Detroit Tigers Clips
Thursday, December 1, 2016

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Daily Transactions
The Tigers have been tame thus far.
With a number of high profile names swirling in trade speculation since the outset of the off-season, there has been little substance.
Sure, the Dodgers might have interest in second baseman Ian Kinsler. The Giants could use a rightfielder like J.D. Martinez. A number of teams would welcome Justin Verlander or Miguel Cabrera – and their long-term, lucrative contracts – with open arms. And those are only four of the team’s most marketable players. Perhaps there will be interest in others as the trade market begins to round into form.
But the Tigers – listening but not shopping – are aiming high.
According to a report from Newsday’s Marc Carig, the Mets were interested in Martinez before they signed Yoenis Cespedes to a four-year, $110 million deal. The Tigers’ price on Martinez? Young outfielder Michael Conforto.
Conforto is a premium prospect who looks to have a promising career ahead of him. The former first-round pick hit .220 with 12 home runs in 109 games this past season. To land a player of that caliber for Martinez would be a boon for the Tigers’ efforts, in which they’re trying to reduce payroll and remain competitive.
The Newsday report reflects the industry’s perception on the team’s trade talks at the moment.
“(They) want too much,” one American League scout said. “Way too much.”
This is not surprising. With control over the team’s seasoned talent and without a hard payroll limit for the upcoming season – though it is a near certainty the Tigers will dip underneath Major League Baseball’s luxury tax limit – second-year general manager Al Avila holds leverage in trade negotiations.
The Tigers didn’t seem to be involved in any of those negotiations as of Wednesday afternoon, and might not until MLB’s winter meetings, which are scheduled for next week. But so far, the team has set a tone in their discussions that they aren’t forced into making any moves – and that they are seeking high-level talent in return.
MLB, players union reach tentative deal
December 1, 2016
By Chris McCosky/ The Detroit News

Detroit — Major League Baseball and the players union Wednesday night reached a tentative agreement on a new collective bargaining agreement that will run through the 2021 season and ensure labor peace in the sport for the next five years.

The agreement was reached just before 9 p.m. Wednesday, three hours before the old CBA was set to expire. It is still subject to ratification and there are myriad details still to be worked out.

But the big issues, the potential sticking points, were worked out over a marathon bargaining session that spanned nearly 24 hours between Tuesday and Wednesday.

“CBA is done…baseball you may proceed with your regularly scheduled events,” Tigers ace Justin Verlander tweeted.

Specifics have yet to be released, but according to several national reports, here are some of the bullet points of the new agreement:

■ Luxury tax. Believed to be the final hurdle in the negotiations, the luxury tax threshold will increase from $189 million to $195 million this year. It will increase incrementally to $197 million in 2018, $206 million in 2019, $209 million in 2020 and $210 million in 2021.

The Tigers, currently with a total payroll of $216 million, clearly have some work to do before the end of the 2017 season.

The penalties for going over the threshold remain the same — 20 percent for the first offense, 30 percent after the second and 50 percent after the third — except there are severe penalties on offenders who exceed the threshold by more than $20 million. Those offenders would pay an additional surcharge of 12 percent.

Now you understand why the Tigers are trying to scale back their spending.

■ Free agent restrictions. Teams no longer lose a first round draft pick for signing an elite free agent (one who received and rejected a qualifying offer from their current team). Teams will still lose at least one pick for signing an elite free agent, believed to be a second round pick. If the signing team is over the tax threshold, it must also forfeit a fifth-round pick.

■ International draft. The owners wanted to institute an international draft. The players were dead set against that. The compromise: The sides agreed to a hard cap of $5 million on the amount clubs can spend annually to sign international players. There are no exceptions. Teams cannot exceed the limit.

■ Schedule modification. This is a victory for the players and for the game itself. The sides agreed to lengthen the season from 183 days to 187 beginning in 2018. That will add four more off days to the schedule. Also, it appears more day games will be scheduled on get-away days, especially when a team faces a long flight and a game the next day.

■ All-Star Game. As first reported by the Associated Press, the Midsummer Classic no longer will determine which league has home field advantage in the World Series. Instead, the pennant winner with the best record will get the extra home game in the Series.

■ Chew ban. Smokeless tobacco will be banned for all new players entering the majors. Those presently in the league will be exempt.

■ Drug policy. From several reports, the league will increase testing and players on suspension will not accrue big-league service time. Also, the league might begin testing for HGH (human growth hormone) beginning next year.

■ Minimum salary: A slight raise in minimum salary was negotiated: From $507,500 to $535,000 this year, then to $545,500 in 2018, to $555,000 in 2019. There would cost-of-living increases in the last two years of the CBA. Minor league players who have been on a club’s 40-man roster for two years also get a boost: From $82,700 to $86,500 this year, up to $88,000 in 2018 and $89,500 in 2019.

■ Baseball without borders. The league is pushing to play games in Mexico and London as early as 2018, according MLB.com. It is uncertain whether that was agreed to by the union and will be part of this CBA.
Three weeks after a certain election created, well, a stir throughout America, it’s time to toss another piece of dry timber onto the public-opinion blaze.

Having donned a three-piece asbestos suit, adorned with fireproof accessories, here, in alphabetical order, are the nominees on one man’s 2017 Baseball Hall of Fame ballot:

Jeff Bagwell.
Barry Bonds.
Roger Clemens.
Jeff Kent.
Edgar Martinez.
Mike Mussina.
Tim Raines.
Pudge Rodriguez.
Curt Schilling.

Note that the list bears nine names. That’s good, personally speaking. Because had there been even two more players deemed fit for a plaque in Cooperstown – and two were within an eyelash of inclusion – I’d have been forced to do what was done the last two years. I’d have abstained from the Hall of Fame vote.

Two years ago, there were 13 players on a personal list of HOF candidates. Last year, there were 11. The problem, of course, is that Cooperstown’s custodians have this intense romance with the number “10” and have decided only 10 names can each year be advanced.

Rather than confront an abjectly negative exercise in deciding what player, or players, were less Hall of Fame worthy than 10 others, I said no. Not going to do it. The 10-player limit is unjust, silly, obsolete, counter-productive, injurious, pretentious, and a few other words that probably can’t tastefully be cited.

So, rather than expand the list so that all players who crack an elite level of consideration can be accommodated on a studious voter’s ballot, Cooperstown’s intelligentsia have held firm. And rather than mount a more militant protest against the 10-man limit, the Baseball Writers Association of America, whose 10-year members are eligible for a HOF vote, has agreed to play by Cooperstown’s rules.

It’s unfortunate. But, hey, that’s not the only lament shared by some voters during the past month.

On to the matter of those who made it and those who didn’t. Get your flame-throwers ready.

The decision relative to those PED-era suspects, Bonds and Clemens, has, for me, never wavered. Their careers would have been worthy of a Cooperstown plaque had they not once indulged in the performance-enhancers that all evidence suggests was part of too many players’ once-normal routine.

Some who might have been just as mischievous during that Wild West time in baseball – principally, 1991-2003, when PEDs were not illegal and weren’t subject to strict testing – have, in my view, gotten within plaque-raising distance perhaps because of the boost they might have gained.

Hence, there has always been resistance to Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa, and Rafael Palmeiro. Their numbers hint at having crossed the HOF threshold perhaps with the help of artificial means. That group has now grown by one: Manny Ramirez, a first-timer on the ballot who qualifies for enshrinement if you assume his numbers were not overly tainted. But the evidence on his behalf seems unpersuasive. And so, for now at least, I’m subjecting his candidacy to further review, given that he has nine more cracks at winning 75 percent of the vote, which is the minimum required for a Cooperstown ticket.

The two players who were this close to winning votes were a pair of right-fielders: Vladimir Guerrero and Larry Walker. You can make great cases for each. But, in the view of a critic who never believed Jim Rice quite qualified as a genuine HOF player, nor Fred McGriff, Walker and Guerrero likewise finish a hair shy. For now, anyway.

Others chosen range from fairly easy to fairly complicated.
Bagwell: Check out his top 10 numbers for career first basemen: homers, walks, extra-base hits, etc. Simply a terrific hitter during his 15 big-league seasons. The PED era has worked against him. Unfairly. Bagwell belongs.

Kent: Tremendous offensive second baseman. His historical place within a wide slice of career batting numbers makes him a narrow choice.

Martinez: One of the game’s immensely gifted stars. Bad knees made him a designated hitter. And that was fine. Because a man who swung a bat as elegantly, and as productively, as Martinez deserved a lineup spot and now deserves a plaque. Martinez batted .312 for his 18-year career, with a .418 on-base average and .515 slugging percentage.

Mussina: Analyze the numbers. They explain why Mussina nine times finished no worse than sixth in the American League Cy Young sweepstakes. His career statistical niches (they include seven Gold Gloves) are Cooperstown-caliber all the way.

Raines: Long ago he should have been standing on a dais in July, detailing to Cooperstown’s cast why he so appreciated induction. He has one chance left before his 10-year window closes. The voters need to get it right with Raines.

Rodriguez: There are firm suspicions Pudge got some help during that time when PED anarchy prevailed. Doesn’t matter. As with Bonds and Clemens, his career was so distinguished, so extraordinary in the realm of big-league catchers, his indelible marks are more like monuments and withstand any interlude when performance-enhancers might have been a benefit.

Schilling: Not a difficult choice here, although, frankly, I made it difficult early in his candidacy by not sufficiently appreciating some career distinctions. His strikeouts-to-walk ratios were, and are, astounding. His career WAR (wins above replacement) is 80.7 – smack dab between Bob Gibson and Tom Glavine. Schilling gets a thumbs-up.

So, there are the nine, and it’s by no means a neat or simple judgment. Probably the heaviest regret hangs over Walker’s candidacy when his career WAR is so compelling (72.6, a tad beneath the average HOF right-fielder’s numbers).

But a vote for Walker would be difficult, personally, minus a vote for Guerrero. And that’s not an easy justification, even if choosing both would mean 11 nominees – and a refusal on this end to forward a ballot that forces one or more worthy names to be excluded.

Some will ask about Trevor Hoffman. Proper question. Tremendous reliever. But he misses, as Lee Smith missed. Still, sidestepping Hoffman is not a decision made with complete contentment.

But, ah, this year will be a breeze compared with a year from now. At least if Cooperstown and the BBWAA persist with this nonsensical 10-man ballot limit.

Consider these three names that will arrive on next year’s docket:

Chipper Jones.

Jim Thome.

Omar Vizquel.

They’re automatics. Here, at least. And unless this year’s vote pushes at least two of the above nine onto the lawn at Cooperstown next July, we’ll have another overloaded ballot – never mind that one voter’s mind will remain open on Walker and others, as it should be when time, and perspective, and refracted light can spur a vote that years earlier might have been withheld.

Here’s hoping the 10-man limit will be discussed at next week’s BBWAA business session during the Winter Meetings. Rather, here’s hoping that 10-man limit will, once and for all, be regarded as a straitjacket entrapping candidacies that should be anything but shackled.
DETROIT -- Baseball has narrowly avoided its first labor dispute in 21 years. Major League Baseball reached an agreement with the players union on a new collective bargaining agreement Wednesday night, just three hours before the midnight expiration of the current deal.
The news was first reported by FOX Sports reporter Ken Rosenthal after both sides emerged with smiles and handshakes from another round of negotiations in Dallas. Yahoo Sports reported that it was a five-year deal. Details of the agreement began trickling out almost immediately.
Owners could have chosen to institute a lockout at midnight, which would have been the first labor dispute since a strike wiped out the 1994 season and a portion of the 1995 season.
Until Monday it appeared the one major sticking point was the international draft, although owners backed down on the issue that Latin American players passionately opposed. Reporter Jon Heyman said the new deal has no draft, but includes a per-team limit of $5-6 million on international signings.
The other issues apparently weren't big enough to keep a deal from getting done:
* Draft pick compensation for free agents.
In the current system, teams can extend a one-year qualifying offer ($17.2 million this year) to impending free agents. If the player rejects the offer, his old team gets a top draft pick from his new team. The players don't like it because it deflates salaries and arbitrarily penalizes players.
MLB Network's Jon Morosi said teams would no longer forfeit a first-round pick to sign a free agent. Reporter Ken Rosenthal tweeted that the details of the compensation format in the new agreement are "still being discussed."
* The competitive balance tax.
The luxury tax threshold, currently set at $189 million, will go up to $195 million in 2017 and rise to at least $210 million over the course of the new agreement, according to the New York Post.
* Other issues like roster size and scheduling.
Although earlier reports suggested that players and owners largely agreed on a proposal to expand roster size to 26 players, the New York Post reported that the provision did not make the final document. Nor did a proposal to alter roster rules for September call-ups.
The idea of reducing the schedule, which was kicked around during the summer, never appeared to get off the ground.
DETROIT -- The Detroit Tigers are demanding a steep price for outfielder J.D. Martinez. That's what shut down talks between the Tigers and the New York Mets, according to a report Wednesday from Newsday.

The Mets balked at including top prospect Michael Conforto in the deal, according to the report. The Mets ultimately re-signed outfielder Yoenis Cespedes, making the point moot. The Mets are now trying to deal veteran outfielders like Jay Bruce or Curtis Granderson rather than acquire another. Conforto, 23, struggled at times in his 2016 debut after rapidly blazing his way through the minor leagues since being drafted out of Oregon State in 2014.

He's a young, affordable left-handed hitter -- all attributes that likely made him appealing to the Tigers. The Tigers have made only one offseason trade this winter, sending Cameron Maybin to the Anaheim Angels. It's possible that trade chatter will pick up next week at the MLB Winter Meetings, especially if players and owners agree on a new collective bargaining agreement. The current labor agreement is set to expire this week.
DETROIT -- The Detroit Tigers must decide by the end of the week whether to tender 2017 contracts to players under team control.

In practice, this annual ritual is really a decision about who not to tender.

The Tigers have six arbitration-eligible players who will make more than the league minimum in 2017. Shortstop Jose Iglesias, third baseman Nick Castellanos and relievers Justin Wilson, Alex Wilson and Bruce Rondon will all be tendered contracts.

The only difficult decision for the Tigers involves super-utility player Andrew Romine, who is estimated to make $1.2 million in 2017.

The Tigers like Romine, who can play just about every position on the diamond, and his contract is pocket change within the context of a $175 million payroll.

But if the Tigers are truly penny-pinching this offseason, or they don't see a role for Romine in the future, they might consider non-tendering him. The organization has four potential bench players who are out of options and must make the team or be exposed to waivers, so keeping Romine might involve losing someone else.

If the Tigers chose not to tender a contract to him, Romine would become a free agent and could sign with any team.

Last year the Tigers declined to extend contracts to relievers Neftali Feliz and Al Albuquerque. Both turned out to be prudent financial decisions.

Feliz, who was slated to make $5.2 million in arbitration, ultimately signed a $3.9 million deal with the Pittsburgh Pirates, where he had an effective but unspectacular 2016 season.

Albuquerque, due an estimated $2.2 million in arbitration, signed a one-year deal with the Anaheim Angels for $1.1 million. He ended the season in the Seattle Mariners minor league system and is now a free agent.

Here are the Tigers' six arbitration-eligible players:

**Jose Iglesias**
* 2016 salary: $2.1 million (avoided arbitration)
* Service time: 4 years, 36 days (second year of arbitration)
* 2017 projected arbitration salary: $3.2 million

**Nick Castellanos**
* 2016 salary: $536,500
* Service time: 3 years, 29 days (first year of arbitration)
* 2017 projected arbitration salary: $2.8 million

**Justin Wilson**
* 2016 salary: $1.525 million (avoided arbitration)
* Service time: 4 years, 35 days (second year of arbitration)
* 2017 projected arbitration salary: $2.7 million

**Andrew Romine**
* 2016 salary: $900,000 (avoided arbitration)
* Service time: 4 years, 49 days (second year of arbitration)
* 2017 projected arbitration salary: $1.2 million

**Alex Wilson**
* 2016 salary: $522,500
* Service time: 3 years, 38 days (first year)
* 2017 projected arbitration salary: $1.2 million

**Bruce Rondon**
* 2016 salary: $507,500
* Service time: 3 years, 37 days (first year)
* 2017 projected arbitration salary: $900,000
Projections are from MLB Trade Rumors.

About arbitration:
Players with at least three years* but fewer than six years of service time are still under team control (they're not free agents), but can negotiate a salary beyond the league minimum. If the team and the player can't agree on a figure, an arbitrator hears the arguments on both sides and selects a winner.
Most teams prefer to avoid arbitration and negotiate a fair deal on their own.
* In some cases, a player very close to three years of service time can reach arbitration. These "Super 2 players" represent the top 22 percent of players between two and three years of service time. The actual benchmark fluctuates every year. The Tigers have no players in that category this year.
V-Mart's intriguing bat drawing interest
December 1, 2016
By Jason Beck/MLB.com

DETROIT -- Victor Martinez sat at the podium at Comerica Park two years ago and talked emotionally about what it meant to remain a Tiger. Directly to his left was Tigers owner Mike Ilitch, who talked about a vow to take care of him for what he did in their run to a fourth consecutive division title in 2014. There was sentiment behind the four-year extension they agreed upon, even as Martinez's age loomed. It seems further in the past, almost a distant memory. And as the Tigers look to pare payroll at next week's Winter Meetings, Martinez joins teammates J.D. Martinez, Ian Kinsler, Justin Verlander and Miguel Cabrera in baseball's Hot Stove rumor mill.
The Tigers have had some inquiries on Victor Martinez, as Nick Cafardo of the Boston Globe reported. That in itself isn't really a surprise, given how many ideas are thrown around in the month or so between baseball's General Managers Meetings and the Winter Meetings. The question as discussions become more focused is how serious that interest becomes.
That depends in part on the rest of the market.
"Always a place for a good bat," one Major League evaluator said.
Indeed, as the rumored interest around the league for 39-year-old Carlos Beltran has shown, age isn't a big hindrance on players who can still perform. In the case of current free agents, it can be a gift, given their propensity for shorter-term contracts compared to younger players.
Martinez, of course, isn't a free agent. With his 38th birthday about three weeks away, he's under contract for two more seasons with an annual salary of $18 million. The only larger salaries on Detroit's roster for 2017 belong to Cabrera ($28 million), Verlander ($28 million) and Justin Upton ($22,120,000).
Like the other three, Martinez provided production, bouncing back from an injury-plagued 2015 season to bat .289 with 27 homers, 86 RBIs and an .826 OPS. His OPS was the sixth highest among players with qualifying at-bats at designated hitter, and just behind fellow switch hitter Beltran, who split his season between DH and right field.
As the Tigers look to pare down their payroll for next year and beyond, Martinez's salary looms large. But even if two years of control on Martinez seems palatable for clubs, Detroit might have to eat some of that money to facilitate a deal for even big-market teams wary of the luxury tax threshold.
Since Martinez was almost exclusively a DH last year, playing just five games at first base, his market is essentially limited to the American League. Also complicating any potential deal is Martinez's full no-trade rights as a 10-and-5 player -- 10 years in the Major Leagues, the last five with the same team. Any trade would require his approval, and while he doesn't have any contract options to use as leverage, he can certainly exercise his rights to either stay in Detroit or go somewhere he wants.
But in an era when bullpen matchups loom large -- and could grow more frequent if rosters expand to 26 players -- the fact that Martinez remains an effective switch hitter gives him the advantage of being a difficult hitter to match up against. After knee issues left him struggling to hit for power from the left side in 2015, he actually hit for a higher OPS against righties (.832) than lefties (.812) for the first time since '13.
Dan Lunetta, the Detroit Tigers Director of Minor League Operations, will receive the 2016 Sheldon “Chief” Bender Award in a ceremony next month. The award, given annually to individuals with distinguished service who have been instrumental in player development, will be presented at the Baseball Winter Meetings Awards Banquet on Dec. 4 in National Harbor, Maryland.

Lunetta has been with the Tigers since 2002, first as an assistant to baseball operations. Based in Lakeland, he handles scouting, player development and much of what goes on in the Tigers’ minor league system. He was promoted to his current position in 2004. Prior to his time with Detroit, Lunetta was the assistant to baseball operations with the Florida Marlins and the assistant to the general manager with the then-Montreal Expos. He has worked in the Cincinnati Reds organization as well.
### TEAM: Atlanta Braves
- **Player:** Tuffy Gosewisch
- **Transaction:** Signed, (2017)(avoids arbitration)

### TEAM: Atlanta Braves
- **Player:** Sean Rodriguez
- **Transaction:** Signed as Free Agent, (2017-2018)(two-year contract)

### TEAM: Baltimore Orioles
- **Player:** Logan Verrett
- **Transaction:** Traded From Mets, NY Mets (for cash considerations)

### TEAM: Colorado Rockies
- **Player:** Jordan Lyles
- **Transaction:** Signed, (2017)(avoids arbitration)

### TEAM: Houston Astros
- **Player:** Norichika Aoki
- **Transaction:** Signed, (2017)(avoids arbitration)

### TEAM: Minnesota Twins
- **Player:** Jason Castro
- **Transaction:** Signed as Free Agent, (2017-2019)(three-year contract)

### TEAM: Oakland Athletics
- **Player:** Ryan Lavarnway
- **Transaction:** Signed to a Minor League Contract

### TEAM: Oakland Athletics
- **Player:** Chris Parmelee
- **Transaction:** Signed to a Minor League Contract

### TEAM: Oakland Athletics
- **Player:** Matt Joyce
- **Transaction:** Signed as Free Agent, (2017-2018)(two-year contract)

### TEAM: Arizona Diamondbacks
- **Player:** Kyle Jensen
- **Transaction:** Signed to Play in Japan, (Fukuoka SoftBank Hawks)

### TEAM: Chicago Cubs
- **Player:** Jon Jay
- **Transaction:** Signed as Free Agent, (2017)(one-year contract)
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<th>TEAM</th>
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**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2016**

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