Yanks, D-backs, Tigers have rich history as trade partners
By Paul Casella / MLB.com
http://m.dbacks.mlb.com/news/article/103275996/yanks-d-backs-tigers-have-rich-history-as-trade-partners

D-backs brighten kids' day at Winter Classic
Underprivileged youth visit Chase Field for fun with players, gifts from team
By Steve Gilbert / MLB.com

Starting pitching remains atop D-backs' Meetings agenda
Even after acquiring Hellickson, Ray, Arizona hoping to supplement rotation next week
By Steve Gilbert / MLB.com

D-backs trade Didi to get power lefty Ray
Arizona also acquires infield prospect Leyba in three-team swap
By Steve Gilbert / MLB.com

D-backs expect to be busy after pre-Meetings moves
New Arizona brass has already acquired Hellickson, Ray for rotation, Tomas for lineup
By Steve Gilbert / MLB.com

Once deal is done, Diamondbacks will give Yasmany Tomas a chance at third base
By Nick Piecoro / The Arizona Republic

Report: D-Backs ownership blocks Montero trade to Dodgers
By Nick Piecoro / The Arizona Republic

Arizona Diamondbacks ready to continue busy offseason
By Nick Piecoro / The Arizona Republic

McManaman: Didi Gregorius' stint as Derek Jeter's replacement won't last long
By Bob McManaman / The Arizona Republic

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Diamondbacks hire Nationals scout Deric Ladnier as scouting director
By Nick Piecoro / The Arizona Republic
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Next up? Lefty bat, payroll flexibility
By Jack Magruder / FOX Sports Arizona

D-backs name Deric Ladnier scouting director
By FOX Sports Arizona

Derrick Hall honored by USC
By FOX Sports Arizona

D-backs acquire P Robbie Ray, send SS Didi Gregorius to Yankees
By Jack Magruder / FOX Sports Arizona

Report: Arizona Diamondbacks looked to trade Miguel Montero to Dodgers
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Didi Gregorius with the D-backs: By the Numbers
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Diamondbacks could be under radar screen at Winter Meetings
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Diamondbacks add power pitcher Ray: Deal Gregorius
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24 Under 40
The most powerful locals under age 40
By Michelle Glicksman / Uptown

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Gregorius just who Cashman sought to replace Jeter
Yanks, D-backs, Tigers all acquire young players with potential in trade
By Richard Justice / MLB.com

Justice: Yanks heat up on Hot Stove scene
Cashman adds Gregorius, Miller while keeping eye on starting pitching
By Richard Justice / MLB.com

Ray, Leyba headed to D-backs in trade
Tigers' No. 2 prospect had joined club in Fister trade a year ago
By Sam Dykstra / MiLB.com

Yanks acquire SS Didi Gregorius
By Andrew Marchand / ESPNNewYork.com

A no-brainer trade for the Yankees
By Keith Law / ESPN.com
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Can new Yankees shortstop handle NYC without Jeter’s influence?
By Ken Rosenthal / FOX Sports

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By Mark Townsend / Yahoo! Sports

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Yasmany Tomas could be D-Backs' starting third baseman
By Michael Hurcomb / CBSSports.com

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By D.J. Short / NBCSports.com
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By Aaron Somers / SL.com
Report: Dodgers nearly traded Andre Ethier to Arizona
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Yankees Acquire Shortstop Didi Gregorius—and Give Him Big Shoes to Fill
Strong-Fielding 24-Year-Old From Arizona Will Be the De Facto Jeter Replacement
By Daniel Barbarisi / Wall Street Journal

Special assistant Deric Ladnier hired by Diamondbacks
By James Wagner / The Washington Post

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Yanks, D-backs, Tigers have rich history as trade partners

By Paul Casella / MLB.com

http://m.dbacks.mlb.com/news/article/103275996/yanks-d-backs-tigers-have-rich-history-as-trade-partners

The Yankees went back to a familiar source on Friday to find Derek Jeter's replacement, acquiring shortstop Didi Gregorius from the D-backs as part of a three-team swap between the Yanks, D-backs and Tigers.

These are the same three teams that -- nearly five years ago to the day -- pulled off a blockbuster that sent Curtis Granderson to New York, Max Scherzer, Austin Jackson, Daniel Schlereth and Phil Coke to Detroit and Ian Kennedy and Edwin Jackson to Arizona.

The trade ties don't end there, as the Yankees and D-backs swapped likely future Hall of Famer Randy Johnson back and forth twice within a two-year span. As for the Tigers and the Yanks, there's plenty of history there, too, including trades involving sluggers Gary Sheffield and Ivan Rodriguez.

Even the key player involved in Friday's trade is no stranger to three-team deals. Gregorius was originally acquired by the D-backs in 2012 as part of another three-team swap involving the Reds, Indians and D-backs.

In an attempt to put some historical perspective on Friday's swap, let's take a look at some of the previous trades involving these franchises, as well as three-team trades in general and the shoes that Gregorius will have to try to fill in the Bronx.

Familiar partners

• Just this past season, the D-backs traded right-hander Brandon McCarthy to the Yankees on July 6 in exchange for southpaw Vidal Nuno. Less than a month later, the clubs connected yet again as Arizona sent Martin Prado to New York on July 31 in exchange for Minor League catcher/outfielder Peter O'Brien.

• Two of the more memorable trades between the D-backs and Yankees, however, came a bit further back. Arizona traded five-time Cy Young Award winner Johnson to the Yankees on Jan. 11, 2005 in exchange for Brad Halsey, Dioner Navarro, Javier Vazquez and cash. Almost two years to the day later, the Yankees traded Johnson back to the D-backs in exchange for Alberto Gonzalez, Steven Jackson, Ross Ohlendorf and Luis Vizcaino.

• As for the Yankees and Tigers, New York traded Sheffield to Detroit on Nov. 10, 2006 in exchange for Anthony Claggett, Humberto Sanchez and Kevin Whelan. The clubs exchanged another aging superstar two years later when the Tigers sent 14-time All-Star and 13-time Gold Glove-winning catcher Rodriguez to the Yankees in exchange for pitcher Kyle Farnsworth.

• The D-backs, meanwhile, have the Tigers to thank for 2001 World Series hero Luis Gonzalez. Arizona acquired Gonzalez from the Tigers in December 1998 in exchange for journeyman outfielder Karim Garcia. Gonzalez, of course, went on to notch a World Series-clinching, walk-off RBI single in Game 7 of the 2001 Fall Classic vs. the Yankees.

• The most memorable trade between these clubs, however, involved all three teams. It was on Dec. 8, 2009 that the Yankees acquired Granderson from the Tigers, while the Tigers landed Scherzer and Austin Jackson, among others, and the D-backs received Kennedy and Edwin Jackson in a three-team Winter Meetings blockbuster.

Recent three-team swaps

• The D-backs have plenty of history when it comes to three-team deals, in general. They acquired slugger Mark Trumbo as part of a three-team swap with the Angels and White Sox at last year's Winter Meetings. The Angels acquired Tyler Skaggs and Hector Santiago in return, while the White Sox landed outfielder Adam Eaton.

• The D-backs also acquired Gregorius via a three-team deal involving the Reds and Indians back in December 2012. In that massive three-team move, the D-backs acquired Gregorius, Lars Anderson and Tony Sipp, while the Indians brought in Drew Stubbs, Matt Albers, Trevor Bauer and Bryan Shaw and the Reds landed Shin-Soo Choo and Jason Donald.

• More recently, the Tigers were involved in a three-team blockbuster earlier this summer when they acquired ace David Price in a three-team deal that once again involved Austin Jackson. In this trade, completed along with the Rays and Mariners, Tampa Bay received prospect Willy Adames and pitcher Drew Smyly, while the Mariners landed Adam Eaton.

• Interestingly enough, the Tigers were also involved in a substantial three-team trade during the 2013 season. The Tigers partnered with the White Sox and Red Sox to complete a deal just ahead of the Trade Deadline that brought Jose Iglesias to Detroit. Boston, meanwhile, acquired veteran starter Jake Peavy and right-hander Brayan Villarreal, while the White Sox landed outfielder Avisail Garcia and a trio of Minor Leaguers.

D-backs brighten kids' day at Winter Classic

Underprivileged youth visit Chase Field for fun with players, gifts from team

By Steve Gilbert / MLB.com

http://m.dbbacks.mlb.com/news/article/103318748/d-backs-brighten-kids-day-at-winter-classic

PHOENIX -- It was billed as the D-backs "Winter Classic" but it hardly felt like winter Friday afternoon at Chase Field.

With temperatures in the 70s and 600 underprivileged kids filling the field playing Wiffle ball, running the bases, creating holiday crafts and meeting some of their hometown heroes, it sure felt like baseball season.

"Look at their faces," said D-backs closer Addison Reed, who was one of the players on hand. "Look at the smiles. That makes it all worth it. This is a great event."

The D-backs started the event 17 years ago after the organization's first season, and each year it continues to grow.
"Six hundred is a little higher than most years," D-backs team president/CEO Derrick Hall said. "It's the highest we've been. It continues to grow not only with volunteers, but with the number of kids that we impact."

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Arizona Diamondbacks -- ✔ @Dbacks

Chase Field becomes a Winter Wonderland where D-backs players and coaches GiveBack to kids in need. WinterClassic

This year there was a Phoenix Herpetological Society petting zoo, and the Phoenix Symphony hosted what it called an "Instrument Petting Zoo" where kids could try out various musical instruments.

D-backs athletic trainers were on hand to conduct a fitness zone, and there were the usual pictures with Santa Claus.

"This is amazing," manager Chip Hale said. "I can't believe how many kids we've got here today. This is much bigger than I initially thought. It's great."

More important than the games and the chance to mingle with players was the fact that the kids were given packages including a new pair of shoes, socks, backpacks, sweatshirts and drawstring bags.

"It's pretty impressive and you watch the smiles we've created," Hall said.

University of Phoenix, which sponsored the event, had more than 150 volunteers on hand to help.

"Everyone is having a good time and they're out on a big league field," Reed said. "That has to be special for them, and I'm glad I can be a small part of it. The least we can do is go out and interact with people. We're blessed with a job where we get to put on a uniform and play a game every day. That's something that not a lot of people get to do, so anytime we can go and make people's day a little better or make them smile a little, I think that's pretty awesome."}

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Starting pitching remains atop D-backs' Meetings agenda

Even after acquiring Hellickson, Ray, Arizona hoping to supplement rotation next week
By Steve Gilbert / MLB.com
http://m.dbacks.mlb.com/news/article/103210942/starting-
pitching-remains-atop-d-backs-winter-meetings-agenda

The D-backs have crossed a few items off their shopping list so far this offseason, adding right-hander Jeremy Hellickson and lefty Robbie Ray to the rotation and getting more sock in the lineup by agreeing to terms with Cuban free agent Yasmany Tomas.

There is still more work to be done, though, to improve a team that finished with the worst record in Major League Baseball in 2014 at 64-98, and some of it could get done at baseball's annual Winter Meetings, which get underway Monday in San Diego.

"I think we'll be active," D-backs team president/CEO Derrick Hall said. "I don't know if we'll get anything done. We will certainly try because we're still looking for ways to improve the ballclub. We're having lots of talks with lots of teams."

Trades by former general manager Kevin Towers, along with injuries to Patrick Corbin and Bronson Arroyo, have depleted Arizona's starting pitching depth throughout the system.

"It's not just adding starting pitching that can give us some extra wins in 2015, but it's building up a group of guys that would be available to pitch that we would control for years beyond 2015," D-backs chief baseball officer Tony La Russa said. "The healthiest situation is for them to pitch when they deserve to pitch, not because we need them to pitch. So [GM Dave Stewart is] looking to build some depth."

Club needs
Starting pitching, starting pitching, starting pitching: The D-backs continue to search for help alongside Wade Miley, Hellickson and Josh Collmenter in the rotation. Ray, Chase Anderson, Trevor Cahill, Vidal Nuno, Randall Delgado, Daniel Hudson and Archie Bradley are among the other candidates to make the five-man staff, but the team would like to have even more competition for spots. When it comes to free agents, Arizona won't be a player for the top-end guys like Max Scherzer and Jon Lester, but will wait to see who might still be on the board late in the process. The D-backs could sign Chad Billingsley and possibly trade for another arm.

Left-handed bat: The D-backs would like to add a left-handed bat, preferably one with power that can either start or at the very least platoon against right-handed pitching.

Catcher: The D-backs have a good combination in Miguel Montero and backup Tuffy Gosewisch, but if they trade Montero, they will need to add a backstop. Organizationally, they could use some depth at this position as well.

Who they can trade if necessary
Outfielder Mark Trumbo: Trumbo struggled with injuries this past season, and if the D-backs feel like Tomas will be ready to start 2015 in the big leagues, it could free Arizona up to deal Trumbo. Trumbo can play first base and left field, but might even be more valuable to an American League team. He has tremendous power, a quality that is in short supply these days. Then again, the D-backs plan on trying Tomas at third base initially, and Stewart said he had "no interest in" moving Trumbo.

Montero: If the D-backs want to reduce their payroll, dealing Montero, who is owed $40 million over the next three years, is the prime way of doing it. A favorite of the previous front-office regimes, there are indications that this one is open to trading him and has at least been listening to offers the last couple of months.

Bullpen arms: Another area of depth for the D-backs. In addition to closer Addison Reed and relievers Brad Ziegler, Oliver Perez and Evan Marshall, the team will get back David Hernandez and Matt Reynolds from Tommy John surgery. There's also Hudson, if he stays in the bullpen, and Matt Stites. That doesn't take into account some of the young, hard throwers
the team has coming up quickly in the system like Jake Barrett and Enrique Burgos. In other words, they have a lot of relief arms.

Top prospects
The D-backs’ top 10 prospects, per MLB.com, are Bradley, right-hander Braden Shipley, right-hander Touki Toussaint, right-hander Aaron Blair, third baseman Jake Lamb, third baseman Brandon Drury, Ray, catcher Peter O’Brien, middle infielder Domingo Leyba and outfielder Marcus Wilson.

The D-backs were willing to part with shortstop Andrew Velazquez and outfielder Justin Williams in the Hellickson deal, because they felt like they were at least three to four years away. However, the organization seems less likely to give up its top-end pitching prospects right now.

Rule 5 Draft
Last year, the team selected right-hander Marcos Mateo in the Rule 5 Draft, but he struggled with his command during the spring, did not make the team and was returned to the Cubs’ organization.

With their roster full at 40, the D-backs would need to clear a spot if they wanted to be able to pick someone this year.

Big contracts they might unload
Montero is owed $40 million over the next three years and could be the most valuable trade chip the team has at this point.

It seems unlikely that the D-backs would be able to trade Aaron Hill unless they are willing to pick up a big chunk of the $24 million he is owed the next two years. It might make more sense for them to try to hang on to him and hope he rebounds at the plate.

Payroll summary
The D-backs’ ownership group has never been cheap. They had an Opening Day payroll of $110 million last year, a club record, and if you figure in the Tomas signing and raises for arbitration-eligible players, it stands right around $100 million. Hall has said the team would like to create more flexibility and have the figure be somewhere around $90 million to $95 million. That will certainly be a challenge.

D-backs trade Didi to get power lefty Ray
Arizona also acquires infield prospect Leyba in three-team swap
By Steve Gilbert / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- The D-backs continued their quest to build pitching depth as they acquired left-hander Robbie Ray and Minor League infielder Domingo Leyba from the Tigers for shortstop Didi Gregorius.

The Tigers in turn flipped Gregorius to the Yankees for right-hander Shane Greene.

"This is a kid, a left-handed guy, that’s a power pitcher," D-backs manager Chip Hale said of Ray. "They’re hard to find these days so we’re excited to have him. Whether he starts in the rotation, we'll wait and see, but he's got some big league time and was highly sought after, so we're excited to have a power lefty."

Ray made his Major League debut in 2014 for Detroit, going 1-4 with an 8.16 ERA in nine games (six starts). The 23-year-old was the centerpiece of a trade that sent Doug Fister from Detroit to Washington.

"This guy projected to be a middle of the rotation to top of the rotation guy," D-backs GM Dave Stewart said. "We've looked at a lot of different guys. I've said from the start that we'd like to get young, controllable pitching. From the day I said it, he's been one of the guys on my list."

The D-backs have made adding starting pitching a priority this offseason, and last month they picked up right-hander Jeremy Hellickson in a deal with the Rays.

As it stands right now, the D-backs have Wade Miley, Hellickson and Josh Collmenter slotted into the rotation. Vidal Nuno, Chase Anderson, Trevor Cahill and Daniel Hudson all figure to also compete for spots, and there’s a chance that Ray could open the 2015 season in the big league rotation.

"I spoke with a few people in the industry, and some people believe that he's capable of challenging for a spot in the rotation," Stewart said. "But we're not going to push him. He’s left-handed. He’s 91-96 mph. Competitive. Young. We have control of him for six years. I guess the question is what's not to like about him?"

The D-backs are also high on Leyba, who has played both short and third since being signed by the Tigers out of the Dominican Republic in 2012. Overall, he has hit .334/.400/.490 in his Minor League career.

While some say he profiles best as a second baseman, the D-backs believe he could also stick at short.

"I heard some reports that he doesn't have enough arm strength to play the shortstop position -- wrong," Stewart said. "He's a very, very good shortstop. Very good first-step quickness. He's capable of playing short. He's capable of playing second. He's a good, athletic kid. He's got first-step quickness. Most people say his biggest asset is swinging the bat, but once again, wrong. I disagree. He's an all-around good offensive, defensive player."

With baseball's Winter Meetings starting Monday in San Diego, Stewart said the team will continue to try to add pieces.

"We're always looking to improve our depth," Stewart said, referring to starting pitching. "We'd probably like to find a left-handed bat if we could. That's going to be a difficult task."

In addition, the D-backs are hopeful that next week they can finally officially announce the signing of Cuban free-agent slugger Yasmany Tomas. The two sides agreed a couple of weeks ago on a six-year $68.5 million deal that included an opt-out after four years.

D-backs officials said there are no snags, but that there are still things left to be taken care of before it becomes official.
"I mean, look, it's our largest contract ever," D-backs team president/CEO Derrick Hall said. "We want to make sure that we have the contract right. But we're close."

Hall said the team’s payroll is hovering around $100 million right now, but it may end up getting reduced a bit before the end of the winter.

"We're where we're comfortable, but I don't think this is where we're going to end up," Hall said. "I think we still want to be more flexible than we are right now. In my opinion I think we're a little higher than we need to be, or should be right now. We've never put a number on it, but I'd say $90-$95 million probably makes sense."

Scouting reports:

Ray: A year after coming to the Tigers from the Nationals as the centerpiece of the Fister trade, Ray is on the move again, this time to the D-backs in a three-team deal that netted Detroit Greene and the Yankees. Signed for $799,000 as a 12th-round pick out of Tennessee's high school in 2010, Ray has more velocity than most left-handed starters. He sits in the low 90s with his fastball and hit 97 mph in the Arizona Fall League this fall. He also has a good feel for a changeup, which dives at the plate when it's at its best, but he still has yet to develop a reliable breaking ball. Ray has a ceiling as a No. 3 starter, though he'll have to improve his mediocre slider and command to reach it. If he can't, he could become a late-innings bullpen weapon. Ray made his Major League debut in 2014, going 1-4 with an 8.16 ERA in nine games (six starts).

Leyba: Signed for $400,000 out of the Dominican Republic in 2012, Leyba has done nothing but rake in pro ball. He has hit .334/.400/.490 in the Minors, including a .397/.431/.483 performance in the final month of the 2014 season as an 18-year-old at Class A. Leyba's bat is for real, as he's a switch-hitter with an advanced approach and the potential for double-digit homer output once he gets stronger. He has played both second base and shortstop and fits better at second because his speed and arm are average at best. But he should produce enough at the plate to become a big league regular.

-- Jim Callis

D-backs expect to be busy after pre-Meetings moves

New Arizona brass has already acquired Hellickson, Ray for rotation, Tomas for lineup

By Steve Gilbert / MLB.com


SAN DIEGO -- You can count on the rumors to be flying around downtown San Diego this week as baseball's annual Winter Meetings get underway here Monday.

Will there be many actual deals or signings? Will the D-backs be able to further make moves to strengthen their team for a bounceback in 2015?

Stay tuned to dbacks.com for all the latest D-backs information, and you can follow me on twitter @stevegilbertmlb for even more up-to-the-minute information.

This should be an interesting few days for Dave Stewart, who will get his first taste of the Meetings as a general manager.

So far this offseason, Stewart has been aggressive, trading for Rays starter Jeremy Hellickson and then catching most of the baseball world off guard by agreeing with Cuban free agent Yasmany Tomas on a six-year, $68.5 million deal. Arizona also acquired left-hander Robbie Ray and Minor League infielder Domingo Leyba in exchange for shortstop Didi Gregorius in a three-team trade with the Tigers and Yankees.

Still on the wish list is a power-hitting left-handed bat, though, that would likely require some other movement to free up money, as the D-backs are already looking at being around the $100 million mark for payroll.

"I think we'll be busy," team president/CEO Derrick Hall said. "I don't know if we'll get anything done. We'll see. We'll certainly be busy at the Winter Meetings."

The D-backs will likely officially announce the Tomas signing -- possibly as early as Monday -- and first-year manager Chip Hale will meet with the media Monday afternoon, so you'll want to check out what he has to say about how he sees his lineup shaping up at this point.

Stewart will also brief the media each day during the Meetings, and that will be included in a daily wrap-up story, so check back with dbacks.com regularly for updates.

Fans are encouraged to take part by filling the comments section at dbacks.com this week with their own suggestions for getting the club turned around. What would you like to see Stewart add during these Meetings? Should the team deal catcher Miguel Montero and the $40 million he's owed over the next three years?

Once deal is done, Diamondbacks will give Yasmany Tomas a chance at third base

By Nick Piecoro / The Arizona Republic


It has been 11 days since the Diamondbacks reportedly reached an agreement with Cuban slugger Yasmany Tomas, but the club has yet to announce a deal, as team executives said last week they continue to work through contract language.

They did, however, talk about him at length with reporters last week, and in doing so dropped an interesting and unexpected nugget. Tomas, widely expected to play a corner outfield spot, might not necessarily be ticketed for one of those positions.

"Our first move if and when we get the Tomas thing done is he's going to come in and we're going to have him compete at third base," Diamondbacks manager Chip Hale said. "So if he can handle third base, he would be our (guy). That's our first wish and then the outfield situation sort of falls in after that."
The move seemed to surprise many in the baseball industry, but there are some scouts who don't think the idea is as crazy as it sounds.

"He looked good when we saw him there," said an executive with a National League team.

"He does have pretty good feet," a scout with an AL team said.

Diamondbacks General Manager Dave Stewart said Tomas, who underwent a physical exam with team medical personnel last week in the Dominican Republic, stands 6-foot-1 and weighs 252 pounds. That puts him in the same neighborhood as the 5-foot-11 Pablo Sandoval, who reportedly weighed about 250 pounds at the beginning of spring training this year.

An executive with an AL team said his club did not envision Tomas as being able to play third base. Tomas' hands and arm were fine, the executive said, but his range and quickness were questionable.

"He's mobile for his size," he said, "but that doesn't make him mobile."

Tomas could compete with rookie Jake Lamb or Hill for at-bats at third base, one of numerous positions the Diamondbacks appear to have up in the air.

Chris Owings or Nick Ahmed could play shortstop, Owings or Aaron Hill second and Mark Trumbo, David Peralta, Ender Inciarte and Cody Ross all could be in the mix for playing time at a corner outfield spot.

If Tomas can't handle third, he would join the glut of corner outfielders, although there's also a chance the team ships the 24-year-old newcomer to the minor leagues to open the season.

"We're going to let spring training judge that, see what he does in the spring," Stewart said. "We're not opposed to sending him back, basically, really just to get acclimated to playing here and in our system. We're not opposed to him being in the minor leagues, but we're going to let his spring training talk for him."

Stewart was asked if there were significant hurdles to be cleared in finalizing Tomas' reported six-year, $68.5 million deal.

"I don't think so," Stewart said. "I was an agent, so really a lot of it just has to do with how we can get this thing done with the agent. That's more of the issue than anything. Based on my experience with the kid, I think he's ready to come and play. It's getting through the hurdles with his representation."

**Report: D-Backs ownership blocks Montero trade to Dodgers**

By Nick Piecoro / The Arizona Republic

The Diamondbacks worked this week on a deal that would have sent catcher Miguel Montero to the Los Angeles Dodgers only to see the potential trade squashed by ownership, according to a report by Ken Rosenthal of FOX Sports.

The collapsed deal would have sent outfielder Andre Ethier and catcher Tim Federowicz to the Diamondbacks.

According to the report, Diamondbacks Managing General Partner Ken Kendrick put a stop to the deal, though the exact reasons were not spelled out. The Diamondbacks and Dodgers have had bad blood in recent years, and it could be that Kendrick did not want to send the club's longest-tenured player to its division rival.

The trade would have been an exchange of pricey contracts involving players coming off down years. Montero is owed $40 million over the next three years, Ethier $56 million over three years. The Dodgers were willing to include cash in the deal.

**Arizona Diamondbacks ready to continue busy offseason**

By Nick Piecoro / The Arizona Republic

It's already been a busy offseason for the Diamondbacks. Their front office has been remade. They hired a new manager. They are on the verge of finalizing the largest contract in franchise history. They bolstered their rotation with a veteran right-hander and a young, hard-throwing lefty.

But with baseball's winter meetings set to begin this week in San Diego, the Diamondbacks seem far from finished with their roster restructuring.

"We'll certainly be busy at the winter meetings," Diamondbacks CEO Derrick Hall said. "I think we'll be active. I don't know if we'll get anything done, we will certainly try because we're still looking for ways to improve the ballclub. We're having lots of talks with lots of teams."

After taking steps to acquire starting pitchers Jeremy Hellickson and Robbie Ray, the Diamondbacks could still look to add another starter, Hall said.

But the club has also broadened its search to include a left-handed bat, a potential offensive weapon to go along with right-handed hitters Paul Goldschmidt, Mark Trumbo and Yasmany Tomas, the Cuban slugger whose reported franchise-record, six-year, $68.5 million deal is seemingly nearing completion.

"A middle of the order, left-handed bat," General Manager Dave Stewart said. "Somebody to sandwich in between Trumbo and Goldschmidt."

That bat, in theory, would fit somewhere in the outfield, Stewart said, suggesting the club's plan to give Tomas a chance to win the third-base job in spring training is somewhat serious.

But if Tomas can't handle the position — some scouts familiar with him think he'd stand a chance at third, others are skeptical — that would create even more of a logjam than the Diamondbacks already have in the outfield. As it stands, the club figures to have A.J. Pollock in center field with Trumbo, David Peralta, Ender Inciarte and Cody Ross as options on the corners.
Many in the industry have speculated the addition of Tomas might make Trumbo available. Neither player is regarded as being a rangy defender, and evaluators with other teams say the Diamondbacks would risk being defensively challenged with both in the same outfield.

"I don't see any reason – and I definitely don't feel forced because we have a little bit more depth in our outfield – to move any of those guys," Stewart said. "They've got options" – referring to minor-league options for Peralta and Inciarte – "and that's what options are for."

Beyond Trumbo, the club has other potential trade chips, the most prominent being Miguel Montero, whose availability likely centers around another important factor: budgetary considerations.

Hall said the team's payroll is currently north of $100 million. And while he said the club is "comfortable" in that range, he doesn't expect to end up there.

"I think we still want to be more flexible than we are right now," he said. "In my opinion, I think we're a little higher than we need to be or should be right now."

Where would he like for the club to be?

"We've never put a number on it, but I'd say $90-$95 million probably makes sense," he said.

Dealing Montero might be the best way for the club to drop into that range. He's owed $40 million over the next three years, and he has drawn interest on the trade market from a variety of clubs, including the Chicago Cubs, Los Angeles Dodgers and Chicago White Sox.

"You guys have seen how I worked," Stewart said. "If I was motivated to move him, he'd probably been gone by now. Right now, I'm not motivated to do anything."

The club could also look to shed payroll by dealing relievers Brad Ziegler ($5 million) or Addison Reed (projected at $3.8 million in arbitration, per mlbtraderumors.com) or Trumbo (projected at $5.7 million). Another option could be to move left-hander Wade Miley (projected at $4.3 million). His name has popped up in trade rumors in connection to the Miami Marlins.

They're going to eat him alive in New York.

After it was announced the Diamondbacks had acquired left-hander Robbie Ray and infielder Domingo Leyba from the Tigers for Gregorius, who was then immediately flipped to the Yanks for starting pitcher Shane Greene, this was a scout's take on Gregorius in a text message to the New York Daily News:

"He's OK. So lid defender, bat is light swing. Good athlete. Nervous type, not sure he can handle NY."

"He lets too many things get to him," an ex-teammate said. "Didi, sometimes he just thinks too much, you know?"

"He always seems to have a lot on his mind," former manager Kirk Gibson liked to say.

Flash forward to today and Gregorius is now off to the Yankees with the unenviable task of having to replace the legendary Jeter at shortstop.

Enjoy it while it lasts, kid, because it isn't going to last long.

There's a reason why two teams have already given up on Gregorius before he turns 25. He can't hit. That's why he couldn't even crack the starting lineup on the worst team in baseball this past season.

Think about that for a minute.

And the Diamondbacks were so desperate and disoriented, they tried everybody. It wasn't until they dropped to 23-36 in early June that they finally brought Gregorius back up from the minors and, really, that was only because injuries had started to gut their middle infield depth.

There is no denying Gregorius is great with his glove. He's an above-average defender with fantastic range for a shortstop. No doubt, we'll be watching several web gems from him in pinstripes.

But how long will a team like the Yankees keep trotting out a light-swinging infielder who has a career .243 batting average and only hits .184 against left-handers?

That's not going to sell in the Bronx.

And it could get even worse. Gregorius is a pleasant and polite young man, but he's also quiet, introverted and has shown he can be a little mentally fragile when things aren't going his way.

"He's OK. Solid defender, bat is light – long swing. Good athlete. Nervous type, not sure he can handle NY."

Well, there's a ringing endorsement, isn't it?

Add that up with the immense pressure of trying to fill the shoes of Jeter and this could get real ugly real fast.

"It's not something I'm going to worry about or can worry about," Yankees General Manager Brian Cashman told reporters. "No one can replace Derek Jeter. He was one in a billion. He's not replacing Derek Jeter. He's going to come in and compete and hold down that position and try to provide excellent defense in the back of the lineup."
Maybe the left handed-hitting Gregorius will find some early success by taking advantage of Yankee Stadium's short porch in right field. A good start could shake off the Jeter jitters and allow him to find some confidence with his third team in four years.

But that's probably wishful thinking.

If Gregorius is batting around .220 in May, Yankees fans and the New York tabloids alike will be screaming at Cashman for not trading for Troy Tulowitzki or Elvis Andrus or making a run at free-agent Hanley Ramirez before he bolted to the rival Red Sox.

After all, that's how the Yankees usually do things, isn't it? They throw big money at big names. Certainly, you'd think they'd follow the same playbook when it came to replacing the legendary Jeter of all people.

"There's more in the tank there as he continues to develop," Cashman promised. "He's an exciting talent, but obviously he's not a finished product. If he can close the gap to where he potentially can be, we could have a heck of a player on our hands."

But what if he's wrong? What if the Jeter jitters never leave? What if the Yankees realize what the Reds and the Diamondbacks before them have already figured out – that Gregorius is a one-dimensional player who is a liability at the plate? What will they do then?

Could it get any worse?

It could, actually.

Remember, they still have Alex Rodriguez on the payroll.

Arizona Diamondbacks trade Didi Gregorius
By Nick Piecoro / The Arizona Republic
http://www.azcentral.com/story/sports/mlb/diamondbacks/2014/12/05/arizona-diamondbacks-didi-gregorius-trade/19949321/

In dealing away Didi Gregorius and acquiring Robbie Ray, the Diamondbacks on Friday used their depth at shortstop to land a left-hander they believe will develop into a high-impact starting pitcher.

In what amounted to a three-team deal, the Diamondbacks sent Gregorius to the Detroit Tigers for Ray and infield prospect Domingo Leyba. Gregorius was immediately redirected to the New York Yankees, who sent right-hander Shane Greene to the Tigers.

Ray has a good fastball — he was clocked up to 97 mph in the Arizona Fall League — and a durable build, and the Diamondbacks, who have made starting pitching their focus this off-season, have little doubts about his upside.

"This guy projected to be a middle-of-the-rotation to top-of-the-rotation guy," Diamondbacks General Manager Dave Stewart said. "That's why we did the deal."

They also did it because they had middle infield depth to spare. Even without Gregorius, the Diamondbacks have options, with Chris Owings and Nick Ahmed the top candidates at short. If Owings isn't the shortstop, he's almost certain to be the second baseman. The club also has veterans Aaron Hill and Cliff Pennington in the mix.

Another intriguing wrinkle to the club's infield situation is Cuban slugger Yasmynary Tomas, whom Diamondbacks manager Chip Hale said would get a chance to compete for the third-base job in spring training. Rookie Jake Lamb figures to be a part of the competition as well.

Ray, 23, is coming off an inconsistent season in the Tigers organization. After being traded from the Washington Nationals to the Tigers last off-season as the centerpiece of the Doug Fister trade, Ray struggled in the majors and posted so-so numbers in the minors in 2014.

In 100 1/3 innings with Triple-A Toledo, he had a 4.22 ERA and saw his strikeout rate dip from previous years. In nine appearances (six starts) in the big leagues, he gave up 26 earned runs in 28 2/3 innings (8.16 ERA).

Despite the results, Stewart said Diamondbacks scouts were high on Ray, evaluating him highly during the regular season and in the fall league, in which he posted a 2.45 ERA in 11 innings.

Opposing scouts are, at best, split on the quality of his secondary pitches — none give high marks for his breaking ball, although some rate the change-up as an averaging offering — and are critical of his strike-throwing ability, evidenced by his career walk rate of 4.0 per nine innings. Some in the industry believe Ray is best suited for a bullpen role.

Leyba, 19, split time between short-season ball and Low-A this season, hitting a combined .323 with a .360 on-base percentage. Scouts like his upside, saying he's an athletic player with good bat speed. They believe he has a chance to be a .300 hitter in the majors, although they think he might be limited to second base.

Stewart said emphatically he believed Leyba has the ability to play shortstop in the major leagues and disputed the notion he was a bat-first type player.

"He's an all-around good offensive and defensive player," Stewart said.

Gregorius came to the Diamondbacks two off-seasons ago in a three-team deal that sent right-hander Trevor Bauer to the Cleveland Indians. Known for his flashy defense and strong arm, he also showed glimpses of being an above-average hitter. However, he was prone to long slumps during each of his two seasons with the Diamondbacks.

"What took place is that since the off-season, Didi has been one of the most talked-about players (in trade) for us," Stewart said. "Looking at the possibilities for things we could do, it really came down to eventually, 'How can we fill a need?'".

Diamondbacks hire Nationals scout Deric Ladnier as scouting director
By Nick Piecoro / The Arizona Republic
PHOENIX -- The Diamondbacks have only begun their remake. Three trades in three weeks, it seems, is just scratching the surface.

The D-backs continue to work on several fronts as the winter meetings approach on Monday.

-- General Manager Dave Stewart on Friday said he remains in the market for a left-handed bat to fit in a right-handed-heavy lineup; outfielder Mark Trumbo is an untouchable piece; and free agent Yasmany Tomas will be given a look at third base in spring training.

-- President/CEO Derrick Hall said the D-backs are looking to trim payroll in part after the six-year, $68.5 million agreement with Tomas, whose deal is expected to be finalized any day. The D-backs have about $102 million committed to salary in 2015, including expected arbitration figures to their six eligible players, and Hall said he would like to get that figure in the $90 million-$95 million range. They spent about $110 million last year.

"Most teams look to find ways to create flexibility so they can make other moves," Hall said. "We are definitely going to do that, because we have a desire to make more moves."

After finalizing the acquisition of Robbie Ray and infield prospect Domingo Leyba for Didi Gregorius on Friday, Stewart said adding offense is his next target.

"A middle of the order, left-handed bat," Stewart said. "A fourth-spot hitter, someone to sandwich in between Trumbo and Goldy (Paul Goldschmidt). We need a guy who can play every day. The next thing is to identify who is available and make sure it doesn't cost too much to get him."

If Tomas can play third base, the D-backs most likely will target an outfielder, even though they already are deep there with Trumbo, A.J. Pollock, Ender Inciarte, David Peralta and Cody Ross. Calls about Trumbo are met with deaf ears.

"Some teams have called lately asking if we'd be interested in moving him and the answer remains the same. No. We have no interest in moving Trumbo," Stewart said.

The easiest way to trim salary, of course, would be to move a player with an expensive salary, and the D-backs have several -- Miguel Montero (owed $40 million through 2017), Aaron Hill (owed $24 million through 2016), Trevor Cahill ($15 million this season) and Ross ($8.5 million this season. The D-backs could end up paying some of a traded player's salary to make any deal work.

While two-time All-Star Montero would command the most in return, Stewart said nothing is hot there.

"Believe me, if I was motivated to move him, he would probably be gone by now," Stewart said. "Right now, I'm not motivated to do anything. Our ownership hasn't told us that we have to move him. For today, as far as I can tell you, he's going to be part of this team."

Cincinnati expressed interest in outfielder David Peralta, according to reports, but Stewart said the D-backs like the protection players such as Peralta and Inciarte provide and is not inclined to move any of his outfielders.

While Friday's trade unblocked the middle infield, a shift of Tomas would add another glove at third to go with Jake Lamb and Aaron Hill. Lamb spent the final two months of the season with the D-backs, and Hill was used at third in the final month. Like outfielders Peralta and Inciarte, Lamb has minor league options remaining, and if Tomas works out at third base, Lamb might be better served to start the season in the minors.

"In my opinion, and I'm an old-school guy, it never hurts a kid to go back to the minor leagues and learn to play the game a little bit better," Stewart said. "But once again, it is a competition. There is nothing that is a given here. Guys come out and you compete, and in the end if he is the best guy for the job he's going to have it."

The Tomas agreement is in the hands of Tomas' agent, Stewart said, and the sides are working through the process.
"Really, a lot of it just has to do with how we can get this thing done with the agent," said Stewart, a former agent himself. "Based on my experience with the kid, I think he is ready to come and play. It's just getting through the hurdles with his representation."

Stewart saw Tomas play in games in the Dominican Republic, and like many scouts was taken by his power.

"He showed unbelievable power," Stewart said. "Short swing; athletic. I think he is going to fit well."

At the same time, Tomas could start in the minors, as Yasiel Puig did with the Dodgers in 2012, depending on how things go in spring training.

"We're not opposed to sending him back, basically to get him acclimated to playing here and playing in our system," Stewart said. "We're going to let his spring training talk."

Tomas, 6-foot-1 and 252 pounds, has reshaped his body some recently, Stewart said. Tomas ran a 6.6-second 60-yard dash for Stewart in the Dominican Republic two weeks ago, well above average for a power hitter.

"I think once he gets on the field and starts playing on a regular basis ... and you have to remember, he has not really played baseball for awhile," Stewart said. "Once he does that, his body will start to improve even a little bit more."

D-backs name Deric Ladnier scouting director
By FOX Sports Arizona

PHOENIX -- The Arizona Diamondbacks on Friday announced Deric Ladnier as scouting director.

Ladnier will report to D-backs Senior Vice President, Baseball Operations De Jon Watson. The two once were teammates in the minor leagues.

Ladnier, 50, replaces Ray Montgomery, who earlier this offseason left the team to join the Milwaukee Brewers front office.

"He has tremendous history," Watson said of Ladnier. "The players we just recently saw in the World Series with the Royals. I think he is going to be really good fit. Experience does help. He's picked No. 1 before. He's picked in the top five quite a few times. I think it helps to understand the pressures that go along with making such a big decision for us organizationally.

"We have one shot at getting the right guy, so we want to make sure we are getting the right guy. The draft is always big. The biggest key for us is bringing the right guy in, with the right mindset, to help us build from the inside out."

Ladnier in 2015 enters his 25th season in scouting and player development. He spent time with the Washington Nationals (2008-14), Kansas City Royals (2000-08) and Atlanta Braves (1991-00).

During his eight-year tenure with the Royals as senior director of scouting, notable draft selections included 2009 AL Cy Young Award winner and Zack Greinke as well as a handful of members of the Royals 2014 World Series team, including Alex Gordon, Eric Hosmer, Greg Holland, Billy Butler, Mike Moustakas, Danny Duffy and Jarrod Dyson.

"He's always been driven by high-end athletes," said Watson, who played with Ladnier on the 1985 ugene Emeralds. "They've all been very athletic with baseball feel. Not just hoping and dreaming and wishing. There is some now talent for the guys he has selected."

Ladnier elevated through the Braves ranks during his 10 seasons in Atlanta, during which the organization was recognized as having a Top-6 minor league system by Baseball America. Among the notable draftees were Rafael Furcal, Jason Schmidt, Jermaine Dye, Kevin Millwood, Jason Marquis, Mark DeRosa, John Rocker, Freddy Sanchez, Marcus Giles and Bruce Chen.

Ladnier began his scouting career as an area supervisor with the Braves in 1991, was promoted to director of minor league operations then regional supervisor and finally assistant director of scouting and player development.

Ladnier was the Royals eighth-round pick in the 1985 draft out of Mississippi.

Derrick Hall honored by USC
By FOX Sports Arizona

The USC Institute of Urology honored D-backs President and CEO Derrick Hall for his fight against prostate cancer and his commitment to spreading awareness about the disease. Hall accepted the award in Beverly Hills after a star-studded red carpet event.

D-backs acquire P Robbie Ray, send SS Didi Gregorius to Yankees
By Jack Magruder / FOX Sports Arizona

PHOENIX -- The Diamondbacks, New York Yankees and Detroit completed another three-team deal Friday, this one on a lesser scale than the one that involved Max Scherzer, Ian Kennedy and Curtis Granderson almost exactly five years ago.

The D-backs acquired left-hander Robbie Ray and minor-league infielder Domingo Leyba from Detroit while sending shortstop Didi Gregorius to the Yankees. The Tigers are to receive right-hander Shane Greene from New York.

The D-backs' deal accomplished two things -- it enabled them to clear space in the middle infield while adding another young, controllable arm to contend for a spot in the starting rotation, a point of emphasis with general manager Dave Stewart in his first year.
"We also have to build on our future," Stewart said. "This guy (Ray) projected to be a middle-of-the-rotation, top-of-the-rotation guy. Some believe he is capable of challenging for a spot in the immediate future, but we're not going to push him."

It is the third major move in Stewart's first 10 weeks on the job, and it is not likely to be the last as the enter the winter meetings with an eye on a left-handed hitting outfielder and more pitching, Stewart and president/CEO Derrick Hall said Friday.

Stewart acquired right-hander Jeremy Hellickson for two prospects three weeks ago and signed Cuban outfielder Yasiel Puig last week, although the deal has not been announced as the sides work through final details. Stewart also has made his interest known in free agent right-hander (and former client) Chad Billingsley, but Billingsley's new agent has said Billingsley is in no hurry to sign and will test the market.

Tomas will be given a first look at third base in spring training, Stewart and manager Chip Hale said Friday, which would seem a better fit since the D-backs are five-deep in outfielders. Most scouts consider Tomas an outfielder first.

"We want to keep our options open. We know he has played some third base in the past," Stewart said.

Gregorius ended the 2014 season as the starting shortstop, with range and a throwing arm that are considered well above average, but the trade opens more options involving Owings, Aaron Hill, Nick Ahmed and Cliff Pennington. Owings spent the last month of 2014 at second base and could remain there with Ahmed starting at shortstop, or Hill could return to second base with Owings at shortstop. Hill spent the last month of 2014 at third base. Stewart said the D-backs will use the spring to evaluate their best combination. Pennington is viewed as the top infield reserve.

"I haven't really been told too much," said Owings, who is recovering from left shoulder surgery. "Short or second, whatever it is, I'm ready to go. I had a lot of fun over there (second) in September."

Gregorius, 24, hit .226 with six homers and 27 RBI with the D-backs last season, taking over at shortstop full-time after Owings suffered a shoulder injury in San Diego in late June. Owings hit .261 had 15 doubles, six homers and 26 RBI, and scouts consider him a better offensive player than Gregorius.

Gregorius was the D-backs' principal return in a three-team deal with Cleveland and Cincinnati two winters ago, when right-hander Trevor Bauer was sent to Cleveland. At the time, then-general manager Kevin Towers compared Gregorius to Derek Jeter, a statement that is making the rounds on the internet day given that Gregorius now replaces the retired Jeter as the Yankees' shortstop. Towers was referring to Gregorius' athleticism, body type and defensive acumen, more than his complete game.

Ray, 22, made nine appearances with the Tigers last season and was 1-4 with an 8.16 ERA. He won his first start and threw six scoreless innings in his second start, but his ERA ballooned after a pair of starts in which he gave up seven and six runs. His fastball is in the low-90 mph range, according to FanGraphs, and he also features a changeup. Ray was Washington's 12th-round draft choice out of high school in 2010 and was obtained by the Tigers along with left-hander Ian Krol in exchange for right-hander Doug Fister before the 2014 season.

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Wade Miley, Hellickson, Josh Collmenter and Chase Anderson appear to be the first four in the D-backs' rotation, with Ray joining Trevor Cahill, Vidal Nuno and perhaps Randall Delgado as early candidate for the other spot as Patrick Corbin and Bronson Arroyo recover from Tommy John surgery. Corbin is expected to return in May or June, Arroyo in late July.

Leyba, 19, hit .323 with two homers and 23 RBIs while splitting time between second base and shortstop in 67 Class A games last season, half of which were in the Midwest League, where the D-backs also have an affiliate.

Report: Arizona Diamondbacks looked to trade Miguel Montero to Dodgers
By ArizonaSports.com


A FoxSports.com report says the Arizona Diamondbacks shopped longtime catcher Miguel Montero to the Los Angeles Dodgers, but negotiations ultimately fell apart.

According to the report, the D-backs were seeking outfielder Andre Ethier in exchange for Montero, who is owed $40 million over the next three years.

A revival of the discussions is unlikely, sources said. Montero is said to be a favorite of owner Ken Kendrick. The D-backs also might not want to deal within the NL West or with their former general manager, Josh Byrnes, who is now the Dodgers senior vice president of baseball operations.
Montero hit .243 with 13 home runs and 72 RBI in 136 games for the D-backs last season. He has spent his entire Major League Baseball career in Arizona after being signed as an undrafted free agent in 2001. Montero is a career .264 hitter and was an All-Star selection in 2011 and 2014.

Ethier, who played baseball at Arizona State from 2001-03, is a career .285 hitter. He hit .249 with four home runs and 42 RBI in 130 games for the Dodgers in 2014. Ethier, an All-Star selection in 2010 and 2011, is owed $33.5 million over the next three years.

Didi Gregorius with the D-backs: By the Numbers
By Josh Martinez / ArizonaSports.com

Didi Gregorius is off to the north, after the Arizona Diamondbacks traded the shortstop on Friday to the New York Yankees for pitcher Robbie Ray.

The trade may disappoint some, only getting two seasons from Gregorius after the Diamondbacks paid a hefty price, largely in the form of up-and-coming pitcher Trevor Bauer, for the defensive-minded infielder in Dec. 2012.

The expectations were evident from early on in Gregorius' time with Arizona, as a great defender that needed to work on hitting the ball, and for the most part, this is what Gregorius did for the Diamondbacks.

With Gregorius ready to suit up in pinstripes, here's a look at some of the numbers from his two years with the Diamondbacks:

8

Sitting pretty with a minor league system that already boasted shortstop prospect Zack Cozart, the Cincinnati Reds were willing to depart with Gregorius, the organization's eighth-ranked prospect in 2010, according to Baseball America. This ranking also served as evidence for why Arizona would offer up such a hefty price for a promising defensive-gem in their middle infield.

.983

With expectations as a vacuum in the middle of the infield, Gregorius may not have been all-star worthy, but without a doubt improved the defense when he was in the lineup. Gregorius had a .983 fielding percentage at shortstop in 2014, a drastic improvement over the team's percentage of .971 at the position from throughout the season.

4.45

Playing at such a high-profile defensive position, shortstops are expected to simply get outs. A lot of them. Gregorius did not disappoint in this regard, getting 4.45 putouts and assists per nine innings that he played in 2014, putting him well above the league average of 4.3 and leaving him in the same company as All-Star Alexei Ramirez and above Gold Glove winner Andrelton Simmons.

.290

For all the Dutch shortstop did in the field, he just couldn't consistently get it together at the plate. The 24-year-old finished last season with a .290 on-base-percentage, a dropoff from his already below-average .332 that he posted in 2013.

91.5

Kevin Towers left no mystery when acquiring Gregorius, this was supposed to be the everyday shortstop in the desert, but this goal was never fully realized in the player's two years in Arizona. Gregorius averaged 91.5 games played over the two seasons, missing significant time due to injuries in 2013 and a lost battle for the starting spot to Chris Owings in 2014.

.387, .310

The difference between hitting in the minor leagues versus the majors is significant, but often times a good eye and ability to get hits translates in some way from one league to the next. Unfortunately, this was not the case for Gregorius, who had impressive batting averages of .387 and .310 with the Reno Aces in 2013 and 2014, only to drop to .252 and .226 when called up later in both seasons.

-6.9, 3.4

FRAA is a Baseball Prospectus statistic measuring the plays made versus the expected average by someone at a position, figuring in other variables to give a realistic depiction of the typical performance from a player. Despite the complexity of the statistic, it serves great notice of Gregorius' growth on defense, racking up a -6.9 FRAA in 2013, the expectation for a poor defender, versus a 3.4 in 2014, the average for a good defender.

Diamondbacks could be under radar screen at Winter Meetings
By Mark Brown / Examiner.com

SAN DIEGO — When Diamondbacks’ team president Derrick Hall told reporters last Friday he expects this team to be active, he also cautioned not to expect significant activity.

That’s a reference to baseball’s Winter Meetings, which commence Monday at the Manchester Grand Hyatt here. While the center piece of this gathering could be the destination of free agent and former Diamondbacks’ pitcher Max Scherzer, the prospect for Arizona to make significant moves do not appear apparent.

In finalizing two, significant trades so far in this off-season, the Diamondbacks’ shopping list, nonetheless, continues to grow. Right now, there remain two priorities but Arizona officials caution the team will not make moves for the cosmetic reasons.

While starting pitching continues as a priority, the Diamondbacks are also in the market for a left-hand bat in the middle of the lineup.

“The meetings are a kind of end of a process,” said Tony La Russa, the Diamondbacks’ Chief Baseball Officer. “We’ve talked for a while and now it’s face-to-face. In a sense, it’s positive as guys are held hostage for four days. It means that everyone is together in one place and a great opportunity continue a dialogue.”
Already, the Diamondbacks have acquired right-hander Jeremy Hellickson in a deal with the Rays and last Friday, they added left-handed power pitcher Robbie Ray in a three-team trade with the Tigers and Yankees.

When general manager Dave Stewart affirmed the rotation, here in early December, he indicated this would be Josh Collmenter, Wade Miley, Hellickson and Ray. Still, the Diamondbacks would be satisfied to add another experienced arm.

If not, those in the mix for a starting spot could be Vidal Nuno, Chase Anderson, Randall Delgado, Andrew Chafin and prospect Archie Bradley. Then again, Stewart could pull the trigger but not necessarily this week in San Diego.

“We’re always looking to improve,” he said. “One of our goals to continue to evaluate our team without deflating the team. As far as pitching is concerned, we’re trying to build depth.”

Another player on the Diamondbacks’ radar screen could be a catcher.

It’s no secret the team would like to separate itself from the $12 million contract owed Miguel Montero for 2015.

With a vibrant, animated personality, Montero brings a high energy and a particular skill level. A dependable left-handed bat, the Diamondbacks would like more power from a left-handed bat and that means Montero, and his large contract, and Jake Lamb, whose power at the minor league has yet to be duplicated at the major league level, are not the answers.

While former manager Kirk Gibson said Tuffy Gosewisch, Montero’s back-up last season, was adequate, his numbers do not translate into elevation as a starter. For 2014, Gosewisch, who played college baseball at Arizona State, hit .225 (29-for-129) in 41 games.

For the record, Montero is under contract for $12 million next season and $14 million each for the each of the 2016 and 2017 seasons.

While the Diamondbacks have been as active as most teams so far in this off-season, Hall pointed out, “we have the desire to make more moves.”

Diamondbacks add power pitcher Ray: Deal Gregorius
By Mark Brown / Examiner.com
http://www.examiner.com/article/diamondbacks-add-power-pitcher-ray-deal-gregorius

If the Diamondbacks are looking to improve for the season ahead, they hit the trifecta on Friday.

Usually, there are three parts to this combination and general manager Dave Stewart touched all three in separate but related matters.

First, there’s the acquisition of power left-handed pitcher Robbie Ray, a 6-2, 195 pound native of Brentwood, Tenn. At 23-years-old, Ray, nearly by osmosis, was injected into the Arizona starting rotation in dire need of help.

Ray comes over from the Detroit Tigers as part of a four-player, three team deal.

During the preliminary stage of talks, the New York Yankees, according to Bob Nightingale of USA Today, offered right-handed pitcher Shane Greene to the Diamondbacks for shortstop Didi Gregorius, straight-up. The Diamondbacks said thanks, but no thanks, and had little interest in Greene. Plus, the Diamondbacks wanted two players for Gregorius and told Brian Cashman, the Yankees’ general manager, that another team would have to be involved.

Enter the Detroit Tigers and the level of negotiations elevated. That’s when the Tigers agreed to trade Ray, plus infielder Domingo Leyba to the Diamondbacks. In the next step, Detroit sent Gregorius to the Yankees for Greene.

Ray arrives in the desert with impressive credentials.

“He’s a power pitcher, throws in the 91 to 96 range, he’s a lefty, he’s young, competitive and we control him for the next six years,” said Stewart Friday afternoon at a Diamondbacks holiday event. “What’s there not to like?”

A 12th round selection by Washington in the 2010 draft, Ray came over to the Tigers last winter as part of the deal which sent right Doug Fister to the Nationals. Ray began last season with Triple-A Toledo (7-6, 4.22 ERA in 19 starts) and with the Tigers in six starts, he compiled a 1-4 record with a 7.16 ERA. At Toledo, he struck out 75 in 100.1 innings and with Detroit, he fanned 19 hitters in 27.2 innings.

“We like Didi but, at the same time, we think we picked up a big, powerful pitcher,” said manager Chip Hale. “In order to get a pitcher like Ray, we had to give up a quality player like Didi but this is another arm and we need another arm.”

By trading Gregorius, the transaction opens several possibilities for Hale.

All of which brings up the second part of the trifecta.

This involves the presence of infielder-outfielder Yasmany Tomas, whom the Diamondbacks signed to a six-year, $68.8 million contract. Both Hale and Stewart confirmed Friday that Tomas will be given every opportunity to win the third base job. That puts third baseman Jack Lamb (.230 in 37 games last season) essentially on the outside looking inside.

“That’s where he will go,” said Stewart in reference to Lamb. “Nothing is a given on this team and the best guy will get the job.”

At shortstop, three candidates immediately emerge.

In the quest to replace Gregorius, Hale could pencil in Nick Ahmed, Chris Owings or Cliff Pennington. At any rate,” Stewart pointed out, “leave it as competitive.”

After missing most of the second half of the season with an injured shoulder, Owings said he’ll be 100 percent at the
commencement of spring training. While he played second base during games last September, Owings, who hit .261 in 91 games last season, said he’s comfortable in either position.

“I’m getting healthy,” Owings said at the holiday event on Friday. “I should start swinging a bat in January and come back stronger. I had fun at second but I know they like me at short. Whatever the situation, I’ll be ready. It’s in their hands.”

Should he beat out Ahmed (.200 in 25 games with Arizona last season) and Pennington at shortstop, Owings would likely team with Aaron Hill at second. At 34-years-old by opening day, a 2014 batting average of .244 in 113 games and owed $24 million over the next two years, Hill will generate little interest from other teams during the up-coming meetings.

If Tomas, now at 6-1, 253 pounds with demonstrative raw power, can answer the bell and contribute from third base, that sets up a creditable infield of Paul Goldschmidt at first, Hill at second, Owings at short and Tomas as “the hot corner.”

If the trade of Gregorius alleviated a traffic jam in the infield, the current outfield represents the third part of the trifecta.

One scenario has the Diamondbacks trading outfielder Mark Trumbo for a second or third pitcher. At this point, that will not happen.

“I have no interest in moving Trumbo,” Stewart said emphatically. “We’ll have to make decisions on some outfield players, but I’m not moving Trumbo.”

For the 2015 season, Trumbo will move to right field and that brings up the status of Ender Inciarte and David Peralta. The Diamondbacks hold options on both players and Stewart indicated, “Iinciarte can probably start on several clubs right now.”

A. J. Pollock, considered a rising star in the National League, will open the season in center field.

Also in the outfield mix is Cody Ross, entering the final year of a three-year, $26 million contract. Missing significant parts of the last two seasons due to dislocated hip sustained on Aug. 11, 2013, Ross, last season, appeared in 83 games, hit .252 and delivered only 10 extra-base hits.

With the Gregorius trade Friday, the announcement Stewart has no desire to part with Trumbo and Tomas, more than likely, will end up at third, the merry-go-round is far from stopping. The music continues next week during the Winter Meetings in San Diego.

“We’ll be busy but I don’t know how active,” said Derrick Hall, the team’s president. “We are after a big, left-handed bat for the middle of the line-up. Yes, he has to be an experienced player. But, we’ll be busy. Not sure how much will accomplish (in San Diego).”

NEW SCOUTING DIRECTOR ON BOARD

On Friday, the Diamondbacks announced they hired Deric Ladnier as the team’s new Director of Scouting.

Ladnier, at 50-years-old, replaces Ray Montgomery, who took a similar post with the Milwaukee Brewers. Entering his 25th season in scouting and player development, Ladnier spent time with the Washington Nationals (2008-14), Kansas City Royals (2000-08) and Atlanta Braves (1991-2000).

Ladnier’s appointment appears critical and time-sensitive because the Diamondbacks have the number one, overall pick in the 2015 draft.

“Deric made several number one picks and is experienced in the draft room,” said De Jon Watson, the Diamondbacks vice president of baseball operations. “The key is bringing in the right guy with the right mind-set.”

With their only number one, overall pick in franchise history, the Diamondbacks selected outfielder Justin Upton in the 2005 draft.

D-backs announce 2015 spring training schedule
By The Foothills Focus

PHOENIX – The Arizona Diamondbacks have announced their 34-game Spring Training schedule, which features 20 home games, and three road games at the award-winning Salt River Fields at Talking Sticks and two exhibition games at Chase Field.

The D-backs open their 18th Spring Training on March 3 at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick with an exhibition game against Arizona State University as part of an annual Collegiate Series. The D-backs have 14 games against their National League West rivals with five games against the San Francisco Giants and Rockies and a pair of games versus the San Diego Padres and Los Angeles Dodgers. The D-backs will play four evening games at Salt River Fields, including matchups on March 14 vs. Giants, March 19 vs. Chicago Cubs, March 24 vs. Milwaukee Brewers, and an away game against the Rockies on March 18. The D-backs will wrap up Spring Training with a two-game set against the Cubs on April 3 and 4 at Chase Field.

Tickets for all games at Salt River Fields, including the D-backs vs. ASU game, are priced from $9-28. Season-ticket plans for the D-backs’ 18 home games and all 34 Spring Training games at Salt River Fields featuring the D-backs and Rockies, including the D-backs vs. ASU game, will go on sale to the public beginning Dec. 18. Individual game tickets for all 34 games at Salt River Fields will go on sale beginning at 10 a.m. on Jan. 10. Tickets can be purchased in person at the D-backs Ticket Office at Chase Field, at dbacks.com/spring or by calling 1(888) 490-0383 or (480) 362-WINS (9467).

D-Backs announce 30 winning schools in $150,000 School Challenge
By Joe Pequeno / KPHO - CBS 5

PHOENIX (CBS5) - The Arizona Diamondbacks Foundation announced today the 30 winning schools in the “D-backs $150,000 School Challenge,”
presented by University of Phoenix. With more than 400 submissions from Arizona schools, the winning grants come from all around the state of Arizona and will fund projects ranging in need from school improvements to innovative educational programs. Through the School Challenge program, the D-backs have provided more than 100 schools with $5,000 grants for an overall monetary commitment of more than $500,000 since the program launched in 2012.

"The D-backs are excited to once again partner with University of Phoenix to provide Arizona schools with much needed funding through our School Challenge program," said D-backs President& CEO Derrick Hall. "Each year the schools get more and more creative with their requests and it was particularly exciting this year to see how the schools will use the money from innovative educational programs to making necessary school improvements."

Winning schools will use the grant money to satisfy an array of needs, ranging from a STEM drone project to a student reporting lab, a desert pollinator garden to a dual language kid caster program and a band mentorship with special needs students. Each winning school will be honored and receive a check on the field at a 2015 D-backs game next April and May at Chase Field. The D-backs will donate 1,000 tickets for students, parents, teachers and staff to attend the D-backs’ game in which their school will be honored.

"University of Phoenix is dedicated to meeting educational needs in Phoenix and across Arizona, and the projects funded by the School Challenge grants will do just that," said Tim Slottow, president of University of Phoenix. "We are excited to once again team up with the D-backs organization to help Arizona teachers inspire students by providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to become tomorrow’s successful workforce."

Submissions from teachers and faculty came from 11 counties in the state and 47 cities. All public, private and nonprofit charter schools, Grades K-12 were eligible and the winning schools sought to bring in funds to assist in one of four categories: educational programs, innovation and technology, nutrition and fitness and school/campus improvements. The winning schools were:

**24 Under 40**
The most powerful locals under age 40
By Michelle Glicksman / Uptown

(Article attached)

**NATIONAL**

**Gregorius just who Cashman sought to replace Jeter**
Yanks, D-backs, Tigers all acquire young players with potential in trade
By Richard Justice / MLB.com

Didi Gregorius has nice range, good instincts and a big-time arm. At times, he will dazzle. Beyond that, he'll make the plays a starting Major League shortstop is supposed to make, and if you ask a dozen Major League managers what they want from that position, this is it.

That is, don't give outs away, extend innings or unnecessarily run up pitch counts. These are the things that lose games. In this most basic of ways, Yankees general manager Brian Cashman did a nice job finding the apparent guy to replace, uh, Derek Jeter.

Still seems odd typing those words. Guessing it'll be odd for the Yankees, too, not seeing him in the spring clubhouse.

And that's the point of this trade, too.

Cashman knew he wasn't going to get the next Derek Jeter. That player may not exist, and if he does, he's unlikely to be traded. Cashman explored an assortment of trades and examined the free-agent market. In the end, he found no option he liked as much as this one.

So on Friday afternoon, the Yankees, Tigers and D-backs pulled off an interesting swap, one in which three solid baseball men made a deal filled with unknowns.

Perhaps the team that knows the most about what it's getting is Detroit. In acquiring right-hander Shane Greene from the Yankees, Tigers president, CEO and general manager Dave Dombrowski is getting a guy who is 26 years old and coming off a season in which he had some nice stretches in a pennant race.

Greene throws hard, in the 92-94 mph range with a workable slider, and when the Yankees began going through pitchers last summer, he stepped up and took advantage of his opportunity (5-4 with a 3.78 ERA in 15 outings).

Greene seems likely to be slotted nicely into the fifth spot in a veteran Detroit rotation, with the chance to learn from those guys and from pitching coach Jeff Jones. Seeing how Greene has made just those 15 big league appearances (14 starts), there's plenty of unknowns about him, too.

But the track record so far is good, and with that big arm, Greene the has the potential for so much more. The Tigers will have him under control for six seasons, so this deal could be the prelude to something more.

With David Price and Rick Porcello a year from free agency, Dombrowski could attempt to trade one of them to add more youth. On the other hand, the Tigers are good enough to win the World Series without Dombrowski doing another thing.

The D-backs are excited about their end of the trade as well. In acquiring 23-year-old left-hander Robbie Ray and 19-year-old shortstop Domingo Leyba, new D-backs general manager Dave Stewart continues to stockpile pitching. With the earlier acquisition of Jeremy Hellickson from the Rays, Stewart seems to be following a basic roadmap to getting the D-backs back into contention as quickly as possible.

All that said, Gregorius will be the focus of this deal, because of the player he seems likely to replace and the market he's
entering. If you're wondering about the pressure he'll feel in replacing one of the all-time greats, that's legitimate.

But know this: No manager in baseball does a better job of creating a sense of normalcy around his team than New York's Joe Girardi. In addition, Cashman has made a string of acquisitions -- Jacoby Ellsbury, Brian McCann, Carlos Beltran and Mark Teixeira among them -- who fit the Jeter profile in terms of makeup and professionalism.

So, yes, Gregorius will come to understand the larger significance of playing shortstop for the New York Yankees. But he'll be in a clubhouse that seems unbothered by distractions and is able to focus on what's important.

Gregorius will help himself by playing well defensively and also by hitting some. That's the unknown part of this deal. He's had only 724 plate appearances in the big leagues, which is about a season and a half. In that time, he has been fairly productive against right-handed pitching, hitting .262 with a .332 OBP. However, against left-handed pitching, he has looked overmatched at times, hitting just .184. Likewise, he struggled against lefties at times in the Minor Leagues.

But in a lot of ways, Gregorius' career is just beginning. He'll be 25 years old on Opening Day and could have his name written in the lineup regularly, giving him the chance to figure it all out.

And there's that defense at short. Let's say the Yankees also re-sign Chase Headley to play third. Suddenly, the left side of their infield will be one of the better ones in baseball.

This trade gives fans from three teams plenty to chew on, which makes it the best kind. Seeing how young players don't come with guarantees, it's the kind of deal we'll look at again year after year.

**Justice: Yanks heat up on Hot Stove scene**
Cashman adds Gregorius, Miller while keeping eye on starting pitching
By Richard Justice / MLB.com

For the Yankees, it was a good day. General manager Brian Cashman was clear about it not being more than that.

"I'm still in acquisition mode," he said.

On Friday, the Yankees upgraded two spots by signing free-agent lefty reliever Andrew Miller and trading for shortstop Didi Gregorius.

What those two deals mean won't be clear for at least a while. Despite getting Miller, Cashman left open the possibility of re-signing closer David Robertson.

Can you imagine a bullpen with Dellin Betances, Miller and Robertson lined up at the end of games? With Adam Warren possibly back in relief and with newly acquired lefty Justin Wilson and others, the Yankees could have a monstrous relief corps.

The Yanks have been decent in a lot of different ways the last couple of years, but they haven't really been dominant in a single area.

Some of that is a byproduct of age and injuries. Some of it is the natural evolution of a roster.

Anyway, Cashman downplayed Miller and Gregorius as simply another couple of steps toward Opening Day. While the Red Sox and Blue Jays have made a flurry of moves, the Yankees had been relatively quiet until Friday.

"We've been trying to get stuff done all winter," Cashman said. "At least today, we were able to push through two things."

Cashman still has starting pitching on his shopping list. He might add an infielder as well, either to play second or third. Or Martin Prado might shift from second to third and allow a pair of kids, Jose Pirela and Rob Refsnyder, to compete for the second-base job.

But Friday was important for a couple of reasons. First, the Yankees can go play with the roster they have right now. No matter how much more Cashman does in the offseason, the Yankees probably need healthy, productive seasons from Carlos Beltran, Mark Teixeira and others to be competitive. This is an unknown quantity that may not be answered until July and August as they push through the grind of a long season. Until Friday, the holes at shortstop and the back of the bullpen were glaring. No more.

There's a larger storyline here, too. In the last year, the Yankees have changed seven of their nine lineup spots. Only Teixeira and left fielder Brett Gardner remain from the 2013 season.

Since then, Cashman has reshaped his club through a series of trades and free-agent signings that brought Jacoby Ellsbury, Brian McCann, Beltran, Prado, Chris Young and Gregorius to the Bronx.

Cashman also acquired third baseman Chase Headley last summer, but has so far not re-signed him. He also has Alex Rodriguez back from suspension, but Cashman said he has no idea what A-Rod's capable of.

With Derek Jeter having joined Mariano Rivera, Jorge Posada, Andy Pettitte and others in retirement, the Yankees will have a different look and feel. As long as Jeter was around, there was still a connection to those teams that went to the postseason 17 times in 18 seasons and won five World Series championships.

Now having missed the playoffs two years in a row, the Yankees are beginning a new era. Until Friday, they didn't know who would replace Jeter at shortstop. Now they do. Sort of.

Gregorius was acquired in a three-team trade, with right-hander Shane Greene going to the Tigers and pitcher Robbie Ray and shortstop Domingo Leyba joining the D-backs.
Gregorius, a career .184 hitter against left-handed pitching, might share the position with Brendan Ryan for a while. Given that Gregorius is only 25 and that he's a premier defensive player already, and that the Yankees gave up young starter Greene to get him, Cashman hopes he'll eventually be the everyday guy.

"He's an exciting talent," Cashman said. "He's an unfinished product."

He's also Jeter's replacement.

"Derek Jeter," he said. "He's a one-in-a-billion."

Gregorius has nice range and good instincts and a big-time arm. At times, he will dazzle. Beyond that, he will make the plays a starting Major League shortstop is supposed to make, and if you ask a dozen Major League managers what they want from that position, this is it.

That is, don't give outs away, extend innings or unnecessarily run up pitch counts. These are the things that lose games.

As for Robertson, his decision may come down to whether he wants to wear the pinstripes again, perhaps for a little less money than he could get to be part of a rebuilding process in Houston.

As for starting pitching, Cashman seems content to wade through the market since there are plenty of attractive options still out there.

Are the Yankees good enough to contend with what they have right now? Possibly.

But ...

"I will gravitate toward whatever presents itself as the most realistic option," Cashman said.

Ray, Leyba headed to D-backs in trade

Tigers' No. 2 prospect had joined club in Fister trade a year ago

By Sam Dykstra / MiLB.com

Ray has a four-pitch mix with a fastball that received a 60 grade from MLB.com -- it usually sits in the low-90s -- and relies more on his changeup as his preferred secondary offering with a slider and curveball in his arsenal as well. He'll likely start the 2014 season with Triple-A Reno, which will already be stocked with young arms like top Arizona prospect Archie Bradley and fellow southpaw Andrew Chafin.

Because of Ray's downward trajectory, one might consider Leyba the better part of the haul from Arizona's point of view.

The 19-year-old infielder was signed for $400,000 out of the Dominican Republic back in 2012 and has been impressive at the plate since. In 2014, the young switch hitter put up a .323/.360/.423 line with two homers, a triple, 18 doubles and 24 RBIs in 67 games between Class A Short Season Connecticut and Class A West Michigan. He has mostly played second base in the Minors but has gotten time at shortstop as well.

"I can do a little bit of everything," Leyba told MiLB.com back in July when he was still in the New York-Penn League. "I play defense, I hit line drives. The pitching is better here, I'm seeing more breaking balls, but everything is the same and the swing is normal."

Right now, Leyba is seen as having the ceiling of an average second baseman, but given his advanced approach for his age, he could change that perception with another strong 2015, beginning at Class A Kane County or Class A Advanced Visalia. Leyba, along with Willy Adames, were the Tigers' top two international signings of 2012, and both have since been traded. Adames was part of the package that brought David Price to Detroit in July.

On the Major League side of things, Gregorius' move to the Bronx will grab the majority of the headlines. The 24-year-old shortstop will slide into the space formerly occupied by future Hall of Famer Derek Jeter but should be considered a replacement in name only. Gregorius put together a solid rookie season in Arizona back in 2013 (.252/.332/.373, 1.4 fWAR) but took a step back offensively (.226/.290/.363, 0.3 fWAR) last summer. His calling card remains his defense, however, and given that he's not eligible for arbitration until 2016 and can't be a free agent until 2020, he could a cheap and dependable average shortstop for the Yankees going forward, if the offense corrects itself.

Greene, the other Major Leaguer involved in Monday's trade, will move to the back end of the Tigers' rotation after a breakout
season with New York. In 78 2/3 innings, the 26-year-old right-hander owned a 3.78 ERA and 1.40 WHIP with a 9.3 K/9 and 3.3 BB/9 as a rookie. Despite being at the game's highest level, his strikeout rate in the Majors was, in fact, his highest with one team since a four-game stretch in Class A in 2010.

Yanks acquire SS Didi Gregorius
By Andrew Marchand / ESPNNewYork.com

For the all-time trivia question of who was the man to replace Derek Jeter as the New York Yankees' shortstop, the answer may very well be 24-year-old Didi Gregorius.

The Yankees on Friday announced that they have acquired Gregorius from the Diamondbacks in a three-team trade that also involves the Tigers. Right-handed pitcher Shane Greene was traded from the Yankees to Detroit, while Arizona received left-hander Robbie Ray and minor league infielder Domingo Leyba from the Tigers.

Gregorius hit .226 with six homers and 27 RBIs in 80 games with the Diamondbacks in 2014. Greene was 5-4 with a 3.78 ERA as a rookie last season.

Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said the left-handed-hitting Gregorius and the right-handed Brendan Ryan could initially platoon.

"He's a hitter who struggles against left-handed pitching," Cashman said of Gregorius. "We believe he hits right-handed pitching and so, at the very least, we expect him to be utilized in probably a split platoon with Brendan Ryan until he separates himself. The high-end projections are we think there is more in the tank as he develops."

Cashman said he doesn't look at it as Gregorius replacing Jeter.

"He was one in a billion, in terms of Derek Jeter," Cashman said. "He is not replacing Derek. He is just now going to come in here and compete to hold down that position at shortstop."

Gregorius, who is from the Netherlands, is known as a good defender, but there are questions if he will be able to hit consistently enough in the big leagues. In 191 games, he is a .243 career hitter.

Yankees GM Brian Cashman talks about new SS Didi Gregorius, new reliever Andrew Miller and the team’s plan for the rest of the offseason.

Cashman said he has had more trade talks to this point than in other winters and that teams are "definitely willing to take more risks in the trade market than they have in the past."

The Yankees liked Greene’s potential; especially with the uncertainty with many of their starters. Masahiro Tanaka (elbow), CC Sabathia (knee), Ivan Nova (elbow) and Michael Pineda are the Yankees' top four starters right now. Cashman said Tanaka’s rehab is over and he is set to go for spring training, as is Sabathia. Nova, after Tommy John surgery, will not be available until May at the earliest.

The team could re-sign Brandon McCarthy, Hiroki Kuroda or Chris Capuano to fill out the staff. It could also make a run at Max Scherzer.

"This offseason, I feel like we have a lot more areas to address," Cashman said. "That means I am open to a lot more ways to solve the problems and improve the club."

A no-brainer trade for the Yankees
By Keith Law / ESPN.com

The New York Yankees have acquired shortstop Didi Gregorius from the Arizona Diamondbacks in a three-team deal. The Yankees sent pitcher Shane Greene to the Detroit Tigers, while Detroit sent pitcher Robbie Ray and minor league infielder Domingo Leyba to Arizona.

The Yankees get a player who former Diamondbacks GM Kevin Towers once compared -- unfairly -- to Derek Jeter to serve as Jeter's replacement. Gregorius is an excellent defensive shortstop with great actions and plenty of arm, and his glove alone will provide more value to the Yankees in 2015 than they got from Jeter during his final season at the position. Gregorius doesn’t have much upside with the bat, showing little patience and below-average power, although his hand-eye is good enough to make up for some length in his swing from his load to contact. He’s a fringy runner, although you’ll see pitchers throw to first to all the time when he reaches base as if he were the Curacaoan Billy Hamilton. Gregorius is cheap, has five years of control left, and can handle the position defensively, so he’s exactly what the Yankees need at shortstop right now even if he never turns out to be more than an average regular. Giving up a 26-year-old fourth starter to fill that hole is a no-brainer for the Yanks, and spares them from overpaying for a Stephen Drew or having to give up prospect depth to trade for a more famous solution.

The Detroit Tigers end up with that back-end starter, Shane Greene, who turned in a tremendous half-season for the Yankees that bore no resemblance to his minor league performance. Greene has become a sinker/slider guy, using the two-seamer in lieu of a true sinker and generating ground balls with both pitches, throwing harder than he did when he was just a 15th-round pick out of Daytona Beach Community College in 2009. I believe in his ability to keep the ball on the ground more than his ability to miss bats, as he doesn't have a true swing-and-miss offering; in Detroit, he’ll have only one above-average defender behind him in the infield, so his BABIP (.330 last year) may not drop as much as you’d expect, and his strikeout rate is likely to regress. With Max Scherzer likely lost to free agency, the Tigers’ fifth rotation spot was open, and even if Greene posts an ERA in the low 4s and throws 160 innings, he’ll be a huge upgrade over whoever else they might have run out there.

One of those “whatever-else” guys was lefty Robbie Ray, who goes to the Arizona Diamondbacks as part of this trade; Ray was a decent prospect in the Nationals system and was traded to Detroit last winter. He was in no way ready for the majors in 2014, and showed it. He’s just 23 and hasn't really been developed; he has four pitches, none of them particularly
effective (although the fastball sits in the low 90s), with nothing to get right-handed hitters out yet. His delivery is low-effort with a short stride, and lengthening that out might help him get more deception and unlock a little more velocity. The Diamondbacks may push him right into their rotation out of need, but I’d rather see him somewhere -- Triple-A or the major league pen -- where he can work on his delivery and try to find a better weapon against right-handers, because what we saw from him in 2014 won’t work as a big league starter. Arizona has at least three better near-term starting pitching prospects (Archie Bradley, Braden Shipley, and Aaron Blair) already in their system.

The D-backs also get a nice upside play in the deal: in-fielder Domingo Leyba, a 19-year-old switch-hitting second baseman. He appears he has a real chance to hit. His right-handed approach is better, more balanced with a little more power from his load and finish; the left-handed swing is less consistent but is short to the ball and should at least produce contact. He’s a below-average runner and doesn’t have the arm for shortstop, but he projects as an every-day second baseman who can hit for average (with a lot of contact) and doubles power, maybe an above-average regular if the bat clicks. Robbie Ray in addition to this lottery ticket seems like a great return for Gregorius, given the devaluing of Didi over the past season.

The deal implies that two major trades from the past two winters have turned out to be failures for one club involved in each. The Diamondbacks dealt Trevor Bauer -- just 18 months off being the third pick in the draft -- to Cleveland in a three-team deal that was aimed at acquiring Gregorius from Cincinnati. Bauer appears to have turned the corner for Cleveland, posting 1.5 WAR in 2015, while Gregorius lost his job to Chris Owings, whom Arizona already had in its system at the time of the trade.

The Tigers may have now almost fully undone the Doug Fister trade from last offseason, sending off Ray -- supposedly the big get in that trade -- for a starter to replace Fister in the rotation. Lefty reliever Ian Krol is the only remaining piece from last December’s deal, while Fister posted a 2.41 ERA in 164 innings for Washington (with a 3.93 FIP) and still has another year to go.

Gregorius a significant upgrade for NYY
By Buster Olney / ESPN.com
http://insider.espn.go.com/blog/buster-olney/post/_/id/8825

A scout who isn’t employed by the New York Yankees spent some time Friday lauding the defense of Didi Gregorius, especially his range. Gregorius is not an elite player with the glove, the scout said, but he’s certainly above average.

A natural question to the scout followed: What do you think about him offensively?

“He’s a good defender,” the scout replied drolly.

There were similar responses about the 24-year-old Gregorius from other evaluators Friday, after the Yankees traded for the guy who will be the first primary shortstop after Derek Jeter. “Can’t hit,” one executive texted. Said another evaluator: “You can throw the ball by him.”

I couldn’t find anyone with the Yankees claiming that Gregorius -- who has a .680 career OPS in 191 career games -- is a future Silver Slugger winner. But they do think Yankee Stadium suits his left-handed swing, and that he will improve. What nobody is saying is that if Gregorius is merely a strong defender who doesn’t hit much, he would still represent a significant upgrade at this crucial position for the Yankees.

In 2013, the Yankees opened spring training with some hope that Derek Jeter would come back from his fractured ankle and be something close to what he was in 2012, when he led the majors in hits. Instead, Jeter was only a shell of himself and had just 73 plate appearances. Jeter was able to work his way back for his final season in 2014, a year in which he represented the sport well, and was gracious in how he handled his year-long curtain call.

He also was one of the least productive players in the sport, offensively and defensively, which is why Yankees Manager Joe Girardi should’ve gone to him early and informed him of a change in his role. It was a really difficult situation unquestionably, and Girardi blew it by running Jeter out as his shortstop, at the top of his lineup, day after day after day.

When Jeter’s legacy is completed with his Hall of Fame election in five years, nobody will care about how good he was in his last season, just as nobody really cares that Babe Ruth, Mickey Mantle and Hank Aaron were much lesser players in their final season. The exception to the rule is a player departing as Mariano Rivera did in 2013, as one of the best in his sport.

But the Yankees’ shortstops finished last season dead last among 30 teams in Wins Above Replacement at -2.3.

As Gregorius takes over, in a platoon with Brendan Ryan, the production bar is very low, which doesn’t necessarily mean he’ll be embraced by fans, but he’ll help them win more than Jeter did last season.

The Yankees’ pitchers will see a major difference, one evaluator predicted. “They’re going to see balls hit up the middle get gobbled up in a way that Derek hasn’t,” he said.

It stands to reason that Gregorius could help at the plate: He had an OPS of .653 last season, 25th among shortstops with more than 250 plate appearances. Jeter’s OPS was .617, tied for 32nd.

Jeter will go down in history as arguably the second-greatest shortstop of all-time, behind Honus Wagner. But in truth, Gregorius in not replacing that player. If it doesn’t work out, a rival executive predicted, the Yankees will have an obvious alternative next winter in the free-agent market. “They’ll go after Ian Desmond next year,” he said.

• Gregorius matches Jeter in his temperament, writes Tyler Kepner.

• Ken Davidoff gives four reasons why the notion of replacing Derek Jeter is overblown.

Around the league

• A lot of the free-agent deals of three years or more that the Yankees have made to lure relievers from elsewhere haven’t
worked out. John Fisher of ESPN Stats & Info sent this table along, after the Yankees announced the signing of Andrew Miller to a four-year, $36 million deal.

Stanton was a crucial piece during the dynasty, but Karsay, Farnsworth and Marte generally didn’t pay off. (Although Marte played a significant role in the 2009 championship, in how he neutralized left-handed bats, making eight scoreless appearances.)

For Girardi a deep bullpen, with Dellin Betances, the newly acquired Justin Wilson, Adam Warren, Shawn Kelley, fast-moving left-handed prospect Jacob Lindgren (a second-round draft pick, he whiffed 48 in 25 innings last season).

The Yankees have a lot of rotation concerns, with uncertainty about whether Masahiro Tanaka will blow out and need Tommy John surgery, about whether CC Sabathia can help in any way after regressing in recent seasons, about whether Michael Pineda can stay healthy the whole year.

But no matter what happens with the Yankees’ rotation, they should have a strong and deep bullpen.

• The Yankees better keep dealing because their rotation is even more iffy with the trade of Shane Greene, writes John Harper.

• The Houston Astros offered Andrew Miller $40 million over four years, and so it would seem to logically follow that they could use that money to target David Robertson, the best closer on the market. We’ll see. The Astros could turn up their effort to sign Robertson.

The Yankees are open to having Robertson return, but only if his asking price drops significantly, and now with New York’s current bullpen depth, it’s in a better position to hold the line with the closer. If Robertson signs elsewhere, the Yankees get a compensation draft pick, and teams in the position New York is in now will essentially deduct what they regard as the value of the draft pick from any offer they make. Remember, the Astros’ pick in the first round is protected, meaning they would only have to surrender a second-round pick if they make a move on the closer.

As this plays out, more and more agents are saying privately they would’ve advised Robertson to take the Yankees’ qualifying offer of $15.3 million.

• Jacob Nix was the Astros’ fifth-round pick last year, and he thought he had a deal last summer. The Astros say he didn’t have a deal. That issue is in dispute, with significant ramifications for both sides, given the question of Nix’s college eligibility and the fact that the Astros could lose two first-round draft picks.

These are the possible resolutions, according to sources:

1. Nix follows through with his grievance, wins, and the Astros are forced to sign him, while being penalized two draft picks.

2. Nix follows through with the grievance but loses.

3. Nix drops the grievance and returns to college. (The least likely of the possibilities.)

4. The Astros and Nix reach some sort of financial settlement, and in the big picture, this might well be the preferred outcome for Houston. The Astros stand to lose two No. 1 draft picks, which would be a significant defeat with major consequences.

The Astros’ dispute with No. 1 overall draft pick Brady Aiken also remains unresolved, sources say, under different circumstances.

• The Tigers’ acquisition of Shane Greene gives Detroit some options.

They’re in a better position to listen to offers for Rick Porcello -- for example, if the Red Sox call and want to discuss a deal built around the right-hander and Yoenis Cespedes. (Although the Tigers’ need is in right field, and Cespedes indicated to the Red Sox his preference was for left field.)

• The Diamondbacks had rebuffed the Yankees’ direct overtures for Gregorius, and so Yankees general manager Brian Cashman - knowing that Detroit liked Shane Greene -- called Dave Dombrowski and told him that if he could pry the shortstop away from Arizona, he’d talk about Greene in a swap.

Dombrowski has a good working relationship with Tony La Russa, the head of Arizona’s baseball operations, and it so happened that last month, Mike Russell was hired as special assistant away from Detroit to work for Arizona. He knows the Detroit farm system well, and he helped target the prospects whom the Diamondbacks landed in the deal for Gregorius.

Arizona hopes the deal bolsters its rotation.

• The Rays’ players are impressed by their new manager, Kevin Cash, as Marc Topkin writes.

The Indians loved the work of Cash. Terry Francona thinks the Rays got lucky.

• On the day that the Braves introduced Nick Markakis, he discussed the neck surgery he might have. This is why the Orioles wouldn’t offer him more than three years.

• The Cubs’ offer to Jon Lester is actually higher than the $130 million to $140 million that’s been reported, writes Jesse Rogers. The way this is going, the tipping point for Lester might turn out to be a seventh year in his contract, or a staggering six-year deal with an average annual value in the range of $25 million or higher.

• Once the Mariners signed Nelson Cruz and gave up their first-round pick, it made sense for Seattle to consider double-dipping in the free-agent market again. So no wonder they are talking about going after Melky Cabrera, another close friend of Robinson Cano.

• Nationals right fielder Jayson Werth was sentenced to jail time.

• Jayson Stark reports the 10 hot names to watch at the winter meetings.
Ruben Amaro is facing a difficult task at the winter meetings.

The Dodgers need Matt Kemp’s hits, writes Steve Dilbeck.

Other teams have major questions about Kemp’s physical state -- his shoulder, his feet, rival officials say -- and whether he’ll break down again during the last five years of his contract, which will greatly affect what the Dodgers would get in return in any deal and how much of the $107 million they would eat.

Moves, deals and decisions

1. The Diamondbacks hired Deric Ladnier.
2. The Padres made the Clint Barmes deal official.

AL East

- Will Middlebrooks is at a crossroad with the Red Sox. His future with the team is blurry.
- The Orioles have work to do at the winter meetings.
- Blake Swihart is ready to be Boston’s next great prospect.

AL Central

- Luke Hochevar hopes to throw off a mound by January and help the Royals next season.

AL West

- Evan Grant writes about the Rangers’ wish list.

NL Central

- Joey Votto says he’s greatly improved. Votto is very excited and motivated.
- Jon Lester’s numbers suggest he might be worth the risk.

Lastly

- Gary Sheffield talked about Alex Rodriguez’s situation.

And today will be better than yesterday.

Nightengale: Yankees finally get their man in Didi Gregorius

By Bob Nightengale / USA Today
http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/mlb/2014/12/05/didi-gregorius-trade-yankees-diamondbacks-tigers/19956169/

Come on, you didn’t expect the New York Yankees to stay quiet all winter, did you?

The Yankees found a shortstop to replace Derek Jeter on Friday and landed their potential closer.

And, oh yeah, keep it a secret, but they’re laying back and waiting for the starting free agent market to sort out before diving in and coming up with Max Scherzer or another prized starter.

Yet their most pressing need was to find a shortstop, and they got their man.

They have been trying for months to pry shortstop Didi Gregorius from the Arizona Diamondbacks and finally got it done when they brought the Detroit Tigers into the deal for a three-way trade.

The Diamondbacks are sending Gregorius to Detroit for left-handed starter Robbie Ray and prized shortstop prospect Domingo Leyba, and the Tigers will trade Gregorius to New York for young right-handed starter Shane Greene.

The Yankees also signed free agent reliever Andrew Miller to a four-year, $36 million deal Friday.

Miller will be a setup man or share the closing duties with Dellin Betances. It’s possible the Yankees could bring back free agent David Robertson, too, but shelling out in excess of $80 million on two relievers would be excessive, even for the Yankees.

If nothing else, Miller won’t have to live up to the pressure of replacing Mariano Rivera, who retired after the 2013 season.

Now, the pressure falls squarely on the shoulders of Gregorius.

The Yankees don’t expect Gregorius to become the next Jeter, but when former Diamondbacks general manager Kevin Towers traded for Gregorius two years ago, he called him a "young Derek Jeter."

Gregorius, a native of Curacao, will be 25 on opening day. Jeter already had two World Series rings and a rookie of the year award by the time he was 25, playing three full seasons.

Jeter is going to Cooperstown as one of the greatest shortstops in baseball history.

Gregorius still is looking to hit enough to be an everyday player. He hit .226 with six homers and 27 RBI last season in 80 games for Arizona as a backup shortstop to Chris Owings and has a career .243 batting average.

If nothing else, Gregorius has tremendous range and can play defense better than Jeter has the last few years.

The Yankees would have simply sent Greene to the Diamondbacks for Gregorius, but the Diamondbacks kept saying no. They weren’t high on Greene, who was 5-4 with a 3.78 ERA in 15 games for the Yankees last summer. They told the Yankees they need another team involved to get it done, and they needed two players in return.

The Yankees turned to the Tigers, who were willing to deal Ray just a year after acquiring him from the Washington Nationals in the ill-fated Doug Fister trade, along with Leyba.

Ray, who went 1-4 with an 8.16 ERA for the Tigers in nine games, will open the year in the Diamondbacks rotation, and Leyba could be their shortstop in several years.
The Yankees, who could use another starter now that Greene is out of their plans, are stealing a page from the Kansas City Royals playbook with their signing of Miller. He becomes the highest-paid setup man in history, eclipsing Rafael Soriano’s three-year, $35 million deal with the Yankees after the 2010 season.

They'll have one of the most lethal lefty-righty bullpen combinations in baseball. Miller averaged 15.3 strikeouts per nine innings last year, while Betances averaged 13.5.

The Yankees would like to find a third baseman, too, but they appear to be wary of the price to bring back free agent Chase Headley, who has a four-year, $65 million deal on the table from an unknown team, according to Yahoo Sports.

If they can't bring him back, they likely will play Martin Prado, Gregorius’ former teammate with Arizona, at third base, with Rob Refsnyder and Jose Pirela competing for the second-base job.

Oh, yes, and then there is Alex Rodriguez.

Stay tuned. The Yankees’ winter wonderland of fun is just beginning.

Can new Yankees shortstop handle NYC without Jeter's influence?

By Ken Rosenthal / FOX Sports


Some with the Diamondbacks questioned Didi Gregorius’ work ethic, attributing whatever success he achieved to his sheer athleticism.

The Yankees, during the Derek Jeter era, could be confident that such a player would snap to attention. The quiet but firm examples of Jeter and the other members of the Core Four helped shame lagging teammates into better work habits.

Gregorius might develop those habits on his own — he is only 24, still a young player. But now that Jeter is gone — and now that the Yankees have acquired Gregorius to replace him — it’s fair to ask whether the team’s clubhouse culture will remain the same type of force for positive change.

To be sure, the Yankees still feature a number of highly respected, lead-by-example veterans — Carlos Beltran, Brian McCann, Martin Prado, Jacoby Ellsbury, Mark Teixeira, et al. But this season, they also could be re-introducing Alex Rodriguez into their mix.

Clubhouse culture can be overrated. Without question it is impossible to measure. But no less a talent than Robinson Cano credited Jeter and the Yankees’ demanding environment with helping him become a better player.

Gregorius is no Cano, certainly not offensively. The question now is whether the post-Jeter Yankees can help him become the best he can be.

Source: Dodgers’ trade of Ethier to D-backs falls through

By Ken Rosenthal / FOX Sports


Andre Ethier a Diamondback? Miguel Montero a Dodger?

The teams recently discussed a trade involving those players, but the deal collapsed when the D-Backs’ ownership declined to give final approval, according to major-league sources.

Under the proposed trade, the Dodgers would have sent Ethier and catcher Tim Federowicz to the Diamondbacks for Montero and lower-level prospects, sources said.

Ethier, 32, is owed $53.5 million over the next three seasons, plus a $2.5 million buyout. Montero, 31, is owed $40 million over the same term. The Dodgers would have included significant cash to help cover the difference, sources said; the exact amount is not known.

A revival of the discussions is unlikely, sources said. Montero is said to be a favorite of owner Ken Kendrick. The D-backs also might not want to deal within the NL West or with their former general manager, Josh Byrnes, who is now the Dodgers senior vice president of baseball operations.

The D-backs evidently were willing to add Ethier even as they proceeded toward a six-year, $68.5 million agreement with Cuban free agent Yasmany Tomas on Thanksgiving Eve.

Many clubs view Tomas as a corner outfielder. D-backs manager Chip Hale, however, recently said that the team plans to give Tomas a chance to win the third-base job, so perhaps the D-backs could have accommodated both Tomas and Ethier.

The Dodgers have been working to trade at least one of their three high-priced outfielders — Ethier, Carl Crawford and Matt Kemp. Their talks with the D-backs offered a glimpse into one type of deal they could make — an exchange of comparable contracts and comparable major-league talent.

Montero, a left-handed hitter, likely would have become the Dodgers’ primary catcher, forcing A.J. Ellis, a right-handed hitter, into a lesser role. The Dodgers have offered arbitration to Ellis, who is projected to receive $3.8 million, according to Matt Swartz of MLBTradeRumors.com.

Clearing Ethier may also have reduced the Dodgers’ interest in trading Kemp, who is drawing heavy interest from the Padres and also from the Orioles, Mariners and Rangers, according to major-league sources.

The Dodgers, however, could trade both Ethier and Kemp and open next season with an outfield of Crawford in left, rookie Joc Pederson in center and Yasiel Puig in right, with Scott Van Slyke and the newly acquired Chris Heisey in reserve.

A trade to the D-backs would have represented a homecoming for Ethier, a native of Phoenix who attended Arizona State. The D-backs evidently view Ethier as a player who could bounce back with more regular playing time. Ethier last season had a career-low .691 OPS in a career-low 380 plate appearances.
With the D-backs, Ethier could have served as a left-handed cleanup hitter between a pair of right-handed hitters, Paul Goldschmidt and Mark Trumbo. Fedorowicz, meanwhile, would have assumed a prominent role in the team's catching plans.

The D-backs would have been left with a surplus of outfielders, perhaps creating a platform for other moves. Ender Inciarte finished fifth in the NL Rookie of the Year balloting last season, while David Peralta had a .770 OPS in 348 plate appearances. Oft-injured Cody Ross is owed $8.5 million next season, plus a $1 million buyout.

Report: D-backs owner nixed Miguel Montero-Andre Ethier trade
By Mark Townsend / Yahoo! Sports

The Los Angeles Dodgers entered the offseason with a surplus of outfielders, and then added one more on Tuesday when they acquired Chris Heisey from the Cincinnati Reds. Needless to say, the focus of their rebuilt front office will now turn to dealing from that depth to fill other needs, and with rumors swirling mostly around both Matt Kemp and Andre Ethier, it's entirely possible a deal comes together as soon as this week's Winter Meetings in San Diego.

According to a report from Fox Sports Ken Rosenthal though, the bulk of that work was nearly completed before the hot stove's blockbuster event. Recently, the team had a deal in place that would have sent Ethier and backup catcher Tim Fedorowicz to the division rival Arizona Diamondbacks in exchange for two-time All-Star catcher Miguel Montero and a collection of lower-level prospects.

Had the deal gone through, it would have been a swap of less than attractive contracts. Ethier, 32, is owed $53.5 million over the next three seasons. There's also a $2.5 million buyout attached to his deal, raising its value to $56 million. Montero, 31, is owed $40 million over the three years. To make up the $16 million difference, Los Angeles was to include some money in the deal, though it's unknown how much they would have covered.

At this point, the details don't much matter anyway. As Rosenthal also reported, Diamondbacks owner Ken Kendrick nixed the deal all together because he wasn't comfortable dealing within the division, in addition to being hesitant dealing with former general manager Josh Byrnes, who is the Dodgers new senior vice president of baseball operations.

That's notable, first and foremost, because it's rare for an owner to step in and block a personnel decision. It's also notable because of the men Kendrick overruled. This past season, he hired Hall of Fame manager Tony La Russa to serve as Chief Baseball Officer, and then approved the hiring of new general manager Dave Stewart.

Both are obviously looking to put their stamp on the Diamondbacks roster coming off a disappointing and disheartening 64-98 season, and are off to a pretty good start with the signing of Cuban free agent Yasmany Tomas and the addition of Jeremy Hellickson to their rotation. But it might prove difficult to execute their entire game plan if some deals within the division are off-limits.

It's a unique set of circumstances to be sure, and perhaps a rightful cause for concern with D-Backs fans if ownership and the front office are already on different pages.

As for the Dodgers outlook. It appears they won't be shy about dealing within the division. In addition to nearly moving Ethier to Arizona, it's reported they've had extensive talks with the San Diego Padres surrounding Matt Kemp. For Byrnes, new team president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman, and new general manager Farhan Zaidi, it's strictly about finding the best deal, which seems to be the smoothest and most sensible way to do business.

MLB trade rumors: D-backs reportedly said no to Ethier-for-Montero deal
By Tom Gatto / Sporting News

Further proof that the Dodgers want a catcher to replace A.J. Ellis and that they're willing to use their outfield surplus to get one:

Fox Sports' Ken Rosenthal reports that LA was poised to send Andre Ethier to the Diamondbacks for Miguel Montero as part of a multiplayer swap but couldn't complete the deal. Rosenthal's sources said Diamondbacks ownership, which loves Montero, squashed the trade.

Ethier was the odd man out in the Dodgers' outfield last season, falling behind Carl Crawford, Yasiel Puig Matt Kemp on the depth chart. He made a career-low 380 plate appearances in 130 games. Montero's offensive production has slipped the past two seasons as he battled injuries.

The players' salaries wouldn't seem to be an obstacle. Ethier, 32, is guaranteed $56 million over the next three seasons, while Montero, 31, is guaranteed $40 million over the same period. Rosenthal reports the Dodgers would have sent the Diamondbacks cash to help bridge the gap.

Reports earlier this week said the Dodgers and Padres were discussing a trade that would send Kemp to San Diego for a package that included catcher Yasmani Grandal.

The Dodgers will continue their quest at the winter meetings in San Diego, which begin Sunday.

Yasmany Tomas could be D-Backs' starting third baseman
By Michael Hurcomb / CBSSports.com

While the Diamondbacks finalize the contract for Cuban slugger Yasmany Tomas, the team is also working on the details about where Tomas will fit into its plans for 2015. While it was assumed Tomas would play a corner outfield spot, the
Diamondbacks could use Tomas at the hot corner, according to The Arizona Republic.

The 6-1, 252-pound Tomas is of similar build to Red Sox third baseman Pablo Sandoval, who is 5-11, 250 pounds.

"Our first move, if and when we get the Tomas thing done, is he's going to come in and we're going to have him compete at third base," Diamondbacks manager Chip Hale said. "So if he can handle third base, he would be our (guy). That's our first wish and then the outfield situation sort of falls in after that."

The Diamondbacks will be watching Tomas closely this spring because there is still the potential for the 24-year-old slugger to open the season in the minors.

"We're going to let spring training judge that, see what he does in the spring," general manager Dave Stewart said. "We're not opposed to sending him back, basically, really just to get acclimated to playing here and in our system. We're not opposed to him being in the minor leagues, but we're going to let his spring training talk for him."

Diamondbacks ownership reportedly nixed a Miguel Montero-for-Andre Ethier trade

By Drew Silva / NBCSports.com

From Ken Rosenthal's latest at FOXSports.com …

Andre Ethier a Diamondback? Miguel Montero a Dodger?

The teams recently discussed a trade involving those players, but the deal collapsed when the D-Backs' ownership declined to give final approval, according to major-league sources.

The Dodgers would have sent Ethier, catcher Tim Federowicz, and money to Arizona for Montero and multiple lower-level prospects. But the majority owner of the Diamondbacks, Ken Kendrick, ruled against the trade because he likes Montero and was not comfortable trading him within the National League West.

The Diamondbacks are pretty set with corner outfielders — see: Mark Trumbo, David Peralta, and Cuban defector Yasmany Tomas — so the swap didn't make a ton of sense on paper. But it's disconcerting for an owner to step in so strongly on a baseball decision. Kendrick is known for being overly meddlesome at times.

Didi Gregorius “can be a little mentally fragile”

By Drew Silva / NBCSports.com

Didi Gregorius was called “a young Derek Jeter” a couple of summers ago by former Diamondbacks general manager Kevin Towers and now that the 24-year-old shortstop is actually going to be playing in pinstripes — via last week's three-team trade — the pressure is on him to in some ways meet that hype.

A number of people don't see Gregorius coming close. This bit of dirt comes from Bob McManaman, senior sportswriter for the Arizona Republic …

Gregorius is a pleasant and polite young man, but he's also quiet, introverted and has shown he can be a little mentally fragile when things aren't going his way.

“He lets too many things get to him,” an ex-teammate said. “Didi, sometimes he just thinks too much, you know?”

“He always seems to have a lot on his mind,” former manager Kirk Gibson liked to say.

They're going to eat him alive in New York.

“He's OK,” an unnamed scout told Anthony McCarron of the New York Daily News on Saturday. “Solid defender, bat is light – long swing. Good athlete. Nervous type, not sure he can handle NY.”

So, uh … good luck, kid.

The Diamondbacks have no plans to trade Mark Trumbo

By D.J. Short / NBCSports.com
http://hardballtalk.nbcSports.com/2014/12/06/the-diamondbacks-have-no-plans-to-trade-mark-trumbo/

After the Diamondbacks agreed to terms with Yasmany Tomas on a six-year, $68.5 million contract, there was immediate speculation that the club would consider trading slugger Mark Trumbo. However, Diamondbacks general manager Dave Stewart made it quite clear on Friday that he plans on keeping Trumbo around:

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Nick Piecoro -- @nickpiecoro

Stewart said teams have called on Trumbo since Tomas entered the mix last week. "We have no interest in moving Trumbo. None."

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Trumbo's first year in Arizona didn't go as planned, as he missed some time with a foot injury while batting just .235/.293/.415 with 14 home runs and 61 RBI over 88 games. Stewart would be selling low if he traded him now. The Diamondbacks still have a potential log jam in their outfield, but they are planning on giving Tomas an opportunity to win the starting third base job in the spring. Some have even suggested that Tomas should begin 2015 in the minors.

Stewart also indicated yesterday that he's not shopping catcher Miguel Montero, but Bob Nightengale of USA Today hears that a deal is still possible if the right offer comes along.

Arizona Diamondbacks won't move Mark Trumbo

By Aaron Somers / SI.com

Mark Trumbo found himself on the move this time last year, traded to the Arizona Diamondbacks from the Los Angeles Angels in a move that many considered surprising at the time. A
year later Trumbo’s name has started to creep into rumblings about the trade market, but it looks like he won’t be going anywhere. GM Dave Stewart spoke with members of the media on Friday, including FOX Sports Arizona’s Jack Magruder, and it made clear that the team will not move Trumbo this winter.

The team will, instead, continue looking to add to their lineup – specifically for a left-handed power hitter who could slot in between Trumbo and Paul Goldschmidt.

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Jack Magruder -- @JackMagruder

#Dbacks will not move Trumbo, Stewart said. Still in market for left-handed power bat to hit in@middle of order, Stew added ----

Much of speculation about Trumbo’s potential availability began after the D’backs signed Yasmany Tomas to a lucrative contract. Tomas’ signing carries with it a handful of questions, most notable of which centers on where he fits best defensively. Teams reportedly developed a number of concerns about his abilities in the field, leading some to not even make an offer. Ultimately Tomas ended up signing for significantly less than he’d initially been projected.

The expectation is that Tomas will likely play left field for Arizona, where Trumbo had been expected to start. Trumbo has the flexibility of also being able to play first base, but with Goldschmidt back healthy there appears little chance of that being a regular option. Trumbo may see some spot starts at first, giving Goldschmidt the occasional day off, but that’s about all that can be counted on.

Without the DH being an option, that leaves Trumbo heading to right field – where he’s appeared in just 65 games over his 528 game career.

A fractured foot kept Trumbo out of the lineup for a good portion of the 2014 season, limiting him to just 362 plate appearances on the year. He hit .235/.293/.415 with 14 home runs – but seven of them came in the first three weeks of April before the injury. He’s a .247/.298/.460 hitter for his career, but he’s averaged 28 doubles and 32 home runs a year. Trumbo will be 29 in January and still has two more years of arbitration eligibility remaining.

Holding onto Trumbo could potentially mean that the D’backs will look to move another outfielder, likely David Peralta, in their search for pitching. FOX Sports’ Jon Morosi noted Friday afternoon that the Cincinnati Reds had shown some interest in Arizona’s outfielders, specifically mentioning Peralta’s name. Peralta turned 27 in August and enjoyed a surprisingly strong rookie campaign, batting .286/.320/.450 in 348 plate appearances. He alone likely wouldn’t be enough to pry away one of the Reds four potentially available starters, but he could front a package of players that would get a deal done.

Report: Dodgers nearly traded Andre Ethier to Arizona Diamondbacks
By Dylan Hernandez / The Los Angeles Times

If not for the objections of the Arizona Diamondbacks owner Ken Kendrick, the Dodgers would have traded Andre Ethier for catcher Miguel Montero, according to FoxSports.com.

The Dodgers would have sent Ethier, backup catcher Tim Federowicz and cash to the Diamondbacks in exchange for Montero and lower-level prospects, FoxSports.com reported. However, the deal failed to receive the blessing of Kendrick, who might best known in these parts for an incident in which he told Dodgers fans seated behind home plate at Chase Field to change their clothes or their seats.

The division rivals would have essentially been trading undesirable contracts.

It would have been great for Ethier to make a home-coming back to Phoenix. I think the Diamondbacks would have embraced him despite his long tenure as a Dodger. Miguel Montero would have been a serviceable catcher as long as the players can forget his role in those massive brawls with...

Ethier, who was relegated to a bench role this year, is owed $56 million over the next three years. Montero is guaranteed $40 million over the same period.

For Ethier, the move would have marked a homecoming. He grew up in the Phoenix area and played at Arizona State.

Ethier recently said he informed the Dodgers he wants to play every day – whether it’s with them or someone else.

Montero would have presumably become the Dodgers primary catcher. His OPS+ has decreased dramatically in recent seasons, from 121 in 2011 and 123 in 2012 to 83 in 2013 and 95 this year.

Montero was a central figure in the violent brawl between the Dodgers and Diamondbacks in 2013.

Yankees Acquire Shortstop Didi Gregorius—and Give Him Big Shoes to Fill
Strong-Fielding 24-Year-Old From Arizona Will Be the De Facto Jeter Replacement
By Daniel Barbarisi / Wall Street Journal

All through November, as the teams around them made splashes in trade and in free agency, the Yankees waited and lurked. Then on Friday, with baseball’s Winter Meetings looming next week, the team struck: trading for shortstop Didi Gregorius to replace Derek Jeter and reliever Andrew Miller to take closer David Robertson’s spot in the bullpen.

In one day, the team filled its two biggest offseason holes, allowing them to move on to the secondary needs with the most obvious boxes checked.

“We believe we’re in a better place than we were when we started this winter,” general manager Brian Cashman said.

The Yankees still need more starting pitching, another infielder at either second or third base, and probably another reliever. But
they can now feel, at least, that the offseason will not end with them standing around dejected as the game of offseason musical chairs wraps up.

The Yankees have been trying to snag the 24-year-old Gregorius for several years, and to get him now in a market with few available shortstops, the Yankees needed to construct a three-team deal with the Arizona Diamondbacks and Detroit Tigers. To get Gregorius, who slides in as the starter against right-handed pitching, the Yankees sent starting pitcher Shane Greene, a standout rookie in 2014, to the Tigers, and the Tigers sent two players to Arizona to complete the deal.

The trade gives the Yankees an excellent defender and a lefthanded hitter to fill the void left by the retiring Jeter, who will platoon with right-handed holdover Brendan Ryan in a defensively stellar shortstop tandem.

Gregorius broke into the majors in 2012 with the Cincinnati Reds, and was then shipped to the Diamondbacks before 2013 in another three-team trade.

He became the starter that year, and hit .252 with seven home runs, 28 RBI and a just-below-average .704 on-base plus slugging percentage (OPS) while establishing himself as one of the league’s best defenders.

He regressed somewhat in 2014, hitting .226 with a .653 OPS, but continued to play excellent defense.

Considering he will only be 25 this coming season, the Yankees see there being room for him to improve, while Yankee Stadium’s dimensions may help his left-handed swing—though Cashman immediately tried to tamp down on expectations that Gregorius can come in and quickly make everyone forget Jeter.

“He’s not replacing Derek, he’s just now going to come in here, obviously compete to hold down that position at shortstop, assist us with Brendan Ryan, obviously provide us with defense and some offense at the back of our lineup,” Cashman said.

Miller too represents a big acquisition, but it is also a dangerous one, and it does yet not mean that the Yankees have gotten better. For the moment, at least, it means that they have trenched water, preserving the chance to have a lockdown bullpen of the sort that propped up this team in 2013.

But even Miller does not come without risk. The 29-year-old authored one superlative season in 2014, with a 2.02 ERA and a 0.80 WHIP, a strong one in 2013, and a good one before that in 2012. But before that he was a disaster, a bust as a starting pitcher who never lived up to his considerable promise.

A move to the bullpen, an alteration in his mechanics, and a transition from a four-pitch to a two-pitch fastball-slider machine caused a dramatic turnaround—but is that permanent?

The Baltimore Orioles certainly thought so, and were willing to give up one of their top prospects, pitcher Eduardo Rodriguez, for two-plus months of Miller—even knowing that he was unlikely to re-sign with them—because they believed he was no fluke. In an interview with the Wall Street Journal during the American League Championship Series, Orioles GM Dan Duquette said that he was willing to make the trade because he saw mechanical changes that seemed repeatable.

“It looked like he really put it together this year, to where he was really getting left and right handed hitters consistently,” Duquette said. “His strikeout record was elite, and if he wasn’t striking out the hitter, he was making them hit a ground ball.”

Miller is unlikely to close for the Yankees, with that job most likely going to rookie All-Star Dellin Betances, and his signing doesn’t entirely preclude the team bringing back Robertson—if Robertson’s price drops from demands that are roughly four years, $50 million, according to a person close to the situation.

Special assistant Deric Ladnier hired by Diamondbacks
By James Wagner / The Washington Post

Deric Ladnier, a special assistant to General Manager Mike Rizzo and one of the top scouts in the Nationals front office, was lured away by the Arizona Diamondbacks to serve as scouting director, the team announced on Friday afternoon. Ladnier had spent the previous six seasons with the Nationals as a national crosschecker and special assistant to the GM.

“How many times do you get the chance to go back and do what you did before and have the first pick in the draft again and the challenges with it, too?” Ladnier said. “It directly changes the mold of the organization. To be able to do that again, not many get that chance.”

The Nationals hired Ladnier in 2008 after nine seasons as the senior director of scouting with the Royals. He oversaw the drafts that selected players that formed the backbone of the 2014 Royals’ World Series run, such as Eric Hosmer, Alex Gordon and Mike Moustakas. Before that, Ladnier spent eight seasons with the Braves in a variety of roles from scouting to player development. With the Nationals, Ladnier has had his hand in a variety of front office matters, from amateur scouting to intentional scouting to advance scouting.

“The Nationals were one of the best organizations I’ve ever worked for,” Ladnier said. “Mike Rizzo, I can’t say enough things about him as boss for me, how he treated me as a man and a baseball person. There are things that happen in life and you take out of it what you need. I learned how to do a draft from the Braves and Royals.”

Ladnier, 50, spoke highly of his time with the Nationals, and other front office officials such as Doug Harris and Kris Kline. But the challenge of returning to an old position and shepherding the Diamondbacks’ draft efforts — they will pick first overall next summer — was enticing.

Ladnier joins a Diamondbacks front office that has ties to the Nationals. Assistant general manager Bryan Minniti left the Nationals for the same position in Arizona shortly after the season. In addition to his ties to Minniti, Ladnier was minor league roommates with De Jon Watson, both Royals’ prospects in 1985.
It's unclear who will fill Ladnier’s vacant position, but last month, the Nationals hired two special assistants to the GM — Mike Cubbage and Terry Wetzel.

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**MLB NEWS**
December 8, 2014 • sports.yahoo.com/mlb/morenews
http://sports.yahoo.com/mlb/morenews

**December 7, 2014**

- Nationals will try once more to sign Jordan Zimmermann to an extension 11:35 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Mets could send Harvey to DL, during season 10:56 pm EST (The Associated Press)
- Wilmer Flores likely to be Mets’ starting shortstop on Opening Day 10:50 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Yankees still retaining interest in Chase Headley 9:40 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Jimmy Rollins unwilling to waive no-trade clause to join the Mets 8:40 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Twins considering Ryan Vogelsong, Brett Anderson 7:35 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Twins considering Ryan Vogelsong, Brett Anderson 7:35 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Cubs aren’t making Starlin Castro available 6:25 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Astros “continue to pursue” David Robertson 5:30 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Report: Padres, Red Sox have discussed trading Ian Kennedy for Yoenis Cespedes 4:48 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Duquette declines comment on Blue Jays report 4:13 pm EST (Comcast SportsNet New England)
- Korea shortstop Jung-Ho Kang to be posted next week 4:05 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Honus Wagner card auctioned for more than $400,000 3:45 pm EST (The Associated Press)
- Angels shopping starting pitcher C.J. Wilson 3:29 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Report: Twins ‘linked to’ free agent Vogelsong 2:55 pm EST (Comcast SportsNet Bay Area)
- Report: Highest offer to Headley not from Giants 2:30 pm EST (Comcast SportsNet Bay Area)
- Braves interested in Stephen Drew for second base 2:15 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Diamondbacks ownership reportedly nixed a Miguel Montero-for-Andre Ethier trade 1:27 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Kenny Williams could lead White Sox for other opportunities 12:58 pm EST (Comcast SportsNet Chicago)

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**National**

- Olympics-IOC vote threatens hammer blow to some athletes 7:32 am EST (Reuters)
- Olympics-IOC votes to open up Games to additional sports 6:34 am EST (Reuters)
- What to watch for at the 2014 Winter Meetings 6:00 am EST (NBC Sports)
- Nats will resume contract talks with Zimmermann 1:52 am EST (Comcast SportsNet Mid Atlantic)
- Cubs nearing deal to bring back Jason Hammel 1:49 am EST (Comcast SportsNet Chicago)
- SportsNet Central Update: Kenny Williams on his way out? 12:58 am EST (Comcast SportsNet Chicago)
- Report: Jason Hammel close to signing with the Cubs 12:37 am EST (NBC Sports)
- Can Cubs become the Dodgers or Yankees of winter meetings? 12:20 am EST (Comcast SportsNet Chicago)
December 6, 2014

- Report: Red Sox to try Scherzer if they don’t get Lester 12:35 pm EST (Comcast SportsNet New England)
- Didi Gregorius “can be a little mentally fragile” 12:35 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Red Sox to try Max Scherzer if they don’t get Jon Lester 11:21 am EST (NBC Sports)
- Report: Dan Duquette being pursued by a division rival 11:11 am EST (Comcast SportsNet Mid Atlantic)
- Orioles executive vice president Dan Duquette a candidate to become Blue Jays CEO 10:38 am EST (NBC Sports)
- Giants did not make that reported four-year, $65 million contract offer to Chase Headley 9:43 am EST (NBC Sports)
- Steven Souza wins GIBBY for Play of the Year 8:56 am EST (NBC Sports)
- Here are 10 players to watch at Winter Meetings 6:56 am EST (Comcast SportsNet Mid Atlantic)
- White Sox could determine Dayan Viciedo’s future this week 1:28 am EST (Comcast SportsNet Chicago)
- What do Nats have in store at Winter Meetings? 12:36 am EST (Comcast SportsNet Mid Atlantic)
- Giants collect four 2014 GIBBY Awards 12:35 am EST (Comcast SportsNet Bay Area)

December 5, 2014

- McAdam: Henry selling Jon Lester on legacy 11:39 pm EST (Comcast SportsNet New England)
- Kyle McClellan retires from baseball at age 30 10:02 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Plenty left on A’s to do list as winter meetings arrive 9:09 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Video: Kevin Cash on being hired as Rays manager 7:00 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Report: Red Sox owner visits Lester in Atlanta on Friday to visit Jon Lester 4:01 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Report: Nationals shopping reliever Tyler Clippard 4:39 pm EST (Comcast SportsNet Mid Atlantic)
- Report: Red Sox owner John Henry flew to Atlanta on Friday to visit Jon Lester 4:01 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Report: Henry pays visit to Lester 3:32 pm EST (Comcast SportsNet New England)
- Orioles get lots of calls on Wei-Yin Chen; discussed Howie Kendrick swap with Angels 3:15 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Report: Giants getting ‘aggressive’ in pursuit of Headley 2:22 pm EST (Comcast SportsNet Bay Area)
- Report: Giants getting “aggressive” for free agent third baseman Chase Headley 2:11 pm EST (NBC Sports)
- Cubs Way: Meet Mark Johnson, Baseball America’s Manager of the Year 2:07 pm EST (Comcast SportsNet Chicago)
- Report: Nationals “likely” to trade reliever Tyler Clippard 1:49 pm EST (NBC Sports)

MLB TRANSACTIONS
December 8, 2014 • MLB.com
http://www.cbssports.com/mlb/transactions

Last updated: Mon, December 8, 2014, 03:32 EST

Sunday, December 7, 2014

Team Player Transaction
Oakland Athletics Philip Humber Signed to Play in Korea, (Kia Tigers)

Saturday, December 6, 2014

Team Player Transaction
Arizona Diamondbacks J.C. Ramirez Signed to a Minor League Contract
Miami Marlins Chris Narveson Signed to a Minor League Contract
Miami Marlins Cole Gillespie Signed to a Minor League Contract

Friday, December 5, 2014

Team Player Transaction
Arizona Diamondbacks Robbie Ray Traded From from Tigers, Detroit (four-player, three-team trade)
Chicago Cubs Ryan Retired
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club</th>
<th>Player Name</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati Reds</td>
<td>Jose De La Torre</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati Reds</td>
<td>Wilmer Font</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati Reds</td>
<td>Irving Falu</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati Reds</td>
<td>Marcus Walden</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland Indians</td>
<td>Adam Moore</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Rockies</td>
<td>Buddy Boshers</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit Tigers</td>
<td>Rafael Dolis</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit Tigers</td>
<td>Shane Greene</td>
<td>Traded From from Yankees, NY Yankees (four-player, three-team trade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit Tigers</td>
<td>Alberto Cabrera</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston Astros</td>
<td>Anthony Bass</td>
<td>Refused Minor League Assignment - Free Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Angels</td>
<td>Adam Wilk</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Dodgers</td>
<td>Drew Butera</td>
<td>Designated for Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Dodgers</td>
<td>Ryan Lavarnway</td>
<td>Acquired Off Waivers From from Red Sox, Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Yankees</td>
<td>Didi Gregorius</td>
<td>Traded From from Diamondbacks, Arizona (four-player, three-team trade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakland Athletics</td>
<td>Niuman Romero</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco Giants</td>
<td>Cory Gearrin</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco Giants</td>
<td>Justin Maxwell</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle Mariners</td>
<td>Justin Germano</td>
<td>Signed to a Minor League Contract</td>
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