You know where they have some good entrenched third basemen? The N.L. East.

Consider this: for whatever abuse he takes for being "non-clutch" or "too tight" or "looking like the Great Gazoo," David Wright is a very good third baseman who is likely to be a very good third baseman for the New York Mets for a very long time. He is not going anywhere. And down I-95 from there, Ryan Zimmerman is in some ways and even better third baseman who is even more likely to be in Washington for a very long time. Chipper Jones is an icon in Atlanta, but he is not as mobile now that his legs have fallen off. Philadelphia has Potato Head and Wilson Valdez, and Florida ... well, let's face it: it's kind of hard to tell what Florida is doing at any given time. Suffice it to say that if you're looking for an inexpensive player, he's likely to be hoarded with clawlike covetousness in South Florida.

So surely there are some hidden gems and blocked prospects (or even veterans!) lying around the Division, right?

Well ...

Atlanta:

The only guy ... and I mean the ONLY guy ... that seems worth a look is a objet d'art known as Wes Timmons in AAA. At the AA level, you're talking abuot Christian Colonel, and we're not talking about Christian Colonel, because NO one talks about Christian Colonel. And this is because he's not actually any good. So let's forget that.

Timmons, on the other hand, hit .293/.400/.404 in 386 AB (114 games). He posted an astonishing 60:33 BB:K ratio ... yes, that's right he walked almost twice as often as he struck out. And he made 9 errors in those 114 games, which isn't bad at third. The downsides (plural) of course, is that he's 31 years old, didn't complete the season because of abdominal injury that may or may not have been a "sports hernia," and has the power of an enthusiastic beagle puppy. In addition, I asked Braves blogger Peter Hjort if Timmons might be available, and he replied:

I have no idea what Wes Timmons' injury was. He's available, but you DO NOT want him (unless he's your 2nd UT INF). He can't hit. At. All.

So there might be a disconnect between Timmons' AAA stats and his actual major-league ability. The good news is that it probably wouldn't take much more than an organizational player to get Timmons. The bad news is that he's probably not that much of an upgrade, with the caveat that I'm really impressed by a guy who posts a 60:33 BB:K ratio, regardless of level.

Florida:

Let's put it this way: they're moving Chris Coughlan to third, and at AAA they put up a mix of Brian Barden, who has looked simply atrocious in his limited major-league experiences (last two shots: .233/.286/.379 and .179/.281/.179), and Hector Luna. Hector Freaking Luna! Luna hit .294/.367/.477 with 11 errors in 97 games, while Barden hit .353/.407/.489 with 4 errors in 49 games. Matt Dominguez reached AA as a 21-year-old high draft pick and is The Man of the Future. You're not getting Matt Dominguez. Is Barden worth a look as a one-year stopgap? I say no. Nice year in AAA, though.

New York Mets:

How much do you invest in a 3B behind David Wright, Wright, Wright? (Old English football joke there)? At AAA, the erstwhile Mike Hessman ... yes, that Mike Hessman ... hit .274/.351/.573 with 18 HR in 248 AB. Awesome, right? I will point you to various other sights (such as Baseball Prospectus) which give you an accurate picture of Hessman's true skills

(walks infrequently, strikes out frequently, legitimate power), but let me leave you with this nugget: his #4 comp is Jeff Manto. I think that pretty much sums it up. (#7: Russ Branyan) Seems like a decent-enough fielder, but he'll be 33 in March and is Jeff Manto (even played in Beefalo this last season).

The guy you'd really like to take a look at is four-level guy Zach Lutz, who hit .287/.380/.571 across all levels and (more specifically) .289/.389/.578 in 61 games in AA, hitting 17 homers in 225 AB. He also struck out more than a time a game (33:63 BB:K ratio) and made 7 errors, so there's probably some polishing to do.

Of course, part of the reason for this is that "Zach Lutz" is Queensian for "Zydrunas Ilgauskas." In 2007, he missed time with a stress fracture in his foot. In 2008, a "leg injury". In 2010, ANOTHER stress fracture and plantar fasciitis. He got surgery with Ilgauskas Screws in 2007, but not surgery in 2010. (Frankly, Z was always better when he got the screws. Going without surgery ALWAYS meant a new injury was coming within the year.) Look, the guy can certainly hit, and if he doesn't supplant Wright at 3B, surely they'd find a place for him at 1B or LF or SOMETHING. I would certainly inquire about Lutz, but find it hard to believe he'd be available for a package you'd be willing to cough up, and his injury history is pretty frightening to boot (as it were).

Philadelphia:

AAA: Cody Ransom, Greg Dobbs. This falls into the "Chile, please" category.

At AA, we find a guy who hit .288/.360/.447 in 2009, and then plastered the International League to the tune of .315/.402/.631 this year. Sure, he made 11 errors in 104 games, but he hit 27 homes in 355 AB with an acceptable 47:85 BB:K ratio. I mean, that could play, right?

It's TAGG BOZIED! Tagg Friggin' Bozied! When was the last time you heard that name? 2006? 2003? Tagg Bozied! Man, I didn't know he could even PLAY third base. Would I take a shot on Tagg Bozied? Certainly a part of me is screaming, "Hell yeah!" But the man is 31 and my guess is that his defense is no better than Blakian at third and the man was at freaking DOUBLE-A. I might be missing something, but ... this is probably not a valid option. This is likely akin to signing Wes Hodges' older brother. Potential upside: Philadelphia might simply

give him to you.

Washington:

With Zimmy at the hot corner in the bigs, the most useful guy was probably Chase Lambin, who just signed a minor-league free agent deal with the Twins as I found out waiting to go on Seth Stohs' podcast last night. They do have a prospect in AA who split time between A and AA, Josh Johnson, who hit .309/.407/.457 in A ball and .287/.375/.444 in AA. He switch-hits and made 6 errors in 74 games with a 29:37 K:BB ratio in 223 AB in AA. Nice bat control, not so much power, good on-base skills. Telling the difference between him and Cord Phelps of a couple years ago might be difficult. Johnson would be an interesting target, but he's pretty far away from the bigs, and not entirely obviously any sort of upgrade over Lonnie Chisenhall, who Baseball America just termed the #1 prospect in the Cleveland farm system.

So, in conclusion, we have:

Serious power upgrade with injury concerns: Zach Lutz

Old quad-A meatball potentially better as one-year stopgap than Nix: Wes Timmons

Old quad-A meatballs I don't believe in: Luna, Barden, Hessman

Fabulous Moive-of-the-Week Level Crash Davis Jake Taylor Breaking Through Awesome Story of the Teens: Tagg Bozied

Ultimately, I'd ask my scouts if Bozied can play, call the Mets about Lutz, and write down Timmons' name to call back if I whiff on my first several choices.