

Kotsay trade leaves Athletics bare at catcher

Oakland will have to find a new catcher after jettisoning catcher Ramon Hernandez

By Laurence Miedema
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

OAKLAND, Calif. — The A's on Wednesday resolved the contract issues holding up the trade that would bring Mark Kotsay from San Diego, but the deal now hinges on the center fielder receiving medical clearance

from team doctors.

An MRI scan of Kotsay's back, which hampered him most of this season, was supposed to be sent to the A's medical staff earlier this week, but according to a Padres source the transfer was delayed because the scan was misplaced.

A's team doctors should get a look at them on Thursday, and if all checks out the widely reported deal will be completed.

Apparently General Manager Billy Beane isn't too worried. He boarded a plane with his wife, Tara, on Wednesday evening for a trip to London.

The A's will send All-Star catcher Ramon Hernandez and outfielder Terrence Long to the Padres in the proposed deal.

Long's days with the A's had been numbered since he demanded a trade the day after the season ended because of a running feud with Manager Ken Macha. The inclusion of Hernan-

dez leaves the A's with an enormous void at catcher, but it was the only way the Padres would consider making the trade.

Hernandez blossomed as a hitter this season, setting career highs with a .273 average, 21 homers and 78 RBIs and was the hero of the A's playoff-opening win over Boston. But his primary value was behind the plate. Hernandez's handling of the pitching staff is considered one of the biggest reasons the A's led the American

League in ERA the past two seasons.

"It surprises me because he's an integral part of the staff even though he's not a pitcher; he operates the staff," A's left-hander Barry Zito said Wednesday. "But I understand we're going for some more offense. I'm sure Billy's got something up his sleeve as far as a catcher."

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BASKETBALL

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Jersey mishap

When Brooks appeared in his first exhibition game, he took the court wearing No. 30. In Monday night's exhibition, Brooks wore No. 00.

The Ducks realized after the first game that No. 30 is a retired number at Oregon, formerly worn by Ron Lee, who played for Oregon from 1972-75. Kent said it all happened by mistake.

"His uniform was ordered this summer and ordered by someone who doesn't have a total feel for what numbers are retired and not retired," Kent said. "We just got him another jersey and Aaron was comfortable with it."

Kent said he has spoken with Lee about the mishap, and Lee had no problems with Brooks wearing the jersey in the first game.

Pre-season rankings

In the annual Pacific-10 Conference

men's basketball media poll that was released on Nov. 6 the Ducks were picked to finish fourth.

Arizona was picked as the favorite, receiving 26 first-place votes. Stanford earned the runner up bid — earning seven first-place votes — and California was tabbed in third, garnering one first-place vote.

Do the Ducks feel they deserve to be chosen fourth after finishing as the 2003 Pac-10 Tournament Champions?

"We don't really worry about it,"

Joseph said. "Last year we were picked second and ended up fifth. Pre-season polls really don't mean nothing. It depends on how you start playing when you get to the Pac-10."

For the past 10 years, the poll has picked the correct team seven times, but only Arizona last year was the correct pick out of the last three.

Injury update

It is still unknown exactly when guard Jordan Kent and center Matt Short will return to the court from in-

jury, but Ernie Kent said the two are expected to be out of their boots by the end of the week.

The Ducks are ready to have the opportunity of a bigger lineup and more depth on the bench.

"They are two of our quickest guys in the post and on the wing," Crosswhite said. "It's hard right now when they're not in there. When they come in it's going to be a big boost for this team."

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Skipper signs with Ducks

The Oregon men's track and field program caught a big one Wednesday.

Oregon announced on Wednesday that it signed the 2003 Track and Field News Prep Athlete of the Year Tommy Skipper to a scholarship to compete for the Ducks for the 2004 indoor and outdoor seasons.

Skipper, who is considered one of the most accomplished national prep athletes in history, holds the outdoor

high school pole vault record. He has also scored in the state level in the sprints and javelin, giving him great versatility in coming to Oregon.

"This is our program's best signing to date, and one of the most notable additions in UO athletic history," Oregon track head coach Martin Smith said. "Tommy owns incredible natural abilities and has shown great maturity in several high-caliber meets."

"To sign the nation's top athlete and a national record holder is special honor, and the fact that he's an Oregonian with deep Duck ties makes it

that much more special."

The Sandy High School graduate was also recently awarded the 2003 boy's national athlete of the year honor after his record-breaking senior year. Skipper concluded his prep career taking second in the outdoor national title in June in the USA Junior Championships in the pole vault at 18 feet and one-half inch.

In the same month, he broke the national prep record, clearing 18-3 to win the Golden West Invitational.

Skipper follows in the footsteps of his brother, Art, who was also a prep

standout that competed at Oregon in the javelin. The former school record holder at Oregon threw 259-10 while in high school.

Women's track adds coach

Oregon track and field finally completed its coaching staff on Tuesday in hiring assistant coach Rock Light.

Light will oversee the women's sprinters, jumpers, heptathletes and hurdlers after former women's coach Dan Steele shifted to the men's sprint, hurdle and middle distance crew to replace Steve Silvey, who resigned in September.

"I've been to Eugene for many meets, and the atmosphere is legendary, so it's a part of a dream come true," Light said. "I'm looking forward to being a part of a staff that is incredibly talented, excited and hard-working."

Light is best known for his days as an assistant coach at Louisiana State from 1989-95.

He oversaw the men's and women's multi-event and high jump athletes, and in six seasons, his athletes claimed four NCAA titles.

— Jesse Thomas

American Cancer Society's Great American Smoke-Out Thursday, November 20th

Smokers often say,
"Don't tell me *why* to quit, tell me *how*."

There is no right way to quit, but there are some key elements in quitting smoking successfully.

These 4 factors are crucial:

- Making the decision to quit
- Setting a quit date and choosing a quit plan
- Dealing with withdrawal
- Maintenance or staying quit

Stop by the Health Center's Peer Health Education Office for a free Quit Kit and tips for staying quit. To make an appointment for free nicotine replacement (either patch or gum) call 346-4456.

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Call 346-0562 for information.
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