

Indians leave Meetings with payroll flexibility

By Mandy Bell MLB.com

LAS VEGAS -- The Indians came to Las Vegas and successfully executed the same plan that many commoners share, but fail to execute, upon arrival to Sin City: obtain more money.

Thursday morning, Cleveland completed a three-team trade that sent Edwin Encarnacion to Seattle for former Indians slugger Carlos Santana and cash considerations and shipped Yandy Diaz and Cole Sulser to Tampa Bay in exchange for Jake Bauers.

Encarnacion will make over \$21 million in 2019 (the largest contract on the Indians' '19 payroll), while Santana is owed \$17 million. Although it's not the greatest amount of savings, the cash considerations involved will add a little more breathing room to address the team's other needs. "It certainly helps," Indians president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti said. "It just helps our near-term position and gives us more flexibility as we seek to build our team for 2019. Exactly what that means or what we'll do, we'll have to see."

Although the trade provided some flexibility to the Indians' roster, it doesn't necessarily fill all the holes the team has prior to Opening Day. Having cleared some space on the payroll by eliminating Yan Gomes' \$7 million contract in a trade with the Nationals, Cleveland has made space to potentially add some depth to the roster in the near future.

"A lot of things we were thinking about [can be accomplished through] interrelated transactions," Antonetti said on Tuesday. "It would lead us to have different segments of the roster, which if all of the pieces don't come together it doesn't align well so each deal is kind of dependent upon the other one."

Biggest remaining needs

1. OF: After losing key outfielders Michael Brantley, Lonnie Chisenhall and Melky Cabrera to free agency, the Indians are left with some inexperience and lack of depth beyond the infield, relying on Leonys Martin, who is bouncing back from a severe bacterial disease in August, and Tyler Naquin in right. Picking up Bauers in Thursday's trade will give the Indians another option, however the cliché "the more the merrier" would definitely benefit the Tribe.

2. Relievers: Just like its impact on the outfield, free agency also impacted the Indians' bullpen. The Tribe returns closer Brad Hand, but after losing Andrew Miller, Oliver Perez and Josh Tomlin, Cleveland could use a couple of additions to bolster the back end.

Rule 5 Draft

The Indians did not make a selection in the Major League phase of the Rule 5 Draft, but did lose right-hander Kyle Dowdy from Triple-A Toledo when the Mets selected him in the first round. Dowdy was traded from the Tigers' organization, along with Martin, to the Indians at the 2018 non-waiver Trade Deadline. In nine starts for the Mud Hens, the 25-year-old went 5-4 with a 4.47 ERA and a 1.51 WHIP. He was selected by Detroit in the 12th round of the '15 Draft out of the University of Houston.

Cleveland lost two more right-handers and a first baseman in the Triple-A phase. In the first round, the Angels selected Matt Esparza, who was Cleveland's 14th-round pick in 2015. Esparza, 24, had a combined 6.23 ERA in 8 2/3 innings in Rookie League and with Class A Advanced Lynchburg. Hector Figueroa was taken by the Rays to conclude the draft. Figueroa, 24, pitched to a 2.78 ERA in 14 appearances last season. Finally, the Indians' 18th-round pick in the '15 Draft, Anthony Miller, was then selected by the A's. Miller, 24, slashed .264/.363/.432 with eight homers with Lynchburg.

Also in the Triple-A phase, the Tribe selected left-hander Yapson Gomez from the Cubs' organization and first baseman Wilson Garcia from the Orioles. Gomez, 25, has been in Chicago's organization since 2013. Last season, Gomez tossed a combined 68 2/3 innings in relief, cumulating in a 3.28 ERA with Class A South Bend and Class A Advanced Myrtle Beach. Garcia, 24, hit a combined .293 with 23 home runs and 76 RBIs with the Class A Advanced teams in the Phillies' and Orioles' organizations.

GM's bottom line

"We could configure the roster in a variety of different ways. But there's still a lot of offseason left. I'm not sure this will be the final roster that we have going into Spring Training." -- Antonetti

Santana returns to Cleveland in 3-team deal

By Mandy Bell MLB.com

LAS VEGAS -- Indians president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti and general manager Mike Chernoff had their hands full at the airport in Las Vegas, waiting to board their flight back to Cleveland. They sat at their gate, working on a blockbuster trade, but not one that involved their starting pitchers.

The Indians acquired Carlos Santana from the Seattle Mariners in exchange for Edwin Encarnacion and cash considerations and sent Yandy Diaz and Cole Sulser to Tampa Bay for Jake Bauers in part of the three-way deal that was finalized as Antonetti and Chernoff were stepping onto the plane.

"We needed Commissioner's approval on the cash component, and that was the last thing we got," Antonetti said. "That was this morning right before we got on the plane. Or as we were getting on the plane."

After donning an Indians uniform for his first eight years in the Majors, Santana will have a homecoming in 2019. The 32-year-old spent his '18 season in Philadelphia after being signed as a free agent last December. The infielder slashed .229/.352/.414 last year with 24 homers and 86 RBIs. He was traded by the Phillies to the Mariners on Dec. 3 for shortstop Jean Segura, right-hander Juan Nicasio and lefty James Pazos. Because he was in the air, Antonetti had to wait until after the flight to call Santana, though the two communicated via text throughout the flight.

"I mean, we have a long history with him," Antonetti said. "We know what makes him tick, we know all of the things he brings to a team and a clubhouse, so that does help."

The Indians have multiple decisions to make at first base. Bauers played mainly first and some outfield for the Rays last season. After getting the callup to the big leagues in June, Bauers, 23, hit .201 with 11 homers and 48 RBIs in 388 plate appearances. The rookie could take first, but could also be a much-needed option in the Indians outfield to fill the vacancies left after the team lost multiple key outfielders to free agency.

"Jake's pretty special to us," Rays senior vice president of baseball operations Chaim Bloom said. "Our high opinion of him doesn't change. He's a competitor who can hit, and he's a pretty good defensive first baseman. We like him a lot. The Indians are getting a hell of a player, and it's going to be fun to watch his career progress."

"We like the fact that [Bauers] can play both [first and the outfield]," Antonetti said. "We feel he's an above-average defender at first, but also has some experience in the outfield and can also play out there if that's where we have an opportunity. So that versatility was an attractive element for us in addition to what we think he has the ability to develop into offensively."

Another option for the Tribe would be to split time between Yonder Alonso and Santana at first and designated hitter with Bauers in the outfield. Dealing Diaz to the Rays opens third base for Jose Ramirez, with Jason Kipnis settling back in at second base. Santana, who made 19 appearances at third last season, could also fill at times. However, the final roster is anything but set, and Kipnis also has gotten starts in the outfield and could again. The Indians also could use Alonso in a trade to help fill the vacancies in the rest of the roster, especially the bullpen.

"A lot of it depends upon what the final construction of our roster might be, but both Carlos and Jake do have some versatility," Antonetti said of Alonso's role in 2019. "So we could configure the roster in a variety of different ways. But there's still a lot of offseason left. I'm not sure this will be the final roster that we have going into Spring Training."

Diaz, 27, appeared in 39 games for Cleveland in 2018, hitting .312 with 15 RBIs. Antonetti said earlier this week that the team would feel comfortable with the young infielder getting over 500 plate appearances next year, but now the acquisitions of Santana and Bauers bring both experience and flexibility to the roster, respectively.

"First off, I think we're acquiring two players that we feel will help us next year," Antonetti said. "Both Carlos and Jake are productive Major League players that not only contribute but enhance the versatility of our roster. Beyond that, it adds some payroll flexibility for us in 2019."

Encarnacion owed \$25M for one year, including \$5M buyout.

Santana, headed to #Indians, owed \$35M for two years, including \$500K buyout.

The Indians' payroll has been one of the most discussed topics this offseason. Dealing Encarnacion erases the team's largest contract with the designated hitter to make \$21.67 million in 2019 with Santana receiving \$17 million.

According to a report by MLB Network Insider Ken Rosenthal, the Indians will receive \$6 million from the Mariners to help with Santana's two-year contract of \$35 million (including a \$500,000 buyout in 2021). With Santana's '19 earnings and the extra cash considerations, the Indians will have a little more wiggle room with their payroll for next season.

Seattle will also receive Cleveland's 77th pick of the 2019 Competitive Balance Draft.

Indians trade Encarnacion, Diaz; Carlos Santana returning

Ryan Lewis Beacon Journal/Ohio.com @ByRyanLewis

LAS VEGAS — Just as several key members of the Indians front office boarded their return flight from the winter meetings Thursday, they finally struck the type of restructuring deal for which they had been searching but unable to complete the previous three days.

The Indians finalized a major three-team deal to acquire first baseman Carlos Santana and \$6 million from the Seattle Mariners along with first baseman/outfielder Jake Bauers from the Tampa Bay Rays.

To acquire those two pieces and the cash, the Indians sent designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion and a compensation pick (No. 77) to the Mariners and infielder Yandy Diaz and minor-league right-hander Cole Sulser to the Rays. To facilitate the deal, the Rays sent \$5 million to the Mariners.

The deal gives the Indians some financial flexibility while also retooling much of their infield with added versatility. Both elements were needed.

"First off, I think we're acquiring two players who we feel will help us next year," Indians president of baseball operations Chris Antonetti said. "Both Carlos and Jake are productive major-league players that not only will contribute but will enhance the versatility to your roster, and beyond that it adds some payroll flexibility in 2019."

Santana, 32, is still owed \$40 million over the next two seasons, along with a \$17.5 million club option for 2021, which has a buyout of \$500,000. Encarnacion is slated to make \$20 million in 2019 and has a club option for 2020 valued at \$20 million with a \$5 million buyout. Their salaries, at least for 2019, essentially offset before factoring in the cash the Mariners included in the deal.

The Indians were clear during the week they weren't looking to rebuild. Rather, they were trying to position every asset they could in order to compete in 2019, extend their contention window beyond next year and find the necessary room financially to accomplish each goal. It was an attempt to reposition their resources on the roster.

Last season as a rookie, Bauers, 23, hit .201 with a .700 OPS (11 HR, 22 doubles), 48 RBI and six stolen bases in 388 plate appearances with the Rays. He primarily played first base but does have experience in left field, potentially giving the Indians some options.

"We like the fact that he can play both," Antonetti said. "We feel he's an above-average defender at first but also has some experience in the outfield and can also play out there if that's where we have an opportunity. That versatility was an attractive element to us in addition to what we think he has the ability to develop into offensively."

Santana, Bauers and Yonder Alonso are now all on the roster as primarily first basemen/designated hitters. If Bauers is moved to the outfield full time, Alonso can remain at first base. Otherwise, another deal could be in the works.

"A lot of it depends on what the final construction of the roster might be," Antonetti said when asked how the trade might affect Alonso. "But both Carlos and Jake do have some versatility. We could configure the roster in a variety of different ways."

In his first year away from Cleveland after signing a three-year, \$60 million deal with the Philadelphia Phillies, Santana hit .229 with a .352 on-base percentage, 24 home runs, 28 doubles and 86 RBI last season. He was traded to the Mariners earlier this month.

"We have a long history with him," Antonetti said of Santana. "We know what makes him tick. We know what things he brings to a team and to a clubhouse, so that does help."

This deal could also have further ramifications for the infield. Without Diaz, the Indians as currently constructed would likely move Jason Kipnis back to second base and Jose Ramirez to third base, although a secondary move could shift the Indians' versatile lineup.

Akron Beacon Journal LOADED: 12.14.2018

Cleveland Indians select two players, but lose four in the Rule 5 Draft

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

LAS VEGAS – The Indians drafted two players, but lost four in Thursday's Rule 5 Draft that marks the official end of the winter meetings.

The Mets selected right-hander Kyle Dowdy from the Indians in the major-league phase of the draft. The Indians acquired outfielder Leonys Martin and Dowdy from Detroit for infielder Willie Castro on July 31.

Dowdy went 1-4 with a 6.52 ERA in six starts for Class AA Akron after the deal. Before the deal he went 3-4 with a 5.09 ERA at Class AA Erie. The Mets paid \$100,000 for Dowdy and must keep him on their 25-man roster for the 2019 season. If not, they have to offer him back to the Indians for \$50,000.

In the Class AAA phase of the draft, the Indians lost three players as the Angels selected right-hander Matt Esparza, Oakland selected first baseman Anthony Miller and Tampa Bay drafted right-hander Hector Figueroa.

Esparza, a 14th-round pick in 2015, was injured for much of last season. Miller hit .264 (66-for-250) with eight homers and 30 RBI at Class A Lynchburg. He was the Tribe's 18th-round pick in 2015. Figueroa was 1-0 with a 2.78 ERA and two saves in 14 games for the Arizona Rookie League Indians.

The Indians selected left-hander Yapson Gomez from the Cubs and first baseman Wilson Garcia from Baltimore in the Triple-A phase of the draft. Gomez went 2-4 with a 3.28 in 38 games for Class A South Bend and Class A Myrtle Beach. He struck out 52 and walked 21 in 68 2/3 innings. Garcia, a switch-hitter, batted .293 (129-for-441) with 23 homers and 79 RBI for Class A Clearwater and Class A Frederick.

James Harris, the Indians' director of player development, said the organization was sorry to lose Dowdy. "We were excited about him," he said. "We think he was going to be a good player and we're sad to lose him."

Harris said Miller was slated to go to Akron in 2019 and trending in a positive way. "He's a big power bat." As for Figueroa, a native of the Dominican Republic, Harris said the clock ran out on the Indians.

"The way this works if a guy comes from Latin America, the clock starts quick," said Harris. "Before we got a real chance to dig in on him, he's Rule 5 eligible. We're sad to lose him."

Regarding the two players the Indians drafted, Harris said, "Garcia is a reliever, probably at the Double-A level and we're looking to develop him. Garcia is a switch-hitting first baseman. We'll see where he's at."

"We spend a couple of months on this. We have tons of analysts look at these players. Guys are digging in to see players who can fit and who we like. They identified two guys and we were able to pick them up."

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Cleveland Indians Scribbles: Carlos Santana-Edwin Encarnacion trade saves money, but I don't like losing Yandy Diaz – Terry Pluto

By Terry Pluto, The Plain Dealer tpluto@plained.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Scribbles in my Indians notebook after the Carlos Santana/Edwin Encarnacion trade:

1. Let's start with the money, because that is one of things driving the Encarnacion-for-Santana part of the deal. Last winter, Santana signed a 3-year, \$60 million contract with the Phillies as he left the Tribe via free agency. But it's a deal that goes down in value. He received \$25 million in the first year, with \$35 million left on the contract.
2. So the Indians picked up two years of Santana at \$17 million (2019) and \$18 million (2020). But as they say on an info-commercial, there's more. The Indians also receive \$6 million in cash from Seattle to help the deal go through.
3. That's right, this is the second time this winter Santana has been traded. Philadelphia traded him to Seattle last month. Santana batted .229 (.766 OPS) with 24 HR and 86 RBI. Now Seattle has shipped him to the Indians.
4. Encarnacion had \$25 million left on his contract: \$20 million for 2019 and a \$5 million buyout in 2020.
5. So let's add it up: The Indians get two years of Santana for \$29 million, thanks to the cash in the trade. So they actually have Santana for about \$4 million more through 2020 compared to one year at \$25 million for Encarnacion.
6. The Indians will save about \$10 million in payroll in 2019, according to league sources.

7. Encarnacion turns 36 on January 7. He batted .246 (.810 OPS) with 32 home runs and 107 RBI. In his two years with the Tribe, it seems Encarnacion's numbers looked better than he played. Maybe so, but he still was a legitimate power threat in the lineup. But his bat is starting to slow a bit.

8. Santana struggled early in the season (as usual) in his first season with the Phillies. He batted .229 (.766 OPS) with 24 home runs and 86 RBI. The odd part is Santana and Encarnacion both have a history of being rather dismal in April and May.

9. Manager Terry Francona has always liked Santana. He prefers switch-hitters. Santana is a first baseman, compared to Encarnacion being primarily a DH.

10. I wonder if the Indians have a deal pending for Yonder Alonso, who batted .250 (.731 OPS) with 23 HR and 83 RBI. He played first base in 2018. I suppose he could be the DH in 2019.

11. That brings us to the second part of the deal. The Indians shipped Yandy Diaz and a Player to be Name Later to Tampa Bay for Jake Bauers, a 23-year-old outfielder/first baseman.

12. Bauers entered the 2018 season as the No. 45 prospect in all of baseball, according to Baseball America. In 184 games over two seasons in Class AAA, Bauers batted .268 (.781 OPS) with 18 HR and 87 RBI. He was playing at a high level at a very young age.

13. He joined Tampa early last season, batting .252 (.864 OPS) with 5 HR and 18 RBI in 155 plate appearances before the All-Star break. But in the second half, he fell apart: .167 (.560 OPS) with 6 HR and 30 RBI in 233 plate appearances.

14. Bauers was not the first 22-year-old rookie to have a hard time. So, I wouldn't dwell on overall stats: .201 (.700 OPS) with 11 HR and 48 RBI.

15. I don't like giving up Diaz. I was hoping the Indians would open the season with him at third and see if he'd hit as a regular. He's a career .283 hitter (.729 OPS) in 299 plate appearances with the Tribe in 2017-18. His lack of power (one HR, 28 RBI) is a concern to some with the Indians. I liked him as a contact hitter.

16. Tampa likes Diaz, trading Bauers and sending \$5 million to Seattle (who shipped \$6 million to the Tribe) to make this deal happen.

17. I believe the Indians see Bauers as a future first baseman, perhaps as soon as 2020 when Santana would be the DH. Perhaps Bauer can help in the outfield. He played 16 games in the outfield for Tampa last season.

18. This trade probably means Jose Ramirez will play third with Jason Kipnis moving back to his original position at second base. If they had kept Diaz, Ramirez would have moved to second and Kipnis probably would have played left field.

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Indians trade for Carlos Santana, Jake Bauers; deal Edwin Encarnacion, Yandy Diaz in 3-team swap with Mariners and Rays

By Paul Hoynes, cleveland.com phoynes@cleveland.com

LAS VEGAS – Chris Antonetti and the rest of the Indians front office was already headed back to Cleveland on Thursday morning when they made news at the winter meetings.

The Indians, who have been talking about a three-team deal for several days, made one happen with Seattle and Tampa Bay during the Rule 5 Draft. The Indians received their old first baseman, Carlos Santana, and cash considerations from Seattle for DH Edwin Encarnacion and their 2019 Competitive Balance Round B First-Year Player Draft selection (77th overall). Then they sent infielder Yandy Diaz and right-hander Cole Sulser to the Rays for first baseman-outfielder Jake Bauers.

There was a lot of money involved to make the contracts work.

Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic reported that Tampa Bay sent the Mariners \$5 million to help pay for Encarnacion's contract. He'll make \$25 million this year, including a \$5 million buyout on his club option for 2020.

Seattle, meanwhile, will pay the Indians \$6 million to help pay for Santana's contract. Santana will make \$35 million over the next two years including a \$500,000 buyout.

Here's how the Indians, who completed the deal as they boarded their morning flight from Las Vegas to Cleveland, view the deal from the money side of things: they'll save \$10 million in 2019, but take on \$14 million in 2020. They will receive \$2 million from Seattle in 2019 and \$4 million in 2020.

Santana, 32, has been a traveling man in the last year. After spending eight years with the Indians, he signed a three-year, \$60 million deal with Philadelphia after the 2017 season. He played one year with the Phillies before they traded him to Seattle on Dec. 3 for shortstop Jean Segura and right-hander Juan Nicasio.

"We feel we're acquiring two productive Majors League players that also enhance the versatility of our roster," said Antonetti, via text at 30,000 feet. "This combination also helps us manage our 2019 payroll."

Encarnacion signed a three-year, \$60 million deal with the Indians after the 2016 season. He did just what the Indians wanted him to do – produce runs. In two years, Encarnacion hit 72 homers with 214 RBI.

Santana can now share the DH/first base duties with Yonder Alonso, who is signed through 2019 with a vesting option for 2020. When the Indians were discussing a variety of three-team deals, Alonso was involved in the discussions as they try to create more payroll flexibility and could still be a trade candidate.

Last season Santana hit .229 (128-for-560) with 24 homers and 86 RBI in 161 games. He drew 110 walks, the second highest total of his big-league career, while striking out just 93 times. Santana, in eight years with the Indians, hit .249 with 174 homers and 587 RBI in 1,116 games. He gives manager Terry Francona another switch hitter for the lineup to go along with Francisco Lindor and Jose Ramirez.

He's also younger than Encarnacion, who will play the 2019 season at 36, and is better defensively at first base than Alonso. Antonetti said Santana, potentially, could play some outfield as well. He did it for the Tribe in the World Series and for the Phillies last year.

The left-handed hitting Bauers, 23, bounced between Class AAA Durham and Tampa Bay. He made his big-league debut on June 7. He came up as a first baseman, but started playing the corner outfield spots at Triple-A. The Rays acquired him from San Diego in an 11-player deal in December of 2014.

He hit .279 (55-for-197) with 14 doubles, five homers and 24 RBI in 52 games at Durham. For the Rays, he hit .201 (65-for-323) with 11 homers and 48 RBI. He led AL rookies in walks with 54 and finished fourth in doubles with 22.

"We love Jake, but all things considered it we felt it was the right price to pay to get Yandy," said Cam Bloom, vice president of baseball operations for the Rays. "It's good for our roster going forward."

Bauers played 76 games at first base for the Rays last year and 20 in the outfield. It's unclear where the Indians intend to play him, but they have holes to fill in the outfield.

"Jake is pretty special to us," said Bloom. "He's a competitor who can hit and he's a pretty good first baseman. We like him a lot. There was no high-fiving after this deal. It was just something that made sense for us. The Indians are getting a helluva player. It's going to be fun to watch his career progress."

Asked whether Bauers would play first or the outfield, Antonetti said, "He could fit in either spot. We believe he's an above average defender at first, but athletic enough to also play the outfield. He's had experience at both positions."

Diaz, 27, has been in the Indians' organization since 2013 after he defected from Cuba. He has been a man without a position for most of that time, but he showed he could swing the bat. Last season he hit .312 (34-for-109) with five doubles, one homer and 15 RBI for the Indians.

Bloom said he didn't know where Diaz would play for the Rays, but was happy to get a hitter of his talent.

"It all depends how the rest of the winter unfolds," said Bloom, when asked where Diaz will play. "We have a lot of options around the infield, especially who can play third base. I think it's premature to say we know exactly where he's going to play. But the versatility he has does give us more options and more possible paths for our roster."

Bloom said they've been talking to the Indians about Diaz for a while. He's appeared in 49 games at third base, nine at first and three in the outfield in his career with the Tribe.

"It's a guy we've targeted in the past and things seemed to come to a head when we were here," said Bloom. "There are moving parts to this deal outside the guys we talked about. As with most three-team deals, everything had to line up to make it work and satisfy all three clubs."

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Jake Bauers: Here's what the first baseman/outfielder brings to the Cleveland Indians

By Joe Noga, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Acquired Friday in a three-team trade with Seattle and Tampa Bay, 23-year-old Jake Bauers will join the Cleveland Indians from the Rays along with ex-Tribe infielder Carlos Santana from the Mariners.

Indians fans are already quite familiar with Santana, who played his first eight big-league seasons in Cleveland. But they might need an introduction to Bauers, who was one of Tampa's top prospects the last few seasons.

Standing 6-foot-1 and weighing in at 195 pounds, Bauers bats and throws left-handed. He hit .201 with 11 home runs and 48 RBI in 96 games for Tampa last season, finishing his rookie campaign with a .700 OPS and an OPS+ of 94.

Drafted in 2013 in the seventh round of the first-year player draft by San Diego, Bauers was traded to Tampa in 2014 and steadily rose through the Rays' farm system before breaking through on June 7 against Seattle.

Below is a rundown of what Bauers brings to the Indians.

He's under team control for the next six seasons

Bauers is not eligible for arbitration until 2022 and cannot become a free agent until 2025. He will make the major league minimum salary of about \$558,000 in 2019.

His power numbers were a pleasant surprise and they are expected to rise

Entering the 2018 season, Bauers had a power grade of 50 and a hitting grade of 55 from MLB Pipeline. He was the No. 5 overall prospect in the Rays' system and was rated as high as No. 3 during the 2015 season.

Bauers made his big-league debut in early June and launched his first career big league home run on June 24, a walk-off blast against New York's Chasen Shreve. He homered in three consecutive games July 29-Aug. 1.

He can play first base and left field

The Indians likely see Bauers as a replacement for Michael Brantley in left field, but his primary position coming up through the minor leagues was first base. He was blocked in the outfield by several Rays prospects at the corner outfield positions.

According to Hudson Belinsky of Baseball America, Bauers received "good reports on his outfield play in the Arizona Fall League" in 2017 and that "he runs well and took surprisingly good routes to the ball." Bauers appeared in 76 games at first for Tampa, 16 games in left and four games in right. He did not commit an error and had one assist in 28 outfield chances.

He's a California kid

Bauers is from Newport Beach, California where he played for Marina High School. He originally committed to play for the University of Hawaii, but opted to sign with the Padres after he was drafted in 2013. Bauers becomes the fifth player on the Tribe's 40-man roster hailing from Southern California, including Trevor Bauer (North Hollywood), Shane Bieber (Orange), Adam Plutko (Upland) and Greg Allen (San Diego).

He's part of a three-team trade, again

The trade that sent Bauers from San Diego to Tampa was also a three-team deal that included Washington. The Rays sent 1B/OF Wil Myers, C Ryan Hanigan, LHP Jose Castillo, and RHP Gerardo Reyes to the Padres in return for INF Trea Turner and RHP Joe Ross, and then shipped those two to the Nationals in return for OF Steven Souza Jr., C Rene Rivera, LHP Travis Ott, RHP Burch Smith, and Bauers.

He homered against Corey Kluber last season

Bauers collected his 10th career home run in a Sept. 10 game against the Indians when he blasted a Corey Kuber offering to deep center with a runner on base. The home run gave Tampa a 3-1 lead in a game the Rays eventually won in walk-off fashion on a Ji-Man Choi homer in the bottom of the ninth.

He compares favorably to Adam Lind and ... Yonder Alonso?

How's that for strange? Matt Germain of DRaysBay.com compared Bauers to Lind and Alonso, noting that Bauers should be able to exceed Alonso's production and reach a similar level of productivity to Lind moving forward.

Here's what Bauers and Alonso accomplished in a similar number of at-bats in their Double-A seasons:

2010 Yonder: 9.9 % BB%, 16.3 % SO%, .820 OPS, .168 ISO, .363 wOBA, 123 wRC+

2017 Bauers: 13.6 % BB%, 19.5 % SO%, .779 OPS, .148 ISO, .352 wOBA, 120 wRC+

He's improved his baserunning

Bauers stole just two bases in 2013, and was rated as low as a 35 by MLB Pipeline in base running. He worked hard and improved his running, stealing 10 bases in 2016 and 20 in 2017. The 2016 and 2017 improvements are especially notable because they allowed the Rays to send Bauers to the OF, said Germaine.

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Encarnacion to Mariners, Santana to Indians in 3-team trade

BEN WALKER Associated Press

Seattle Mariners general manager Jerry Dipoto was in a hospital, making a trade from a bed.

Cleveland counterpart Chris Antonetti was boarding a plane headed back home, trying to finalize the deal before the flight pulled away from the gate.

They managed to complete the swap as the winter meetings came to an end. Carlos Santana was sent back to Cleveland, where he was an Indians fan favorite. Edwin Encarnacion is headed to Seattle — no telling how long he'll stick there.

The star hitters were dealt for each other Thursday, part of a three-team trade that also involved Tampa Bay.

The Rays got infielder Yandy Diaz and minor league right-hander Cole Sulser from Cleveland. The Indians also acquired first baseman Jake Bauers from Tampa Bay, while the busy Mariners wound up with a draft pick. Tampa Bay will send \$5 million to Seattle and the Mariners will pay \$6 million to Cleveland.

"I called Edwin earlier this morning before we had final sign-off because again I wanted him to hear from me," Antonetti said after landing, adding he was in midflight when he finally reached Diaz.

Dipoto made likely the first winter meetings deal from a medical facility since then Jim Hendry's agreement with pitcher Ted Lilly in 2007 when the then-Chicago Cubs general manager was taken for angioplasty in 2006. Dipoto felt ill a day earlier and was checked "out of an abundance of caution," the team said. Dipoto was released from the hospital later Thursday.

"We'll see how it goes with Edwin, whether he stays with us or he moves on to another destination," Seattle assistant general manager Justin Hollander said.

Coming off their third straight AL Central title, the Indians had been expected to make a move at the meetings, presumably with ace Corey Kluber or pitcher Trevor Bauer.

Instead, they jettisoned Encarnacion — the designated hitter has averaged 108 RBIs over the last seven seasons — and brought back the popular Santana.

"Not sure how to feel," Indians star Jose Ramirez tweeted.

The 32-year-old Santana, known for his power and ability to draw walks, spent the first eight seasons of his career in Cleveland before signing a \$60 million, three-year deal with Philadelphia last winter. He is still owed \$35 million.

Philadelphia sent Santana to the rebuilding Mariners this month in a trade that included All-Star shortstop Jean Segura. Seattle quickly parted with Santana, who was appreciated by Indians rooters even more after he left.

"We know what makes him tick. We know all of the things that he brings to a team into a clubhouse, so that does help," Antonetti said.

Santana hit .229 with 24 home runs and 86 RBIs while walking 110 times as the Phillies' first baseman. He is owed \$17 million next season and \$17.5 million in 2020, part of a deal that includes a \$17.5 million team option for 2021 with a \$500,000 buyout.

Yonder Alonso hit 23 homers with 83 RBIs last season as the Indians' first baseman. He's signed for 2019 with an option for 2020 — with the additions of Santana and Bauers, perhaps Alonso could end up in a trade along with one of Cleveland's star pitchers.

Encarnacion had 107 RBIs while hitting 32 homers and .246. He leads the majors in homers and RBIs since 2012, and could provide the power lost when DH Nelson Cruz became a free agent.

A month before he turns 36, Encarnacion is guaranteed \$25 million: \$20 million next season and a \$5 million buyout of a \$25 million club option for 2020.

"Both Carlos and Jake are productive major league players that not only will contribute but enhance the versatility of our roster," Antonetti said. "And beyond that it adds some payroll flexibility for us in 2019."

Seattle gets a competitive balance round B draft pick, currently projected at 77th overall. The Mariners, who recently traded star second baseman Robinson Cano and closer Edwin Diaz, said getting that choice was key to them making the deal.

"By adding another draft pick for 2019, we have another opportunity to add to the talent in our minor league system," Dipoto said in a statement.

Tampa Bay was eager to get Yandy Diaz, who hit .283 with 28 RBIs in 88 games for Cleveland in the last two seasons. Highly regarded at 27, his opportunities were limited with the Indians because they already had a talented infield.

Diaz hit .312 in 39 games for Cleveland this year. The Cuban led the Triple-A International League in on-base percentage.

"The key to this deal for us is how we feel about Yandy Diaz," said Chaim Bloom, the Rays' senior vice president of baseball operations. "We really like his bat. He hasn't gotten an opportunity to show it regularly at the major league level just being blocked by some of the players that the Indians have had."

"But we think there's a lot of upside there," he said. "He's a third baseman by trade. He can also play first base. He's kicked around the outfield a little bit. That and the fact that he's a right-handed hitter is a really good fit for our roster."

The 23-year-old Bauers made his major league debut last season and hit .201 with 11 homers and 48 RBIs in 96 games for Tampa Bay.

Sulser, 28, spent last season in Triple-A and Double-A, going a combined 8-4 with a 3.86 ERA in 47 relief appearances.

Tampa Bay will send the Mariners \$2.5 million in two installments by May 1 and Aug. 1 next year. Seattle will send Cleveland a pair of \$1 million payments on or before May 1 and Aug. 1 next year, and \$2 million on or before each of those dates in 2020.

Three-team trade gives Indians flexibility for future

Author: Matthew Florjancic

CLEVELAND — CLEVELAND -- After many reports about starting pitching, the Cleveland Indians altered their batting order and infield lineup by striking a three-team deal with the Seattle Mariners and Tampa Bay Rays on the final day of the 2018 Major League Baseball Winter Meetings in Las Vegas.

The Indians dealt designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion and a Competitive Balance Round B selection in the 2019 First-Year Player Draft to the Mariners in exchange for their former first baseman, Carlos Santana. The other half of the deal came with the acquisition of first baseman/outfielder Jake Bauers from the Rays for third baseman Yandy Diaz and a player to be named.

The Indians are one of the many teams in MLB looking to reduce payroll this offseason, and while it does not clear all that much space, the trade did free up some cash that will come in handy, especially with hefty raises expected to come in arbitration for pitcher Trevor Bauer and shortstop Francisco Lindor.

By dealing away Encarnacion in exchange for Santana, the Indians saved \$1.3 million in 2019, as well as \$5 million in 2020. If the team kept Encarnacion for 2019, but then, declined his option for the 2020 season, it would have cost them a \$5 million buyout.

Plus, the Indians got cash considerations back from the Mariners in the deal.

GETTING BACK PRODUCTIVE TALENT

With the Indians in 2016, Santana hit .259 with 151 hits in 582 at-bats with 89 runs scored, 87 RBI, 31 doubles, three triples and 34 home runs with 99 walks against 99 strikeouts. Additionally, Santana had .366 on-base and .498 slugging percentages.

During the 2017 season, Santana hit .259 with 23 home runs, 37 doubles, 79 runs batted in, another 90 scored and 148 hits over 154 games. Additionally, Santana struck out 94 times, but worked his way to 88 walks.

In his eight years with the Indians, Santana had a .249 batting average with 995 hits in 3,994 at-bats over 1,116 regular-season games. He belted 236 doubles, 13 triples and 174 home runs, drove in 587 runs, scored another 573 and drew 726 walks against 812 strikeouts.

In 21 playoff appearances with the Indians, Santana had two doubles, four home runs, eight RBI, eight runs scored and 11 walks against 16 strikeouts.

BAUERS CREATES OPTIONS

Encarnacion was not the only infielder the Indians were rumored to explore deals for during the Winter Meetings, as first baseman Yonder Alonso reportedly has been placed on the trade block. Should the Indians find a suitor for Alonso, Bauers will give them plenty of flexibility.

Bauers can play infield on days when Santana is off or serving as the designated hitter, or he could be a platoon player for a team short on Major League talent in the outfield.

Although Bauers had a .201 batting average in 96 games with the Rays last season, he scored 48 runs, drove in 48 and finished with 35 extra-base hits, including 22 doubles, 11 home runs and two triples. Plus, Bauers drew 54 walks to raise his on-base percentage to .316.

Three-team trade sends Carlos Santana to Indians, Edwin Encarnacion to M's

ESPN News Services

The Seattle Mariners have acquired slugger Edwin Encarnacion from Cleveland, sending Carlos Santana back to the Indians as part of a three-team trade that also includes the Tampa Bay Rays, it was announced Thursday.

The Indians will receive first baseman Jake Bauers from the Rays, while Tampa Bay will get third baseman Yandy Diaz from Cleveland. The Indians also are sending minor league pitcher Cole Sulser to the Rays and the 77th pick in the 2019 competitive balance draft to the Mariners.

Mariners general manager Jerry Dipoto was released from a hospital Thursday, hours after completing a trade from his bed during the baseball winter meetings.

Tampa Bay will send \$5 million to Seattle, and the Mariners will pay \$6 million to Cleveland.

Encarnacion, who turns 36 in January, hit .246 with 32 home runs for the Indians last season. He was third in the American League with 107 RBIs. His streak of seven consecutive seasons with at least 30 home runs leads all active players.

"We're excited to add a proven offensive performer in Edwin Encarnacion," Mariners general manager Jerry Dipoto said in a statement. "In addition, by adding another draft pick for 2019, we have another opportunity to add to the talent in our minor league system."

However, with the Mariners having made a flurry of moves -- recently trading star second baseman Robinson Cano and closer Edwin Diaz -- the team wouldn't tip its hand if Encarnacion would be staying.

"We'll see how it goes with Edwin, whether he stays with us or he moves on to another destination," Seattle assistant general manager Justin Hollander said.

Trade Daze

Starting with the deal to send catcher Mike Zunino to Tampa Bay, the Mariners have made deals involving 11 players since Nov. 7.

PLAYER TO

C Mike Zunino Rays
OF Guillermo Heredia Rays
LHP Michael Plassmeyer Rays
LHP James Paxton Yankees
RHP Alex Colome White Sox
2B Robinson Cano Mets
RHP Edwin Diaz Mets
SS Jean Segura Phillies
RHP Juan Nicasio Phillies
LHP James Pazos Phillies
1B Carlos Santana Indians

Dipoto finished the trade while in a hospital. He felt ill a day earlier and was checked "out of an abundance of caution," the team said.

Santana returns to the Indians, where he started his career in 2010 before signing with the Philadelphia Phillies in free agency prior to last season. He was traded to the Mariners on Dec. 3.

Encarnacion mostly served as the Indians' designated hitter in 2018 but also started 23 games at first base. Cleveland ranked 23rd in the majors last season with a .312 on-base percentage from their first basemen. Santana provides an immediate upgrade in that department, as he had a .365 OBP during his eight seasons with the Indians and a .352 OBP with the Phillies.

Overall, Encarnacion has 380 career home runs with 1,156 RBIs and a .264 batting average.

He is guaranteed \$25 million: \$20 million next season and a \$5 million buyout of a \$25 million club option for 2020.

Santana, 32, signed a three-year, \$60 million contract with the Phillies last offseason and has a base salary of \$17 million in 2019 and \$17.5 million in 2020. His contract has a club option for the 2021 season worth \$17.5 million with a \$500,000 buyout.

He hit .229 with 24 home runs and 86 RBIs in 2018.

Coming off their third straight AL Central, the Indians had been expected to make a move at the meetings, presumably with ace Corey Kluber or pitcher Trevor Bauer.

"Not sure how to feel," Indians star Jose Ramirez tweeted.

Yonder Alonso hit 23 homers with 83 RBI last season as the Indians' first baseman. He's signed for 2019 with an option for 2020 -- with the additions of Santana and Bauers, perhaps Alonso could end up in a trade along with one of Cleveland's star pitchers.

Tampa Bay was eager to get Diaz, who hit .283 with 28 RBIs in 88 games for Cleveland in the last two seasons. Highly regarded at 27, his opportunities were limited with the Indians because they already had a talented infield.

"The key to this deal for us is how we feel about Yandy Diaz," Rays vice president Chaim Bloom said. "We really like his bat. He hasn't gotten an opportunity to show it regularly at the major league level just being blocked by some of the players that the Indians have had."

The 23-year-old Bauers made his major league debut last season and hit .201 with 11 homers and 48 RBI in 96 games for Tampa Bay.

Sulser, 28, spent last season in Triple-A and Double-A, going a combined 8-4 with a 3.86 ERA in 47 relief appearances.

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What it's like to cover an Indians three-team trade while on a flight with no Wi-Fi and the front office on board

Zack Meisel Dec 13, 2018 48

35,000 FEET IN THE AIR — Airplane mode can go to hell.

When you get word that the Indians are trading away Edwin Encarnacion and Yandy Díaz and are acquiring Carlos Santana, you fire off that tweet, even as your plane gains steam on the runway.

And then you turn around. Four rows behind you is Indians president Chris Antonetti, staring back with a sly grin.

"It's done."

He said he could provide full details once we reached our cruising altitude on our return to Cleveland after four days in Las Vegas for the Winter Meetings. Perfect. Purchase the \$8 Wi-Fi, collect all of the information, send it out to the world and write up a story. A productive, efficient day.

Ah, but Southwest had other plans.

This is the story of a trade completed minutes before takeoff on a cross-country flight full of team executives and a couple of fingernail-chomping, internally screaming reporters. Feel free to cue up the "Seinfeld" theme as you read along.

It all began at Gate C22, a small nook beside a row of glitzy slot machines and a Nathan's Hot Dogs stand. Mike Chernoff stood beneath the monitors displaying departure statuses and chatted with assistant general manager Matt Forman. Antonetti eventually joined them, and a parade of texting and phone conversations commenced.

Members of the Indians' analytics department, video department, scouting department and clubhouse managing team sat at the gate and waited for the boarding process to begin. The Indians' director of media relations typed away on his laptop nearby.

The Indians were up to something. And Chernoff could tell that we were suspicious.

Southwest's boarding system created a stressful scenario. I held the A27 position. Antonetti, Chernoff and Forman all had business select, all within the first 15 passengers to board. They would certainly cluster together. Should I crash their party and attempt to snoop out their activity? Should I sit a row behind them and try to keep tabs on what they're doing? Should I leave them alone? From past shared flights, I had an idea that Antonetti was an aisle guy. Should I snag the middle seat beside him, or would that just urge him to ignore my texts and calls until the end of time?

They chose the middle of the plane, occupying the exit rows. The Indians' brain trust, a group of people I constantly pester with information requests, were now my guardian angels. Antonetti and Chernoff selected adjacent aisle seats, with Forman in front of them. Overwhelmed by the decision at hand, I plopped down a few rows in front of them. It felt like a movie scenario in which the protagonist must snip one of four colored wires to deactivate a bomb. I couldn't handle the pressure.

This was chaotic, but it could be OK. If they executed a trade, Ryan Lewis of the Akron Beacon Journal and I had the best resources a mere 10 feet from us. We should be able to obtain a quote if necessary, right?

"If the seatbelt sign isn't on," Ryan quipped.

And then, I got word. Welcome back, Santana. See you later, Encarnacion.

I had to tweet out what I knew, but the flight attendants had already demanded that we switch our phones into airplane mode. As I rushed to type my 104 characters, an attendant, donning a red Santa hat, delivered a speech littered with jokes.

Wear your seatbelt like Britney Spears wore her pants: low and tight
Place your seat in a full, upright and most uncomfortable position
If you're traveling with two children, just pick the one with the most potential
We're checking to make sure your shoes match your outfit; we want you to look your best
If you want to smoke, just step out onto that wing
If you aren't a fan of these jokes, there are eight ways to leave the plane

This was not helping me focus. Come on, feel the room.
My tweet went through and the plane left the ground. Adios, world. Catch up with you in about 10 minutes, when I hopefully have more complete details to share.

I turned around and faced Antonetti. He said we could chat once phone usage was permitted.

Last year, Antonetti and Chernoff flew into Burke Lakefront Airport after the Winter Meetings. They remained there for about two hours, working on a contract negotiation with none other than Carlos Santana. (Obviously, he ultimately signed with the Phillies.)

In a lighthearted moment Wednesday, I asked whether they had the means to get anything done on an actual flight.

"We have Wi-Fi," Antonetti replied.

I asked when he was flying back to Cleveland.

"We're in the morning (on Thursday)," he said. "It has become a fully connected world 365 days a year."

Well, if that wasn't the greatest jinx of the week.

When the flight attendant voiced that passengers could use their electronics, I frantically retrieved my laptop and called up the Wi-Fi page on my phone. Antonetti and Chernoff both laughed. Their work was complete, but mine was just beginning.

One problem: Southwest Wi-Fi wouldn't work. Every click of the "Submit Payment" button segued into a 504 Gateway Timeout page. I won't be shocked if charges adding up to \$800 appear on my credit card statement.

Antonetti did relay the final details of the deal:

Indians receive: Carlos Santana, Jake Bauers, cash
Mariners receive: Edwin Encarnacion, compensatory pick, cash
Rays receive: Yandy Díaz, Cole Sulser

Knowing the information was helpful. Not being able to do anything with the information was painful.

The teams had to wait for approval from the commissioner's office before the trade was final, since the deal included a bounty of cash changing hands. The Indians were preparing to board the plane when the transaction was complete. That was a first, Antonetti said.

There would be no news conference on the plane. Too cramped. Poor sound quality resulting from the steady hum of the engine and the pumping of the air conditioning. And, with occasional turbulence, there would be no gathering in the aisle.

Antonetti passed on his choice from a selection of pretzels, Fritos, Oreos and crackers. (In related news, the Indians passed on selecting anyone in the major-league portion of the Rule 5 draft Thursday morning.) Once he gave up his internet bid, he got some sleep.

With about an hour remaining on the three-hour, 50-minute trek, the Wi-Fi started to work. By then, of course, every last detail of the deal had been publicized. Shortly before we began our descent, a flight attendant led the passengers in a stretching routine. Then, more jokes.

Anything left behind can be found at 10 a.m. tomorrow on eBay.
Nobody loves you or your money more than Southwest.

We interviewed Antonetti and Chernoff at the information desk in front of the TSA pre-check line. The Indians save a bit of money in 2019 and they like Bauers' ability to play either first base or corner outfield.

"(It) gives us more flexibility as we seek to build our team for 2019," Antonetti said. "Exactly what that means, we'll have to see."

Antonetti called Encarnacion on Thursday morning to deliver the news, as he didn't want the slugger to hear it from someone else in the event Antonetti was on the flight when the deal was finalized. He and Díaz exchanged texts during the flight, after his call went unanswered before boarding. They talked with Bauers about five minutes before departure, and Antonetti has kept in touch with Santana.

"This was a first," Antonetti said.

"Let's never do it again," I replied.

Law: Indians trade risk for expense in Santana-Encarnacion swap

Keith Law

Following the Seattle Mariners' Jean Segura-led trade with the Phillies, it always seemed like Carlos Santana would be subsequently flipped, which the Mariners finally did on Thursday as part of a three-team deal. As a result, at the moment they have Edwin Encarnacion, Santana is reunited with the Cleveland Indians, and the Tampa Bay Rays swapped Jake Bauers to Cleveland for Yandy Diaz, with a probable Encarnacion trade still to come.

Encarnacion's second year in Cleveland on his three-year deal (plus a 2020 option) was his worst season at the plate since 2011, with the highest strikeout rate of his major-league career. So there was every reason for Cleveland to be concerned about what he might do over the next year or two and whether the contract might become dead money. They take on more expense in adding Carlos Santana, who's a better overall hitter thanks to his on-base skills, also is best served as a DH, and seems poised for a modest return to form after a career-worst BABIP. Cleveland is trying to shed some payroll but still contend for the AL Central title in 2019; this trade makes them at least a win better, maybe 2-3, at a modest cost, while still bringing in a younger player who could help them in the long term.

Tampa Bay adds Diaz, a third baseman who has always hit for average but has no power. He makes a lot of hard contact but often puts the ball on the ground. It's easy to say that Diaz could benefit from a change to his launch angle -- put a pin in that thought, we're going to talk about it again -- but I'm sure Cleveland tried this with him already. He has produced all of one home run in 299 major-league plate appearances so far, with a 56.6 percent ground ball rate, tied for 10th-highest in MLB over the past two years (minimum 200 PA). Even when he hits the ball hard, it's on the ground: 53 percent of the balls he hit with exit velocity of 95 mph or greater were ground balls. He's at least an average defender at third base and could fill in as either a first baseman or corner outfielder, so if the Rays can get him to put the ball in the air more by doing something that Cleveland didn't, they could end up with an above-average or better regular here -- but it doesn't seem terribly likely.

The Rays must have soured on Bauers after attempts to unlock more power by changing his launch angle, creating more loft in the finish to his swing, failed. Bauers returned to his old swing mechanics, which are geared towards hitting for average and high contact but not power. Of course, he didn't even hit for contact in his rookie year in 2018, striking out 26.8 percent of the time and posting a .201/.316/.384 line in 388 PA and producing less than nothing against lefties. He'll play in his age-23 season in 2019 and did have a strong track record of hitting for contact throughout the minors, so there's still good reason to think he'll develop into a regular at first base, but the lack of power limits his ceiling and he's not good enough on defense to play other positions.

The Mariners clear salary here, add a draft pick in the competitive balance B round (and thus increase their draft bonus pool), and can still add another prospect by trading Encarnacion away. Their rebuilding continues apace, and now they have some extra cash to play with in the draft in June.

Why did the Rays trade first baseman Jake Bauers for infielder Yandy Diaz?

By Juan Toribio

LAS VEGAS — When Jake Bauers got called up in June, the future had finally arrived for the Tampa Bay Rays. After years of talking about the youngsters in the minor leagues, it was now time to see what the future would hold for the Rays, with Bauers and shortstop Willy Adames leading the way.

Bauers jumped out to a hot start, hitting nine home runs in his first 44 games, and quickly became a fan favorite. His bat flip on a walk-off home run against the Yankees on June 24 gave Rays fans a glimpse of what they hoped this young team would be able to do against the likes of New York and Boston.

Just six months after being called up, the Rays decided to trade Bauers to the Indians as part of a three-team deal on Thursday, just as the MLB Winter Meetings were ready to wrap up in Las Vegas. In exchange, Tampa Bay received infielder Yandy Diaz and minor-league pitcher Cole Sulser.

"The key in this deal is how we feel about Yandy Diaz," said Rays vice president of baseball operations Chaim Bloom. "We really like his bat. He hasn't gotten an opportunity to play with regularity at the major league level, just being blocked by some of the players the Indians have had, but we think there's a lot of upside there."

"He hits the ball to all fields, hits the ball really, really hard and has a chance to drive the ball more as he continues to develop as a hitter."

In his short time in the big leagues, Diaz, 27, has shown the ability to hit the ball hard, but he hasn't necessarily turned that into home-run power. In limited work with the Indians last season, the native of Cuba slashed .312/.375/.422 in 120 plate appearances. Diaz connected on just one home run, but eight of his 34 hits went for extra bases.

With this move, the Rays clearly are betting on Diaz's bat. They're hopeful that he can tap into some more power as he continues to develop, but the club would be content if he remained the same type of hitter he is right now, which is a player that will hit to all parts of the field and get on base.

Along with Bauers, the Rays also sent \$5 million dollars to the Mariners, Carlos Santana went to Cleveland and Edwin Encarnacion was sent to Seattle.

Why did the Rays make the deal?

The Rays' interest in Diaz had been widely reported over the last couple of days in Las Vegas, but the fact that Bauers was part of the return came as a surprise to everyone.

Bloom understood that there would be some shock among players who had moved up through the Rays system with Bauers, but he did say that the organization believes Diaz will fit in well with the core players and the clubhouse atmosphere.

The Rays also believe that Diaz will give the roster even more versatility. He can play first base but at the same time is capable of playing either third base or in the outfield. The move gives manager Kevin Cash even more options, and it'll allow him to keep his players fresh for what the club hopes is a long season that extends well into October.

Diaz, who signed as an older player out of Cuba, still has five years left of team control as well. Both Bauers and Diaz were under control for a long period of time, so getting a controllable player for Bauers was something the Rays wanted.

Adding right-handed bats, too, has been a priority for the Rays ever since the offseason began. They dealt Mallex Smith for right-handed catcher Mike Zunino in November and have now added Diaz to hit from the right side.

Those two additions, however, doesn't mean that the team is done shopping for another bat.

"It's something we're still open to," Bloom said. "We feel like we do have a deep and functional club right now and we're going to continue to look at other ways to improve, but we like where our roster stands."

What's next?

Adding Diaz gives the Rays another infield option, which likely means someone will be on the move before the season begins. Diaz joins an infield group that includes Joey Wendle, Matt Duffy, Daniel Robertson and Brandon Lowe. Everyone except for Duffy can slide into the outfield, which means Duffy could be the odd man out.

One plus of having such a versatile roster is the fact that the Rays can now carry one (or even two) big bats who are solely designated hitters. That leaves the door open for the Rays to continue to explore signing someone like Nelson Cruz. Cruz's representatives met with the Rays on Wednesday night, and we're told the negotiations "went well, but nothing is imminent."

Bloom and the Rays have continuously said that they're happy with the club they have right now, but I would expect the Rays to continue shopping.

So who plays first base?

With Bauers and C.J. Cron now out of town, the question now shifts to who will play first base in 2019.

While the Rays have a couple of months to figure things out — and could still bring someone in from the outside — they're hoping Diaz, Choi and even Robertson and Lowe can help the team at the position on any given night. As of right now, Cash will likely play matchups at the position. Getting Diaz is an upgrade offensively for the Rays, but the team defense certainly takes a hit with Bauers' departure.

One other option for the Rays is highly touted prospect and 2018 minor league player of the year, Nathaniel Lowe. Over three stops in the minor leagues, Lowe hit .330 with 27 home runs and 102 runs batted in. The organization is high on Lowe, and there's a good chance that he joins the team sometime during the 2019 season.

Until then, the Rays will have to work with what they've got at first base. But the team's offseason action might just be getting started.

The Athletic LOADED: 12.14.2018

Jerry Dipoto hospitalized, but Mariners continue drafting, trading

BY TJ COTTERILL

The Seattle Mariners announced three key transactions on Thursday on the final day of MLB's winter meetings in Las Vegas.

- They traded Carlos Santana to the Indians for Edwin Encarnacion and a draft pick.
- They selected right-handed reliever Brandon Brennan from the Rockies in the Rule 5 draft.
- General manager Jerry Dipoto was hospitalized with a series of blood clots in his lungs.

Yeah, Dipoto can apparently sign off on deals even from a hospital bed, doing so with assistant general manager Justin Hollander briefly by his bedside.

The Mariners said he's fine, even though he was undergoing tests at a local hospital because he had been dealing with an illness since Tuesday. They said he was being treated out of "an abundance of caution." He was expected to fly home to Seattle on Friday.

"They're still running tests, getting results. I would assume it's nothing serious if they're going to let him go home, hopefully today," Hollander told reporters. "He seemed to be feeling better based on what (wife) Tamie said. He was even looking better last night than before he went in."

But this is Las Vegas, and there was wheeling and dealing to do.

They picked the 27-year-old right-hander Brennan from Rockies just before reports circled that the Mariners had traded Santana to the Indians for 35-year-old designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion.

What a morning.

"We were texting back and forth. Some of the groundwork had been laid and then he basically handed me the keys and said, 'You know what I want to do roughly, just check in when you have it, but go run with it.'"

But they picked Brennan because, well, they need relievers. They already traded Edwin Diaz, Alex Colome, Juan Nicaio and James Pazos, while Nick Vincent, Adam Warren, Zach Duke and David Phelps have become free agents.

Brennan spent most of this past season with Double-A Birmingham, but he also appeared in four games with Triple-A Charlotte. He combined to go 5-4 with a save and a 3.25 ERA in 44 games. He limited opposing hitters to a .205 batting average and struck out 79 batters in 74 2/3 innings.

Here's the catch — a player selected in the major league phase of the Rule 5 draft has to be kept on the 25-man roster of the team that drafted him for the entirety of the following season, and the player can't head to the disabled list for at least 90 days.

If one of those doesn't happen, then Brennan would be sent to waivers, and the club that claims him must also keep him on the 25-man roster for the entire season. If he clears waivers, then he'd have to be offered back to the Rockies for \$25,000 or they can work out a trade so the Mariners could send him to the minor leagues.

Players who signed at age 19 or older are eligible for the Rule 5 draft if they have spent at least four years in the minor leagues without being added to the 40-man roster. Players age 19 or younger are eligible for the draft if they spent at least five years in the minor leagues without being added to the 40-man roster.

From the Mariners' system, right-hander Adonis De La Cruz was drafted by the Yankees, the Nationals selected Chuck Taylor, and the Mets took right-hander Chris Mazza.

News Tribune LOADED: 12.14.2018

From a hospital bed in Las Vegas, Mariners GM Jerry Dipoto finalizes a trade for Edwin Encarnacion

By Ryan Divish

LAS VEGAS — The legend of Trader Jerry has a new anecdote.

Jerry Dipoto, the Mariners general manager and the man of many trades and transactions, finalized a trade with the Cleveland Indians late Wednesday evening from a Las Vegas hospital bed with assistant general manager Justin Hollander standing in the room.

To conclude a three-team trade that included the Tampa Bay Rays, Dipoto sent recently acquired first baseman/designated hitter Carlos Santana back to the Indians in exchange for designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion and a competitive balance round B choice in the 2019 draft to Seattle. That selection is No. 77 overall in the draft. Sources confirmed the Mariners also received \$5 million in cash from the Indians and sent \$6 million in cash to the Rays. That cash will be paid out over two years.

Cleveland received first baseman Jake Bauers from the Rays, and the Rays received third baseman Yandy Diaz from Cleveland. Minor-league pitcher Cole Sulser also went from Cleveland to Tampa Bay.

"We're excited to add a proven offensive performer in Edwin Encarnacion," Dipoto said in a statement, presumably made from his hospital bed. "In addition, by adding another draft pick for 2019, we have another opportunity to add to the talent in our minor-league system."

Of the dozens and dozens of trades Dipoto has made with the Mariners, completing one from a hospital is a first for him.

"I have a picture of it," Hollander said, showing a cellphone picture of Dipoto wearing a hospital gown in bed and giving a thumbs-up.

Dipoto had been feeling ill since Tuesday evening, and after being relegated to his room for most of Wednesday, the Mariners staff in Las Vegas decided to take him to a hospital out of "an abundance of caution."

Sources confirmed the diagnosis was a blood clot in his lung.

"He's feeling better," Hollander said Thursday. "I was just texting with him and his wife, Tamie, said he was feeling better. Hopefully, he gets out of there today and can fly back tomorrow. They are still running tests and getting results. But I would assume it's nothing serious if they are hopefully going to let him go home today."

Early Thursday evening, Dipoto confirmed via text message that he'd been treated and released from the hospital in the afternoon and was cleared to fly back to Seattle on Friday.

The framework of the deal started earlier in the week and with Dipoto not feeling well, Hollander and the rest of the staff continued to work on it.

"He handed me the keys and said, 'You know what I want to do so just check in if you have questions, but go run with it,'" Hollander said. "Everybody chipped in and everybody did a little bit more and jumped in. Everybody was awesome."

But late Wednesday evening, Hollander decided to visit Dipoto as the trade was getting close to being finalized and had some last-minute details to be set.

"We went to see him because there was sort of a new wrinkle in the trade. I told one of the teams that I was on my way to see him to get them an answer on something in a half an hour," Hollander said. "I asked him how he was doing first — 'How are you feeling?' And then we talked trade and did the deal. I put him on speaker phone."

Santana's time with the Mariners was brief — a total of 10 days.

When the Mariners acquired Santana from the Phillies as part of the trade that sent shortstop Jean Segura and relievers James Pazos and Juan Nicasio to Philadelphia, the expectation was that the Mariners would move him immediately as part of what they are calling their "step back."

But it was somewhat surprising that they acquired Encarnacion, who turns 36 in January. The veteran slugger hit .246 (123 for 500) with 74 runs, 16 doubles, 32 home runs, 107 RBI, 63 walks, a .336 on-base percentage and a .474 slugging percentage (.810 OPS) in 137 games with Cleveland in 2018. He will make \$20 million in 2019 with a \$5 million buyout for his 2020 option listed at \$20 million. Santana was slated to make \$17.5 million each of the next two seasons and has a \$500,000 buyout.

Much as with the acquisition of Santana, it seems more than unlikely that Encarnacion ever wears a Mariners uniform. The Mariners are expected to flip Encarnacion to another team in a trade to garner some more prospects.

"He's a really good player," Hollander said. "We'll see where it goes with Edwin whether he stays with us or moves on to another destination. If he plays for us, he'll be a good player for us."

Some reports have said the Mariners were going to immediately trade Encarnacion to the Rays, but multiple MLB sources have said that isn't likely. The Rays actually valued Santana more than Encarnacion.

"I haven't talked to anyone specifically on him yet and I don't think Jerry has either," Hollander said.

There is a market for Encarnacion. But it might take some time to develop with teams still looking at possibly signing Nelson Cruz as a free agent. Cruz's agent, Bryce Dixon, has had talks with the Twins, Rays and Astros. The Mariners logically would approach the two teams that fail to land Cruz with Encarnacion serving as the consolation prize.

"We will do what's best for the Mariners in the long run and we want to make that long run shorter," Hollander said. "So if we can pick up an asset going forward, we'll do that. But we'll see where the market takes us."

For the Mariners, the draft choice acquired is key for their rebuilding process. It gives them another high level selection to supplement a farm system that needs to accumulate more talent.

"We wouldn't have done the transaction without that pick being involved," Hollander said. "It's very important to us."

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