

MLB Weekly --- Saturday, July 30th, 2005
BY MATTHEW HATFIELD

We're hours away from the trading deadline, which comes on Sunday, July 31st. After the deadline strikes there will be a number of other deals that take place. How can that be? They're called waiver deals. So plenty of activity awaits us over the next several days, and it could be that one move (like Carlos Beltran to Houston) or multiple moves that gets your team deep into October....



Rangers DH/outfielder David Dellucci stole a big base in Game 7 of the 2001 World Series for Arizona. Dellucci has postseason experience and could be the Texas player on the move to a contender very few are talking about on this deadline eve. (AP/Robert Scott Button)

Byrnes to Baltimore; Rangers-Padres make swap:

Bruce Bochy and the San Diego Padres were very adamant about getting Phil Nevin out of their clubhouse. He was a great guy for them for years, hitting 156 homers in seven seasons there. Suddenly he became a bad apple for them and is due over \$19 million dollars from now until the end of 2006. This for someone that has single digit home runs to this point, a batting average well under .270 and has not helped matters for sputtering San Diego, who's fallen under .500. It's the latest a team under .500 has been atop their division since Texas in the 1994 strike shortened season. In return they get pitcher Chan Ho Park, a proven commodity with the Dodgers but nothing such during his stay in Texas. As far as the move goes for the Rangers, it may be a good one. Yes, they need pitching desperately but this deal could enable them to trade Alfonso Soriano for pitching. Texas has a bunch of good left-handed hitters and now get a right handed batter in Nevin that could prosper in that ball park.

Oakland trades reckless outfielder Eric Byrnes to Colorado in mid-July and the Rockies have now sent him to Baltimore for Larry Bigbie. I think the O's make out in this deal because Byrnes will give up his body to make a play in the field. His bat isn't the greatest in the world, but at this point he's better than Bigbie and may be able to help the slumping Orioles - losers of nine of their last ten. Most of all, Byrnes is a Lee Mazzilli type of player. Baltimore isn't done, believe me. As Sammy Sosa continues to

struggle and a few players are injured, they need extra pitching. Sidney Ponson, who was to be traded for Nevin, is still on the market for someone to have. They will keep trying for Florida's A.J. Burnett as well.

Manny Ramirez:

Boston Red Sox outfielder Manny Ramirez is a goof ball and a hustle headache. Heck, the guy recently went into the left field wall at Fenway to go cool himself off with a fan and barely got back in time in what could've been a disastrous situation. Anyway, Man-Ram shouldn't be traded. Why? Because you can't replace his RBI's. The guy is an RBI machine just look at the numbers. He's got a Major League best 92 runs driven in and the next closest person to him is teammate David Ortiz, arguably the most clutch player in the game and without question the #1 DH. So you've got Ortiz, why do you need Manny? Like I said, look at the numbers. The man has 1362 career RBI's in 1631 regular season games to go along with a lifetime .313 batting average and 418 home runs. It's also not like the guy is going to hang 'em up at the end of the year either. Some will tell you he is at his peak, heading for 140-150 RBI's this year. **Unless you are getting equal value in return - which means Vlad Guerrero, Albert 'Winnie The' Pujols, or Alex Rodriguez - you can't do this now.** In the off-season, fine, deal him. But Sox management should avoid getting fancy here.

TRADE TALK: Part 1

Who's out there to be had? Well, lets start with Burnett. I think a few times will realize on deadline day that this is the best pitcher in a weak market. He has injury concern and has yet to use his stuff to his full potential. In the end, I believe Florida's asking price is too high. After all, the Marlins are only 5.5 games out of first and 2.5 back of Houston for the NL Wild Card spot.... Another interesting name out there is **Ken Griffey Jr. - the man that in my opinion is the one player that can take a team from good to great.** Soriano in Texas would be in the same boat too if his fielding were a bit better and he ran harder on the base pads. As for Griffey might go, no where. I'd be enormously surprised to see him get traded right now. Maybe a post deadline deal like the one that landed Larry Walker to St. Louis could happen. Speaking of those red birds, they may not stay pat. One of the teams that would be willing to take him right now excluding the Yankees would be the Cardinals. Manager Tony La Russa also would have the luxury of putting him in left field and using him in center when Jim Edmonds has a day off in August/September.... Closers such as the Phillies' Billy Wagner and Danys Baez of Tampa Bay are being rumored by almost anyone in the NL and AL. Baez is the most likely to go, despite the fact Tampa's management is hard to deal with when it comes to talking trades.... Tampa Bay has another play that's pretty intriguing in Aubrey Huff. Appealing to teams in both leagues because of his versatility that allows him to play multiple positions, Huff would be a good fit for the White Sox, a team starving for more offense. Huff brings doubles to the table and can drive in runs for them at third base, first base or as a DH.... He's someone I see getting traded, but Juan Pierre of Florida probably will not. The Yankees made a move to get Rockies reliever Shawn Chacon, an occasional spot starter or close similar to Miguel Batista (on the White Sox radar screen, though expects \$5 million next yr.) of Toronto. Byrnes is now off the

market and a move for Griffey hasn't gotten stronger. If Pierre does go somewhere my gut tells me it's either the Yankees or Cubs.

Who are the buyers and sellers? There's a lot of buyers and a short list of sellers. Lets start with the sellers and the best place to go is Seattle. Once though by me to finish second in the AL West and third according to everyone else, the Mariners are a lock destined for the cellar for the second straight year. Seattle would like to get rid of old guy Jamie Moyer, a lefty that some NL teams ,such as Philadelphia, have acquired a minor amount of interest in, and deal outfielder Randy Winn. Ichiro and Jeremy Reed are staying put in the outfield as well as newcomers Adrian Beltre and Richie Sexson in the infield. This team has considerably less power from the left side of the plate as Texas and their ball parks have different dimensions. However, they are alike in the weak starting pitching they have. Closer steady every day Eddie Guardado has been rumored about to the Mets, **Red Sox [top bidder]**, Diamondbacks, Blue Jays and now even the bullpen loaded Nationals. Veterans Scott Spiezio and reliever Ron Villone might be packaged in with one of these higher profile names. What'll be interesting to me is whether starter Joel Piñeiro goes.

Another seller has to be the Kansas City Royals. But what do they have to sell? The answer is Mike Sweeney, and one front office person told me he is not going anywhere. We'll see if someone in need of a first baseman or DH [Angels?] gives them too good of an offer, which would include prospects, to give up. The other clear cut seller in my mind is the young Pittsburgh Pirates. They shipped off backup catcher David Ross to San Diego earlier in the week. Outfielder Matt Lawton has been rumored about and should be traded. A one-time Indian, Twin and Met, Lawton might be on the move to one of the two World Series teams from a year ago in Boston or St. Louis. Same goes for David Dellucci of Texas. Everybody else might be buyers; just a few of them aren't going to mortgage their future to get the best guy out there. Teams bold enough to do something include the obvious Yankees and Red Sox, teams a piece or two away like the White Sox, A's and Astros, and a couple others on the outside looking in. Those trying to get in are the Cubs and Mets, both of whom are players for Alfonso Soriano of Texas. Everybody wants an extra reliever, nobody more so than the White Sox and Diamondbacks. Arizona is inching closer to the top of the NL West, whereas the White Sox want to be ready for the postseason. Dustin Hermanson isn't the answer in my opinion.

Other Names & Tidbits:

Mets outfielder Mike Cameron along with a couple of their prospects (P Aaron Heilman and OF Lastings Milledge) might go in what one of these blockbuster deals Omar Minaya is trying pull off. The Padres, Cubs and Yankees have seemed like the logical choices. There are two sleepers in my mind, though. San Francisco because they are old in the outfield, Jayson Ellison is strictly a hitter not reliable glove, and we still have no clue on when Barry Bonds will return. Minnesota Twins are the other one's. They need help all over their infield, especially on the corners at first and third. Second baseman Brett Boone may be released if he doesn't start hitting consistently. Some days he looks great and then other days he makes me look stupid for saying good things about him last week. **Most of all, gold glove CF Torii Hunter ripped an ankle tendon on**

Friday night. They won't have him back for about 4-6 weeks. A J.C. Romero for Kevin Millar trade could be done between Boston and Minnesota. It has to be something the Twins want, though.

Pirates pitchers are out there for someone to bite. Closer Jose Mesa is aging and they've got a good setup guy soon to be closer in Mike Gonzalez. Mark Redman was very instrumental in Florida's 2003 World Series run. He and Kip Wells can solidify a contender's rotation for sure. The Marlins might be looking at both Mesa and Redman. Toronto has made a suddenly surprising push without AL Cy Young candidate Roy Halladay. They may very well be in Wells sweepstakes.

So many hot prospects are out there in the minor leagues. Both the International and Pacific Coast league have a number of pretty good players for sale by Major League organizations. Even at the AA level there are a few names worth taking a quick look at. One is Ryan Howard of Philadelphia. Two of the hardest teams to predict right now in the NL are the Phillies and Cincinnati. The Reds already made a move by ridding themselves of Joe Randa's contract at third. Cincy has two outfielders a lot of people are asking about not named Griffey. They're Adam Dunn and Austin Kearns. In Philly's case they won't let Howard go until they know Jim Thome will be a healthy, effective player at first base. No way of really knowing that he will or won't.

HOT:

Oakland Athletics: Like the Astros, the A's were 15 games under .500 and both find themselves ahead of the pack in the wild card hunt. SS Bobby Crosby looks like a star in the making, while you can make the case that nobody has pitched better since the break than Rich Harden. Both Houston and Oakland can go to the playoffs with great starting pitching. Only this is they won't unless they get that extra bopper in the lineup.

Houston Astros: The Astros can credit their pitching for getting them back in the wild card chase. Andy Pettitte, Rogers Clemens and Roy Oswalt are 10-2 with a combined 1.29 ERA in the month of July [through Wednesday]. An extra stick is needed here for Houston to make the playoffs and make significant noise.

Brewers 1B Lyle Overbay: Here's a name very few people are bringing up as we inch ever so close to the deadline. There's a fair reason why Milwaukee could him, too. They have a rising young first baseman named Prince Fielder, son of Cecil, and by shipping Overbay elsewhere they could address and more pressing need while his value is at an all-time high. Overbay has 4HR, 8RBI and is 10-24 since last week. A team like the Mets or Minnesota could be a tad interested.

NOT:

San Diego Padres: Any team that's leading their division below .500 is anything but hot. San Diego (6-44RISP entering Tues.) has lost nine of its last ten and were a nice 43-37 at the start of the month. They've watched their 4.5+ game lead on Arizona diminish down to two. I loved watching this team play at the

beginning of the year, but I can't help shivering when they are playing like this on the tube. At least they are the lone team in the division above .500 at home.

Baltimore Orioles: Slipping fast than the stock market, the Orioles suddenly find themselves in fourth place in the American League East after holding a 4+ game lead on everyone else in the division at the start of June. If they aren't careful, the 51-51 O's could stay there when all is said and done.

Giants Pitching: Atrocious, particularly the bullpen as of late. Starter Kirk Rueter has given up 20 earned runs in his last 16 innings. The only guy worth a nickel has been Jason Schmidt. Although they are 12-13 this month and are slowly making minute progress, San Fran has a 4.47 bullpen ERA. Closers LaTroy Hawkins and Tyler Walker have together blown ten out of 33 possible saves.

TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE WEEK:

UCLA offered Devils Rays outfielder Carl Crawford a basketball scholarship, but what school offered him a scholarship for football?

Last Week's Answer: A Boat

OUR TOP TEN PITCHERS OF ALL-TIME: (no order)

Roger Clemens & Sandy Koufax - His career only lasted from 1955-66, but when he was at the top of his game, Sandy Koufax may have been the most unhittable pitcher to ever play. Using a super heat fastball and nasty curve, Koufax led the Dodgers to three world titles. His career ERA during the World Series was under 1.00 and he struck out batter after batter to pitch a no-hitter in four straight seasons. Clemens is headed for Cooperstown with Koufax. Having spent his 22-year career with four different teams, Roger has yet to slow down, even as his 43rd birthday approaches. Over 4400 K's and 330+ wins don't even tell half the story.

Already on the List: Walter Johnson & Cy Young