A lot of speculation has circulated around who the player to be named later in the Kelly Shoppach trade may be. A couple days ago, Tony speculated that player could be infielder Willy Aybar, and we have since realized that is not the case. So who IS the player to be named later? Tony gives us his latest thoughts, and also hits on the quickly approaching Rule 5 Draft, and also the Indians latest exploits in the international free agency market.

Here are some quick updates and thoughts on some of the recent developments in the quest to obtain more information on the player to be named in the Kelly Shoppach trade as well as other happenings in the Indians organization:

No Go On Aybar

In my update on Wednesday I made mention that the Indians may be targeting infielder Willy Aybar as the player to be named from Tampa Bay to complete the Kelly Shoppach trade.

As it turns out, this is not the case as a source close to the situation has confirmed that Aybar is not on the player to be named list the Indians have to choose from.

I had originally speculated that they may be trying to get Aybar considering their known need for a versatile infielder, someone to complement Luis Valbuena at second base, and also someone as a fallback at first base in case Matt LaPorta's recovery from surgery takes longer than expected. When Shoppach was traded to Tampa Bay on Tuesday for a player to be named later and it was announced that the player to be named would have to be decided by December 20th it really looked like the player may be playing winter ball so they wanted some time to see

the player. Hence the Aybar speculation.

However, with the help of e-mails and postings here on the site from several fans, per Major League Baseball rules a player to be named cannot have played in the same league as the team he is going to (a silly and strange rule if you ask me ... I mean it is okay to go from the AL to the NL but not from the NL to the NL or AL to AL?). Considering Aybar played for the Rays in 2009, this eliminated him from consideration as a player to be named.

So Who Could It Be?

With Aybar clearly out of the picture, just what kind of player will the player to be named turn out to be?

First off, there has been rampant spreading of erroneous information the last 48 hours that Indians GM Mark Shapiro supposedly said something along the lines that the player to be named has a good chance to be on the Indians 25-man roster all year next season. This however is not true, as in his conference call with the media on Tuesday he was asked this very question on if the player could be a part of the 25-man roster next year and he gave a very short reply of "it's possible".

That's it.

It was a vague answer that could be taken any way really, as there is no better chance either way that the player could be on the 25-man roster next year or not be on it.

The way things look right now if you are gearing up for a player who can contribute meaningful time with the big league club in 2009 you are likely to be very disappointed. Instead, from what I am hearing, the deal is likely a prospect deal and for pitching.

Whether or not it is for an arm at Low-A or Double-A remains to be seen, but here are some pitchers the Indians may be targeting from the Rays:

Jake McGee (LHP), Aneury Rodriguez (RHP), Mitch Talbot (RHP), and Alexander Torres (LHP).

Of those four pitchers, the two who seem to be the most likely targets are Rodriguez and Talbot.

In fact, if I had to guess right now I would say the odds on favorite to be the guy picked is Rodriguez.

Talbot is major league ready and would certainly be a big league option in 2010, but he is out of options so I can't see the Indians taking him considering one of their own starters left-hander Jeremy Sowers is out of options as well (by the way, Aaron Laffey still has one option remaining).

But Rodriguez has a lot of untapped potential still as a starting pitcher with a low 90s fastball with the potential to get up to 94-95 MPH as he continues to mature and get stronger.

He has a good feel for pitching, commands the zone well, and has two secondary offerings in a curveball and changeup that are no worse than average.

With just a quick glance at his stats and overview of his scouting report without actually ever seeing him, he reminds me a lot of Indians right-handed pitching prospect Jeanmar Gomez.

McGee may be a pipedream and would clearly be a nice haul in return for Shoppach. He is coming off Tommy John surgery but is expected to be 100% by the spring and with his power stuff he has the potential to be an impact arm in the Rays bullpen by the end of the season.

Torres is a young lefty who turns 22 years old next week and would be a nice addition as well.

He doesn't have dominating stuff with a fastball in the low 90s, but he has a good curveball and a changeup which is still a work in progress.

Whichever way the Indians go with the player to be named selection, for the most part it is all but mere speculation from now until December 20th. The Indians are expected to make the selection on that date, and when all is said and looks very much like it will be yet another young arm added to the organization.

Rule 5's Possible Effect On The Deal

Some may be surprised to learn that any player on a minor league reserve list may not be traded between November 20th and the Rule 5 Draft. When rosters are finalized on November 20th, Major League teams submit reserve lists for all major league and minor league levels.

From November 20th until the Rule 5 Draft, no team can add a player from a minor league reserve list to their roster or trade them.

For example, now that the Indians have an open 40-man spot after dealing Shoppach they can't go and roster left-hander Chuck Lofgren to protect him from the Rule 5 Draft nor can they trade him until after the Rule 5 Draft. They can include him in a deal on a list as a player to be named, but they cannot trade him until after the Rule 5 Draft has been completed.

Knowing this, it is possible that the December 20th deadline to choose the player to be named in the Shoppach deal may in fact be Rule 5 related.

Indians Dip Into Outback Again

The Indians dipped into the International waters again this week as they signed Australian 17-year old catcher Ryan Battaglia to a contract. According to the Caboolture Shire Herald , Battaglia signed his deal on Sunday and will join up with the Indians in late March where he will participate in an eight week extended spring training program.

According to the news report, Battaglia has a strong arm and has some good power for his age.

The Indians have shown a strong presence in Australia over the past few years as they have recently signed infielder Jason Smit, pitcher Jacob Reust, and outfielder Trent Baker out of Australia.

Santana Shutdown

Apparently the only thing that can slow Indians catching prospect Carlos Santana down is the flu bug. According to the Cleveland Plain Dealer , after battling the flu recently and losing close to nine pounds because of it, the Indians took the precautionary route and just shut him down in order to avoid any risk of injury while he was in a weakened condition recovering from the flu.

He played just one game in the Dominican Winter League going 0-for-4 on October 16th.

Acta Close To Hitting On Final Coach

As reported a few weeks back, new Indians manager Manny Acta is now in Venezuela where he is interviewing Dave Hudgens and Jon Nunnally to be the hitting coach on his staff. Hudgen s is managing out in Venezuela while Nunnally is serving as his hitting coach, while in-season Hudgens is the Indians Field Coordinator for the minor leagues while Nunnally was the Triple-A Columbus hitting coach.

A decision could be imminent as the announcement could be made as early as the beginning of next week on who is named as the hitting coach and the final member of Acta's staff.