Crip, Riske, Bard Sent To Boston For Marte, Shoppach, Mota

The Coco Crisp Saga finally came to a close yesterday as the Indians dealt the 26-year old outfielder to the Red Sox as part of a six player trade that saw prized third base prospect Andy Marte acquired by Cleveland.

Crisp will start in center field and bat lead off for the Red Sox, who were desperate to find someone for both roles in the wake of Johnny Damon leaving the team in free agency and signing with the rival Yankees.

Indians GM Mark Shapiro saw this as an opportunity to deal from a position of strength with a team desperate to make a move. The Indians clearly got good value for Crisp, who many in the organization feel may be "maxed out" at his 2005 numbers, which saw him hit .300 with 16 home runs and 15 stolen bases.

The centerpiece of the deal for the Indians is Marte, widely viewed as one of the top prospects in all of baseball. Just 22 years old, Marte slammed 20 home runs at AAA last season and is an above average defensive third baseman. He brings right handed power to the table, which the Indians lack, and also fills a gaping hole the organization has at third base, with no one ready to take over for Aaron Boone in 2007.

With Boone set to make 3.75 million this year, and coming off a good second half of 2005, Marte will likely begin the season in AAA Buffalo, where he will spend at least part of this season. Most feel Marte is very close to ready, needing maybe another half year or so of seasoning in the minors.

The Indians also swapped relievers and backup catchers with Boston in this deal, apparently upgrading both spots.

They sent Josh Bard to the Red Sox, obtaining 25-year old Kelly Shoppach in return. Shoppach is regarded as a better prospect than Bard, and has slammed 48 HRs the last two seasons in AA and AAA. He will compete with Einar Diaz and Tim Laker to back up Victor Martinez, who was run into the ground a year ago. Shoppach also potentially provides a right handed stick with pop off the bench.

The Tribe also sent David Riske to the red Sox in the trade and recieved Guillermo Mota in return. Mota was lights out dominant as Eric Gagne's set up man with the Dodgers in 2003 and 2004 before struggling with injuries and a move to the closer role last season. When healthy, he has stuff as good as any 8th inning guy in the game, and will ideally assume "The Bob Howry Role" for this years Indians.

Shapiro may not be done either. Rumors continue to swirl that the Tribe may look to sign free agent pitcher Jeff Weaver to a one year deal similar to the one given to Kevin Millwood last year. If so, the Indians would likely turn around and deal pitcher Jake Westbrook to Cincinnati for outfielder Austin Kearns.

Stay tuned ...