

Detroit Reels in Two Big Fish

Contributed by Troy Chuinard
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The MLB Winter Meetings are over, and the Detroit Tigers seem to have come out victorious.

Earlier in the week, the Tigers acquired slugging Miguel Cabrera and hard-throwing Dontrelle Willis for a package of six prospects. The price did not come cheap; Detroit was forced to give up two first-round draft picks in Andrew Miller and Cameron Maybin along with four other highly-touted prospects. However, the Tigers' acquisition of these two young athletes adds even more depth to the already stacked lineup which includes Edgar Renteria, Placido Polanco, Magglio Ordonez, Gary Sheffield, Jacque Jones, Ivan Rodriguez, and Curtis Granderson. Combine that talent with a pitching staff led by a Verlander/Bonderman one – two punch, and you have possibly one of the strongest contenders in the American League.

The move has easily been the most impacting of the off-season, and many expect that the Tigers will be the most dominant force in the AL Central. Though the Cleveland Indians were crowned with the division title this past season, it is clear that the Tigers have taken the necessary measures to become a legitimate threat.

Based on the 24-period it took to complete the transaction, the Florida Marlins obviously felt that it was worth trading their all-star third baseman and their 2003 rookie of the year for six up and coming prospects. Scouts have claimed that Miller's fastball can reach 97 miles per hour, while Maybin has demonstrated exceptional skills at the plate throughout his young career. The other players that were sent to Florida include catcher Mike Rabelo and pitchers Burke Badenhop, Eulogio De La Cruz, and Dallas Trahern. Given the availability of superstars in this year's free-agent market, both Cabrera and Willis had an extremely high price tag.

"The inclusion of Dontrelle was not something at the outset that we had considered," Florida president of baseball operations Larry Beinfest said. "We recognize the market value for both players."

After an 88-74 finish in 2007 and a failure to defeat the St. Louis Cardinals in the 2006 World Series, the Tigers felt that they needed to make a move that would put them over the top. The Detroit organization has been very active this off-season, acquiring both Edgar Renteria from the Atlanta Braves and Jacque Jones from the Chicago Cubs in mid-November.

Andruw Jones also signed a two-year, \$36 million contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers, who were seeking a slugging outfielder to solidify their lineup. The contract received by Jones is the fifth largest in MLB history in terms of earnings per year. Analysts are shocked at the amount of money that Jones received considering that he appears out of his prime. It is also evident that he has gradually gained some weight over the past couple of seasons. Nevertheless, his presence at the plate and gold-glove caliber defense is just what the Dodgers needed.

Many teams still have work to do, and there are still a handful of big names on the free agent market. The future of ace Johan Santana is up in the air, and the World Champion Boston Red Sox appear to be the frontrunners in the Santana sweepstakes. Kosuke Fukudome is also expected to make his decision about playing in the Americas in the next few days. It will be very interesting to see where each ball club stands come March when spring training begins.

