pitch to him, he struggled, hitting .244/.293/.389 after the All-Star break. I'd try him in a platoon situation, benching him against lefties, and extracting some value from him on defense in right, where he has above-average range.

Miles Head is a first baseman whose bat does not profile as anything above average at the position; he's a strong right-handed hitter with some pull power but has a long swing and doesn't rotate his hips well or keep his hands inside the ball to drive it the other way. He did perform well in the Sally League at age 20, and was adequate when he moved up to high-A; he's young enough that he could become a different animal with some swing adjustments, but I wouldn't project him as an everyday player on a good club.

The potential prize here for Oakland is right-hander Raul Alcantara, a projectable, loose-armed right-hander who just turned 19 earlier this month. Alcantara sits 91-93 mph but will touch 96, and shows the makings of an average slider. He doesn't have a third pitch right now, and until he does his ceiling is probably an above-average reliever. But he's young, reasonably athletic, and already is ahead of the typical hard-throwing teenage prospect who has no clue where it's going, so there are plenty of ways to imagine him becoming a starter down the road as he develops.

It's a trend now to try to add a lottery-ticket guy to deals the way Texas did with [Neftali Feliz](#) and Carlos Melo, and Alcantara is an excellent choice to give Oakland a chance to win this trade down the road. It doesn't sound like a great deal for Oakland on its face, but for a one-inning reliever who hasn't pitched a full season since 2009, it's fair, and at least there's some upside in the form of Alcantara.

A's get quality and quantity for Gio

Keith Law, [espn.com](#), 12/22/2011

The [Washington Nationals](#) made it clear they want to try and win sooner rather than later by trading four prospects (right-handers [Brad Peacock](#) and A.J. Cole, left-hander [Tom Milone](#) and catcher Derek Norris) to the [Oakland Athletics](#) for left-hander [Gio Gonzalez](#).

The Nationals get some starting rotation depth, but at a pretty significant cost in prospects, pinned to the hope that Gonzalez' moderate success these last two years wasn't just a function of him playing his home games in Oakland's pitcher-friendly park. The A's, on the other hand, get a substantial reward for taking in Gonzalez -- who struggled with two other organizations -- and building up his value beyond what I think it would have become in most other ballparks.

Washington has its ace in [Stephen Strasburg](#) and a near-ace behind him in [Jordan Zimmermann](#), with some pitching coming up through its system to fill out the rotation in the coming years, so I'm not sure why they'd deal for Gonzalez at this point unless they believe he's a lot better than I think he is.

He has racked up strikeouts the last few years despite below-average command and control that have led to high walk totals, and would likely have led to higher ERAs but for a great ballpark and Oakland's generally strong defenses. The 26-year-old has always had questions about his on-field makeup, particularly his ability to respond to adversity on the mound, something that I'm told is still a concern with him going forward. What Gio does bring is stuff. He'll show you a grade-55 fastball, a big-breaking curveball, and a fringe-average changeup, but not the command to get maximum results from his repertoire. I did think if he was traded to the wrong environment, like Yankee Stadium, he had disaster potential, but in Washington he's more likely to maintain some value (say, 2-2.5 wins above replacement) while leaving the club frustrated that he's not better.

Oakland gets a future ace, a starting catcher, a strong reliever who might be a back-end starter, and an up-and-down arm. Cole is the prize here, a potential No. 1 starter who ranked 36th on my [midseason top prospects update](#) and was the No. 2 prospect in Washington's system behind Bryce Harper.

Cole is now Oakland's top prospect, sitting in the mid-90s with much better fastball command than he showed as an amateur. He acquired a reputation in high school for disinterest on the mound and fell to the fourth round of the 2010 draft, but he was a new man this year and many scouts felt in hindsight he should have gone in the first round. He's primarily fastball-slider now and needs to improve his changeup (and just use it more), as he had a big platoon split at low Class A Hagerstown. He turns 20 next month and is about two full years away from the majors.

Norris broke his wrist following the 2009 season and has struggled to hit for average the last two years, but his secondary skills remain intact and he has plenty of arm to add value on defense. The 22-year-old has a sound swing with good hip rotation for average or slightly better pull power, and his eye at the plate has always been outstanding. So even if he hits .240 in the majors, he'll be a valuable offensive catcher. Behind the dish, Norris is a fair receiver but has arm strength with sub-2.00 pop times (throwing to second base), so he should continue to control the running game as he has in the minors, nailing 41 percent of runners over the last four seasons.

Peacock, 23, is a 6-foot right-hander with a lot of effort in his delivery, but he brings the heat with above-average velocity as a starter that would be plus out of the pen. His curve and change are both fringy, and between the effort in his delivery and lack of plane on his fastball (making him fly ball-prone), I think he's best suited for the pen. Milone, 24, is a finesse lefty with a below-average fastball and no out pitch; he might survive as an emergency guy in a big ballpark like Oakland's, but they can and will do better for the back of their rotation.