



Detroit Tigers Clips

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No takers? Detroit Tigers could keep core together for 2017

December 6, 2016

By Anthony Fenech/ Detroit Free Press

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – Detroit Tigers general manager Al Avila is walking on a tightrope. He has been since the outset of the off-season, when, as transparently as he could, Avila laid out the Tigers' winter plans.

On that mid-October afternoon at Comerica Park, Avila talked about how changes are coming to the organization. He spoke about the start of a process, about getting younger, about reducing payroll, about keeping in contention.

“That’s a tightrope we have to walk on,” Avila said back then. “We certainly want to stay competitive, we certainly want to try and get back into the playoffs. But at the same time, this organization has been working way above its means, as far as payroll, for many, many years, and it’s put us in a situation where, quite frankly, it’s difficult to maneuver.”

A month and a half later, tonight, inside an eighth-floor suite at the National Harbor Resort and Conference Center, Avila sounded like he was swaying on that tightrope a certain way.

On the first day of the Major League Baseball winter meetings, Avila reiterated the tact of his transparency: The Tigers remain in listening mode, without any sort of mandate from ownership to reduce payroll by a certain amount, aware of their need to pare back payroll in some way but equally as aware of the talent they have under contract.

So many possibilities have been speculated about thus far. The names Miguel Cabrera and Justin Verlander have twirled in trade rumors. The names Ian Kinsler and J.D. Martinez have garnered a great deal of interest. But in the face of all that speculation – much of it overblown, particularly in the cases of Cabrera and Verlander – Avila added more possibilities with his answers.

Asked if there was a chance the Tigers could surpass the luxury tax limit for a second consecutive year in 2017, Avila said, “It’s a possibility.”

Asked if he could envision a scenario in which both Kinsler and Martinez return – assuming Cabrera and Verlander do, too – Avila said, “It’s very possible.”

According to the league’s collective bargaining agreement, the luxury tax limit is \$195 million next season. As a second-time offender, the organization would be charged 30% on the total. The team’s payroll in 2016 was around \$216 million.

His words were not a pivot as much as they are the most pertinent course of action for a team that profiles as a postseason contender, with strong starting pitching, an imposing lineup and a bullpen that, with incremental improvements, could be counted on.

The Tigers would like to shed some payroll, yes. They would like to get younger. Maybe add a left-handed bat. “We would like to shed some of that payroll,” Avila said. “But if it’s not a deal that we feel is fair, there’s no demand to dump the salary.”

And with no such demand, and with no suitors yet to pay their prices for top-shelf talent, it’s become more likely the Tigers will take the process Avila has diligently detailed into next season with business as usual, only without massive free-agent spending.

In his first day at his second winter meetings, Avila talked to more than a handful of teams. He said as of evening time, none of those talks were hot and heavy.

Those words weren’t the most important. Perhaps these were.

Asked if he thought the Tigers, kept in tact next season, could contend, Avila said: “It’s certainly a team that could compete for a playoff spot, yes.”

And it certainly seems like fielding that kind of team is much more possible in the winter than it looked like in the fall.

Tigers' Jordan Zimmermann had injections to treat neck pain

December 6, 2016

By George Sipple/ Detroit Free Press

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – Detroit Tigers general manager Al Avila acknowledged that the velocity of right-handed pitcher Jordan Zimmermann was down last season. But Avila said it wasn't down to "a point where it was alarming."

The Tigers signed Zimmermann to a five-year, \$110-million deal in November 2015 and he dominated in the first month of the 2016 season.

Zimmermann started out 5-0 with a 0.55 ERA and 23 strikeouts in 33 innings for the Tigers. But he battled groin and neck injuries the rest of the season.

Zimmermann went 9-7 with a 4.87 ERA and a 1.367 WHIP with 66 strikeouts in 105 1/3 innings in his first season with the Tigers.

According to brooksbaseball.net, Zimmermann's fastball went from an average of 94.58 in 2014 to 93.44 in 2015 to 92.59 in 2016.

Zimmermann, who turns 31 in May, is still viewed as an important piece in a starting rotation that is expected to include Justin Verlander, Michael Fulmer, Daniel Norris and Matt Boyd.

Avila told beat writers tonight in the team's suite at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center that athletic trainer Kevin Rand sent Zimmermann to a specialist. Avila said Zimmermann received "injections in certain parts of his neck that block those areas where he had pain."

Avila said Zimmermann "reports no pain" doing physical therapy.

"He's feeling very good right now and so we're keeping our fingers crossed that that carries into spring training, into the season and that fixes everything," Avila said.

Avila said Zimmermann is due for one more injection and then physical therapy.

Jones? Collins? Gose? A trade? Tigers exploring all options for CF

December 6, 2016

By Anthony Fenech/ Detroit Free Press

NATIONAL HARBOR, MD. – The Detroit Tigers might explore a trade to acquire a young centerfielder. They could stick with the players already in the fold. They also are exploring the market of six-year minor league free agents as a stopgap until prospect JaCoby Jones is ready to take over.

They also could opt to sign a free agent like Ben Revere, who will turn 29 in May. Revere hit .217 with 44 runs and 14 stolen bases in 103 games last season for the Washington Nationals.

The Tigers need to fill the hole in centerfield left after they traded Cameron Maybin to the Angels for minor league right-hander Victor Alcantara.

Maybin was due \$9 million on a club option or the Tigers would have had to pay him a \$1-million buyout. They saved themselves from doing that with the trade.

General manager Al Avila told local beat writers in the team's suite at the Gaylord Resort & Convention Center that when it comes to centerfield, he's considering everything.

"How we're going to accomplish that I couldn't tell you today right now," Avila said of filling that role. "It's not clear right now. But it will come from one of those scenarios."

Internal candidates as of now are Jones, Tyler Collins and Anthony Gose.

"We have JaCoby Jones that we feel right now can be our centerfielder," Avila said. "Although I feel the best-case scenario for him is to start the season in Triple-A."

Jones, who turns 25 in May, hit .214 with three doubles and 12 strikeouts in 13 games for the Tigers last season. He also hit .312 with four home runs and 20 RBIs in 20 games at Double-A Erie and .243 with three home runs and 23 RBIs in 79 games at Triple-A Toledo.

Jones struck out 132 times in 112 games last season.

Avila said they still like Collins, who will turn 27 in June. Collins played all three outfield positions last season and hit .235 with four home runs and 15 RBIs in 56 games. He also hit .214 with seven home runs and 30 RBIs in 68 games at Triple-A Toledo.

Gose, who turns 27 in August, struggled at every level last season. He hit .209 with 11 runs in 30 games. He also hit .185 with 22 runs in 50 games for Toledo and .224 with 16 runs in 40 games at Double-A Erie

Aug 30, 2016; Detroit, MI, USA; Detroit Tigers third

OF JaCoby Jones; Salary:\$507,500; Under club control. (Photo: Rick Osentoski, USA TODAY Sports)

Avila said there's a possibility they would trade for a young guy to play center.

"Or is it a guy that in January we find is still out there that we can plug in for \$2 million or less that can do the job temporarily," he said. "We can mix and match and make us still competitive and buy that time we need for JaCoby Jones.

"There's a lot of different ways that you attack that situation, and we're attacking it on every front, whether it be a trade for that right guy or waiting for the right deal to come around to plug in the hole. Even six-year minor league free agents. We actually have a lot of talk about certain guys that we've been after, going after that might fit the bill."

Avila said there's a shortage for centerfielders in Major League Baseball, but called it "an area of importance" for the Tigers.

Tigers' Omar Vizquel, Carlos Guillen united for World Baseball Classic

December 6, 2016

By George Sipple/ Detroit Free Press

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – Miguel Cabrera is on board to play for Venezuela in the World Baseball Classic. Venezuela manager and Tigers first base coach Omar Vizquel said Victor Martinez, Francisco Rodriguez and Bruce Rondon are other Tigers who may be chosen to represent their country.

The tournament will be held in March in various locations,

“There is so much quality and numbers,” Vizquel said of the Venezuelan team. “We have batting champs, Cy Youngs, Gold Glove, MVPs.

“To have them all together is just one of the biggest honors in my career and probably my life.”

Vizquel said it wasn't necessary for him to try to convince those top players to play for Venezuela.

“Before anything else, when I came to them, they say ‘Ay, I'm able (to play) for you in the Classic’ before they say ‘How you doing?’ ” Vizquel said.

Vizquel and former Tiger Carlos Guillen, who is Venezuela's general manager, sat together while talking to reporters Monday during a World Baseball Classic news conference at the winter meetings at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center.

A disagreement between Guillen and Vizquel nearly resulted in Braves coach Eddie Perez managing the team. Cabrera and other players reportedly played a part in helping to get Guillen and Vizquel on the same page and Perez will serve as the bench coach.

Asked about the confusion about who would manage, Vizquel asked if the question was for him or Guillen.

“I have to say this, when you work with somebody that you haven't worked (with) before, there is a new dynamic,” Vizquel said. “There were a lot of misunderstandings and differences between him and myself. All we had to do was sit down at the table and clear everything up.”

Vizquel said he and Guillen sat face-to-face and worked things out.

“I know Carlos from a long time ago,” Vizquel said. “And one thing is when we sit down and start talking about baseball you can feel the chemistry in between the two minds because he played also shortstop, second base. I played the same position. We played against each other. Awesome to have a guy that understand all that and to kind of play the same way that you do. Once you start talking baseball I think everything came out naturally.”

Asked what caused the friction, Vizquel said it was little differences. Vizquel said he was told not to talk about the Classic but every time he did interviews that was the first thing he was asked.

Vizquel said some things were said that he and Guillen weren't in agreement on and “I got my ears pulled off. You can't talk about that. That's where the whole confusion started.”

Asked how Cabrera played a role in getting them together, Guillen stepped in and said: “Everybody helped. All the players.”

Guillen said like a clubhouse, there are some things that have to be kept inside the clubhouse. Guillen said he and Vizquel will both be on the same page going forward.

Vizquel said Rondon is on his list for consideration for the team.

“We want Rondon to get his mind straight up and focus into the game right away,” Vizquel said. “I hope he can get into spring training ready and in shape. And if there is any reason that we see that he's not in shape or we need to work longer with him, maybe we gotta take another decision.”

Vizquel said that goes for all of the players.

“If we find a guy that we think is going to be a better guy, we're going to have to pick that guy. It's not Detroit Tigers. It's not Marlins. It's not Minnesota. It's Venezuela.”

Vizquel said Rodriguez will hopefully be available. “He told me he wants to be there,” Vizquel said.

Vizquel declined to say whether Cabrera will be used exclusively as a first baseman or whether he might also be available at third base.

“The fact that we already got his permission from the Detroit Tigers and himself is just a huge thing,” Vizquel said.

Could Justin Verlander pitch in for USA World Baseball Classic?

December 6, 2016

By Anthony Fenech/ Detroit Free Press

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – On Sunday, Justin Verlander texted Jim Leyland.

The Detroit Tigers ace wanted to talk with his former skipper about this spring's World Baseball Classic, which Leyland is participating in as manager of the United States team.

A day later, Leyland sat alongside U.S. general manager Joe Torre at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center, answering questions in a media session, when his phone flashed.

"Jv" was calling to chat.

"This is Verlander," Leyland said. "Maybe we got him."

"Put him right on speaker," Torre said. "We'll go from there."

In short order – "I may have an answer from him after this session today," Leyland said – the U.S. team will know if its star-studded starting rotation will include Verlander, one of the faces of the Tigers' franchise and one of many faces of baseball that will compete in the WBC.

"Kind of ironic," Leyland said about the call.

Verlander would have joined former teammate Max Scherzer and pitching coach Jeff Jones on the U.S. team. He previously competed for Team USA as an amateur in the 2003 Pan-American Games.

"It would be great," Leyland said. "It would be great to be reunited with Justin and Scherzer if that worked out but as I texted him back last night, I said, 'Listen, I'd be absolutely thrilled to have you. I just want to make sure you're comfortable and we'll talk (tomorrow).'"

The U.S. roster has yet to be finalized. Earlier in the day, Major League Baseball released an initial list of 30 confirmed players. Those on the U.S. roster include names like Scherzer, Giants catcher Buster Posey, Pirates centerfielder Andrew McCutchen, Orioles centerfielder Adam Jones and Rockies third baseman Nolan Arenado. In addition, Torre said right-handers Chris Archer and Marcus Stroman have committed, along with lefty reliever Andrew Miller.

Along with a number of players on the Venezuelan team's roster – Miguel Cabrera has committed and Victor Martinez, Francisco Rodriguez, Anibal Sanchez and Bruce Rondon are likely – Kinsler will likely be the only Tigers player on the U.S. roster.

According to people with knowledge of the situation, Kinsler has accepted an invitation to play for the U.S. team. Not at liberty to make a definitive answer on Kinsler with the roster yet to be set in stone, Leyland said it was a "strong possibility" he would be on the team.

Kinsler, 34, is coming off a sensational season, hitting .288 with 28 home runs and 83 RBI. In 2016, he won his first American League Gold Glove Award at second base.

Detroit Tigers' Ian Kinsler, Miguel Cabrera to play in WBC

December 6, 2016

By Anthony Fenech/ Detroit Free Press

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. -- This spring's World Baseball Classic will have a strong Detroit Tigers flavor. Managing the U.S. team is Jim Leyland, former Tigers manager and current special assistant to general manager Al Avila. Managing the Venezuelan team is first-base coach Omar Vizquel.

And this afternoon, a couple more names entered the fold.

Second baseman Ian Kinsler will play for the U.S. team, according to two people with knowledge of the situation, and first baseman Miguel Cabrera will play for the Venezuelan team, according to mlb.com.

Provisional rosters could be announced this afternoon.

Kinsler, 34, is coming off of a sensational season in which he hit .288 with 28 home runs and 83 RBIs. He won his first American League Gold Glove Award.

Cabrera, 33, is one of baseball's best hitters. In 2016, he hit .316 with 38 home runs and 108 RBIs. His participation is not a surprise: Cabrera reportedly played a part in mediating differences between Vizquel and Venezuelan GM Carlos Guillen, another former Tiger.

Both Kinsler and Cabrera have been talked about in trade rumors this off-season. But at this point, it appears unlikely that the Tigers will trade either.

Kinsler is the team's best two-way player. Due an affordable \$11 million this season, his contract carries a limited no-trade clause. His agent, Jay Franklin, told Fox Sports' Ken Rosenthal earlier in the off-season that he would look for a contract extension in exchange for lifting that clause.

Cabrera's departure is even less likely. He is owed \$212 million through 2023 -- his age 40 season.

Al Kaline endorses Bud Selig's Hall of Fame election

December 6, 2016

By George Sipple/ Detroit Free Press

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. -- Detroit Tigers Hall of Famer Al Kaline said today it was a no-brainer that former Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig would be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Selig and John Schuerholz, a longtime MLB general manager, were voted into the Hall of Fame on Sunday by the Today's Game Era committee, which consists of Andre Dawson, Ozzie Smith, Bobby Cox and others.

"I don't even know why they voted on it," Kaline said of Selig's election. "He should have been automatic. For all he did for baseball, whether you like it or not, he did an awful lot for baseball. Made it bigger and better than it has ever been.

"If they had just put him in (without a vote), they could have maybe voted for somebody else, and somebody else might have gotten in."

Selig was in charge during baseball's steroids era. Players implicated in the use of performance-enhancing drugs have received lukewarm support from voters to enter Cooperstown.

"Eventually, somebody (from that era) is going to get in, and the Hall is going to have to figure out what they're going to do about it," Kaline said. "Anybody gets in is well-deserved. The only thing I don't like about it is some of these guys are breaking some records that probably wouldn't have been broken. The greatest player I ever saw play was Willie Mays, and people are passing him by like crazy. To me, I don't like that."

But Kaline called Selig "probably the greatest commissioner of all time."

Dawson said of Selig: "A guy of his stature, you can't do everything perfect." Dawson said Selig accomplished so much that there was no doubt he should be in the Hall of Fame.

Asked whether he feels the same way about players who got in trouble but have HOF-worthy statistics, Dawson said: "At some point, it may happen. ... But I don't think this was the proper committee to set that in motion. I don't think any doors are opened. We understand that, as difficult a process as this is, you vote by your heart and what you feel is right."

Asked how he felt about Selig personally, Dawson said: "I vote based on the big picture. His tenure as the commissioner, the good things he did for the game itself. For me, it was a no-brainer. Once he was on the ballot, it wasn't much for him to give consideration to. I'm satisfied with voting for him and deservedly so. He belongs in the Hall of Fame."

Although Kaline sat with Selig at dinners during Hall of Fame weekend in Cooperstown, he said he knows Schuerholz better.

"John's from Baltimore, and he played on the same amateur teams that I did ... after me," Kaline said. "I'm going to congratulate both of them, but I especially want to see John. I called him as soon as I saw that he'd made it."

Schuerholz ran the Atlanta Braves during their dominant run in 1991-2005 and won championships in both leagues (1985 Kansas City Royals and 1995 Braves).

Avila says Tigers could start 2017 with same gang

December 6, 2016

By Chris McCosky/ The Detroit News

National Harbor, Md. — The phones weren't exactly ringing off the hook in the Tigers war room on Day 1 of the Winter Meetings on Monday.

"We've talked to a few teams here, more than a few," general manager Al Avila said. "But right now, there's nothing I would call hot and heavy."

And, contrary to what seems to be the national perception, that's perfectly OK with him.

"Our message has been clear from Day 1," Avila said. "Our mission, as we move forward, is we're going to do things in a different manner. We're going to be more reliant on scouting and player development. We're going to sign, develop and keep our good prospects, as opposed to utilizing them in trades.

"We would like to reduce our payroll and get under the luxury tax."

But, Avila said, that doesn't mean the Tigers are going to just dump salary. There has been no mandate from owner Mike Ilitch to do so. He has instructed Avila to make the best deals possible; and if there aren't good deals to be made, so be it.

In fact, when asked if it was possible the Tigers could start the season with the same group that finished last season — including J.D. Martinez, Ian Kinsler, Justin Verlander and Miguel Cabrera — Avila didn't hesitate.

"Yes," he said. "Very possible."

Several factors have altered the landscape since Avila spoke in his postseason address in October.

The new collective bargaining agreement raised the luxury tax to \$195 million — between \$5 million and \$10 million less than teams expected. So clubs, even the big-market teams, have less to spend (or in the Tigers case, less room to absorb a big contract in a trade).

Also, the new structure puts a premium on teams keeping and developing the young players who are still under team control. Those are the types of players — players who are projected to be everyday big league players within a year or two — the Tigers are seeking in trades for their established, expensive stars.

"I've never said we're going to be pushing to trade players," he said. "I've never picked up a phone and said, 'So-and-so is available; what will you give me for him.' What we've said is, we are willing to engage in conversation about any player on our roster."

Avila said the club will have substantial contracts coming off the books after 2017 (Martinez and Kinsler, possibly Justin Upton) and 2018 (Anibal Sanchez and Victor Martinez), so some of the financial hardship will fall off naturally.

"My main message, though, is once that money falls off, don't look for us to sign guys for \$100 million or \$200 million," Avila said. "That's not what we're going to do. We are going to be more prudent and more conservative in our approach."

Avila still is taking calls. There is still a chance he makes a deal or two before these meetings end. But at this point it seems highly unlikely that Cabrera or Verlander is traded.

The most likely player to be moved remains J.D. Martinez. There are teams, like the Mets, who still have interest in him.

"If we can use a player to make a good baseball trade and make our transition (to being more cost-efficient) smoother and faster, we would look at that trade," Avila said. "If not, we will stay the course the best we can, and we would probably be more competitive next year doing that.

"If you can't get a good return and you have to settle for fringe-type guys, it behooves you to keep your player, the guy who is going to help you now."

Keep in mind, too, all those players could be back up for discussion at the trade deadline. And, as the Tigers found out in 2015 when they were able to parlay Yoenis Cespedes and David Price into three-fifths of their present starting rotation (Michael Fulmer, Daniel Norris, Matt Boyd), their value could be much higher in July. In the meantime, Avila and his staff are scouring the league for a center fielder. As it stands now, Tyler Collins, JaCoby Jones and Anthony Gose will come to spring training and fight for the job.

“We like Jones, we feel he could be the center fielder,” Avila said. “Although, best case, he would start the year in Triple A. In that case, it would be in our best interest to get a guy who can play in center and buy some time for Jones.”

Avila said he was attacking all available avenues.

“Maybe we can get that guy in a trade,” Avila said. “Maybe we can wait until January and get a guy for \$2 million or less to be a temporary fix. Maybe we can plug that hole with a sixth-year minor league free agent. We’ve had a lot of talk on certain sixth-year minor league free agents.

“We will attack it from every front.”

One player that might fit the bill is Ben Revere, who was non-tendered by the Nationals. He’s 28 and coming off the worst offensive season of his seven-year career. A career .285 hitter, he battled an oblique strain early in the season and his average fell to .217.

But, he’d not hit lower than .298 in the previous four seasons and averaged 33 steals a year from 2011 through 2015.

Avila did not comment on Revere specifically, but because so many teams need center fielders, he could end up being out of the Tigers price range.

Tigers' \$6M option on K-Rod looks golden now

December 6, 2016

By Chris McCosky/ The Detroit News

National Harbor, Md. — So, how prudent does the \$6 million option the Tigers picked up on veteran closer Francisco Rodriguez look now?

The Giants on Monday paid \$62 million on a four-year deal for Mark Melancon, generally considered the third-best closer on the market. What might teams have to pay to land Aroldis Chapman or Kenley Jansen?

Tigers general manager Al Avila said Monday that picking up Rodriguez's option was essentially a no-brainer — regardless of the closers' market.

“We picked up his option for numerous reasons,” Avila said. “One, to be competitive; we still want to win. And knowing we weren't going to be in the market for those other guys, not even close, he brought us the most affordable guy who saved a lot of games for us last year. He was one of the best.”

Rodriguez, Major League Baseball's active saves leader (430) who will turn 35 on Jan. 7, was second in the American League to Orioles closer Zach Britton with 44 saves in 49 attempts last season. On top of that, his leadership in the clubhouse and his mentorship of young relievers, particularly Bruce Rondon, was invaluable. “He did a tremendous job for our young players,” Avila said. “And we have other young players coming in Joe Jimenez and Adam Ravenelle, plus the other guys on the team. Sometimes that stuff is a lot of baloney. This was not baloney. It was real.

“This guy took his time to do that for those young guys.”

Avila said he has not made Rodriguez available for trade — not before picking up the option or since. But, he said, that could change before the trade deadline this summer.

“If things were right, if the timing was right, would he be a guy we'd look to trade? Yeah,” Avila said. “A veteran guy in the last year of his contract, there might be a good situation down the road.”

Henning: It's big week for Tigers as Avila ponders '17, beyond

December 6, 2016

By Lynn Henning/ The Detroit News

National Harbor, Md. – The Detroit Tigers flew into Washington, D.C., Sunday for baseball's Winter Meetings, otherwise known as Black Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. For 30 big-league clubs whose best shot at getting better often comes during three full days of stop-ins at hotel suites where teams are headquartered, or during phone chatter that make the Winter Meetings Verizon's best friend, this is heavy retail time.

The Tigers and general manager Al Avila are staring at business strategies that could go either way as teams settle into the Gaylord National Hotel and Convention Center:

Play for 2017: This happens if the Tigers aren't happy with offers for players they'd prefer to trade in the quest to get younger and less costly. And those trades happen only if the Tigers swap, for example, Justin Verlander, or Ian Kinsler, or J.D. Martinez, or Francisco Rodriguez, or others, for skilled youth that could boost their long-term stock.

The Tigers would justify a playoff push for 2017 on the strength of healthy starting pitching that, if he's not dealt, would include Verlander, Michael Fulmer, Daniel Norris, Matt Boyd, and presumably, a healthy, back-intact Jordan Zimmermann.

Play for the future and immediate payroll relief: This is the Tigers' preference. It is a goal shared by the front office and by owner Mike Ilitch, who is still in charge and who is deferring to his front office on shaping priorities that focus first on Detroit's baseball product.

This fine-line approach has created a sense of palace intrigue. But there's not a lot of drama at work.

Avila wants to get younger and less expensive for reasons that benefit a roster and a front office. The Tigers need all the tools youthful players tend to deliver at affordable prices. This has the potential to bring qualities to the Tigers not now in surplus – speed, defense, harder throwers – at the same time a lowered payroll gives the GM wiggle room down the road to add a difference-making piece.

Ilitch sees the wisdom in all of the above, as well as an escape from a payroll on which he now pays luxury tax and will continue to pay luxury tax in 2017 (perhaps upwards of \$10 million) if payroll isn't chopped.

But he is not ordering cuts. Rather than have Avila make tepid trades, Ilitch would approve another all-in approach to 2017, which isn't far-fetched when one considers how injuries (Zimmermann, J.D. Martinez, Nick Castellanos, etc.) whacked the Tigers in fairly abnormal ways last season.

Still, the owner has known as the GM has understood that the Tigers have been spending well beyond their allowance and that last year's spending spree earned them nothing more than a sideline seat at playoff time.

So, the owner has agreed, make some deals. Big deals, if they're there. As long as it makes the Tigers a healthier franchise for the long haul.

The Tigers have managed only a single piece of significant business in the two months since they closed shop on 2016. They decided a team spending its dollars sensibly couldn't justify Cameron Maybin and his \$9 million option. Rather than simply give Maybin away, they tried to trade him – and found one of 29 teams interested: the Angels, who landed him for a hard-throwing, right-handed reliever, Victor Alcantara, who isn't a big-percentage bet to make the big leagues.

The Tigers decided they had other, more practical options next year in center field, beginning with JaCoby Jones, who covers a great deal more ground than Maybin and who has infinitely more power. He might strike out, he might not hit for average, but his strong Arizona Fall League showed a prospect, 24 years old, can probably help Detroit in 2017, especially if paired with a helping hand, say, along the lines of Ben Revere, who was just non-tendered by the Nationals.

J.D. Martinez remains the Tigers player with the friendliest odds for being traded this week. But be mindful that he is part of a rare, right-handed power glut on this year's market. The Tigers could leave town this week convinced Martinez would draw a potentially greater bounty at next July's deadline, which of course would happen if the Tigers aren't in a compelling playoff lane.

Avila, in this sense, is caught in something of an in-between time with the Tigers. They aren't necessarily in a rebuilding mode. And they aren't of a mind or of means to make a serious World Series push when they have an overweight payroll and an under-nourished roster.

So, again, they will shoot for a preferred path that could lower costs and give the Tigers a better shot at winning into the next decade.

Is Avila the man to craft a blueprint this delicate?

Probably.

People forget he was a scout and player-development guy whom Dave Dombrowski employed for two decades for a reason. Avila knows personnel, as he proved when he steered the Tigers to J.D. Martinez.

The GM got off to a bad start a year ago when he and David Chadd, his right-hand man, made a disastrous foray that brought Mike Pelfrey, a fairly bad pitcher, to Detroit, at a thoroughly absurd price (\$16 million).

It is a certainty Avila regrets the move as much as any critic who panned it from the outset.

But that wasn't his only transaction. It's simply the one easiest for most people to remember.

Avila also pulled off an economical trade (Javier Betancourt) for Rodriguez and the Tigers suddenly had a deadly closer. Rodriguez may yet be dealt, with July a strong possibility there, for inventory that could make this a dual winner.

He got Maybin for a year at low cost. He got Justin Wilson for the bullpen, and Wilson now is on plenty of opposing teams' wish lists. His signing of Mark Lowe blew up, but at the time it looked solid until it confirmed how difficult it can be to project big-league relievers.

Zimmermann? This looks today like a prime reason to avoid that baseball trap-door, signing starting pitchers anywhere in the vicinity of 30 or older. Zimmermann, though, pitched like a Cy Young Award finalist in April until neck issues turned his fastball to mush. If he gets it back in 2017, he'll look like a smarter investment. But this single pitcher and his ability to get the Tigers quality innings in 2017 and beyond very much is a test of Avila's foresight.

The Tigers could, suddenly, become one of baseball's busier teams this week. Or, they could learn the market simply isn't cooperating. They could, for sure, find their phones heating up once White Sox ace Chris Sale's situation is resolved and Sale, perhaps, is pitching for the Red Sox, or Nationals, or Braves, or whomever pays the heavy freight Chicago is demanding.

If that's the case, Verlander turns into a hot ticket and could draw the package Avila will command if the Tigers are to part with a franchise pitcher.

It's all indefinite a few miles from a place, the United States Capitol, where dealing and strategizing by rival parties is known to have been the rule for a couple of hundred years.

We'll know soon if compromise is part of this week's mindset. Or, if often times happens in Congressional sessions, everyone goes home with not a great deal having gotten done.

Tigers to have heavy influence on World Baseball Classic

December 6, 2016

By Chris McCosky/ The Detroit News

National Harbor, Md. — So, this World Baseball Classic might be fun. It will certainly have the Tigers' handprint on it.

Start with Team USA, which will be managed by former Tigers' skipper Jim Leyland. Former Tigers Tom Brookens (bench coach), Jeff Jones (pitching coach) and Alan Trammell (first base coach) are on his staff. As are Willie Randolph (third base coach), Tino Martinez (hitting coach) and Marcel Lachemann (assistant pitching coach).

Playing second base for the Americans is likely to be Ian Kinsler, who gave Leyland a firm but not an official commitment.

"I won't say it's etched in stone," Leyland said. "But I talked to Ian. I got a good feeling about it."

Then there's Team Venezuela. The general manager is Carlos Guillen. The manager is Omar Vizquel. Miguel Cabrera has not only committed to play, he helped quell a minor revolt within the organization.

Early last week, it was reported that Vizquel was fired, presumably by Guillen. Several players protested the move in the Venezuelan press and said they wouldn't play for anybody other than Vizquel. Cabrera and others intervened and on Monday, there was Vizquel and Guillen sitting side-by-side, all smiles.

"When you work with somebody that you haven't worked with before, there is a new dynamic," Vizquel said. "How do you handle things and all that? There were a lot of misunderstandings and differences between him and myself.

"All we had to do was sit down at a table and clear everything up. What do you want? What do I want? The only way we solved that problem was sitting down and talking at a table face to face."

Vizquel took a good part of the blame for the miscommunication.

"Somethings were said that weren't agreed upon," he said. "And I got my ears pulled off a little bit. They were like, 'You can't say that.' ... The best thing for us was to sit down and work it out. I've known Carlos for a long time. When we sit down to talk baseball, you can feel the chemistry between our two minds. He played shortstop and second base and I played shortstop.

"Once we started talking baseball, it all came together naturally."

Vizquel said he expects Tigers pitchers Anibal Sanchez, Bruce Rondon and Francisco Rodriguez to play for him in the tournament. He is also waiting for word from Victor Martinez.

Tigers right-handed reliever Joe Jimenez is expected to play for Puerto Rico.

Wear and tear

Tigers general manager Al Avila said the organization has no say on whether his players can compete in the WBC.

"We can't influence their decision to play or not to play, unless they are injured," he said. "You just have to trust the people who are running that team will take care of your players."

Team Venezuela will play its first exhibition game on March 8, so players will be leaving their respective spring training camps after only three weeks. The Tigers have to be a little concerned about an older player like Cabrera, especially with his history of ankle issues.

Certainly, Vizquel is aware of that.

"It's an opportunity for him to get ready," he said. "No doubt that (playing in the WBC) will be better than playing in spring training games. There will be moments when you really have to push yourself. That's why we've been telling guys to prepare themselves – not to just to play, but to be ready to play 100 percent, game level."

Vizquel said he's seen video of many of players, including Cabrera, already in full workout mode.

Zimmermann healing

Avila said the medical reports on Tigers' starting pitcher Jordan Zimmermann were encouraging.

Zimmermann, whose season was derailed by groin, neck and shoulder issues, has continued to see a neck specialist this offseason.

“He continued to get injections in the neck to block the pain in the area,” Avila said. “He needs just one more. Through all the rehab work and physical therapy, he said there’s been no pain. He can do everything he used to do. He’s feeling really good right now.”

“We are keeping our fingers crossed that carries into spring training and into the season and that it’s fixed everything. We think it has.”

Ben Revere could be on Tigers' short list for center field

December 6, 2016

By Chris McCosky/ The Detroit News

National Harbor, Md. – The Detroit Tigers believe JaCoby Jones can be their everyday center fielder. They just aren't sure when.

“JaCoby Jones is a viable option,” general manager Al Avila said in his post-season media address. “I think there's people in the organization that feel he could use more time in Toledo. I'm of the opinion he could use more time in Toledo.”

Which is why, among the items on his to-do list here at the Winter Meetings, Avila is looking for an affordable veteran to plug in on a short-term deal – something far less than the \$9 million it would have cost to keep Cameron Maybin.

Revere, 28, is coming off the worst offensive season of his seven-year career. A career .285 hitter, he battled an oblique strain early in the season and his average fell to .217.

But, he'd not hit lower than .298 in the previous four seasons and averaged 33 steals a year from 2011 through 2015.

Although he's a staple of annual year-end highlight shows, his defensive metrics in center field are underwhelming. In seven years, according to baseballreference.com, he rates a minus-21 in defensive runs saved.

Revere earned \$6.25 million with the Nationals last season.

Avila said last month that Jones could still win the job – or at least share it -- with a strong spring. He boosted his stock by hitting .329, with a .391 on-base percentage, in the Arizona Fall League.

Avila is expected to speak to the media here Monday evening.

Baseball Winter Meetings live updates: Latest news, rumors from Day 2

December 6, 2016

By Evan Woodbery/ MLive.com

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. -- Will the trade market start to heat up, or will this year's installment of the Baseball Winter Meetings be one of the quietest in recent memory for the Detroit Tigers?

That's the big question as the sun rises on a chilly Tuesday morning here on the banks of the Potomac River. Tigers general manager Al Avila downplayed some of the trade possibilities that seemed all but certain a few days ago, implying that the market is not as robust as he had hoped.

Without any deals, the Tigers would have only a few items on their to-do list: A backup catcher and perhaps a veteran center fielder.

As the day unfolds, we'll have all the news, rumors and reports right here.

7:55 a.m. -- The Tigers are taking some calls on relievers Justin Wilson and Shane Greene, according to the New York Post. If the team's asking price is too high on bigger stars like J.D. Martinez, a smaller deal might be more viable.

It's worth noting that the Tigers gave up two promising pitching prospects just one year ago to acquire Wilson from the Yankees.

In stingy trade market, Tigers are quiet on Day 1 of Winter Meetings

December 6, 2016

By Evan Woodbery/ MLive.com

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. -- The start of the Baseball Winter Meetings passed quietly for the Detroit Tigers, who talked to a handful of teams on Monday but engaged in no serious trade discussions.

"There was nothing hot and heavy," said Tigers general manager Al Avila.

In October, Avila seemed to be preparing fans for the possibility that one or more key players could be traded. But on Monday night he emphasized that it was also possible that no deals would be made.

"Quite frankly, we've always been willing to listen (to offers) on any of our players," he said. "But there's never been a mandate to dump salary. I've never picked up the phone and said, 'So-and-so is available. What do you want for him?'"

If no meaningful trade opportunities arise, the Tigers could choose to stand pat, even if means exceeding the luxury tax payroll limit for a second consecutive season.

"The message has been clear from Day 1," Avila said. "It's just the way it's been printed."

Avila suggested the trade market hasn't generated the sort of offers that would prompt him to move outfielder J.D. Martinez, who is the Tigers' most valuable trade chip.

He said the Tigers are seeking the same type of player that "everyone covets," someone who is young, talented and cost-controlled for several years.

"Nobody wants to give those players away," he said.

Avila also touched on a range of other topics Monday. He said:

* The Tigers are prepared for a range of options in center field, including internal candidates like Tyler Collins, JaCoby Jones or Anthony Gose.

"We're attacking it on every front," Avila said.

Avila said it's in Jones' "best interest" to start the season in Triple-A Toledo, but he would still get a chance to win a spot on the roster.

Outside candidates could include inexpensive veterans or perhaps even six-year minor league free agents.

* The team has no objection to Miguel Cabrera participating in the World Baseball Classic. "We leave it up to the player," he said.

* Starting pitcher Jordan Zimmermann, who battled injuries in 2016, has been getting injections in his neck during the offseason. He reports no pain and is feeling good.

"We're keeping our fingers crossed," Avila said.

Omar Vizquel, Carlos Guillen say 'misunderstandings' that led to feud are in past

December 6, 2016

By Evan Woodbery/ MLive.com

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. -- Omar Vizquel and Carlos Guillen are friends again, or at least put on a really good show for reporters at the Baseball Winter Meetings on Monday.

Vizquel, who was fired last week as manager of the Venezuelan World Baseball Classic team and then rehired a few days later after a player revolt, stressed his respect for Guillen and took partial blame for the "misunderstandings" that created a controversy that dominated Venezuelan sports news last week.

Guillen, a former Detroit Tigers shortstop, and Vizquel, the current Tigers first base coach, shared laughs, hugged each other and addressed questions frankly.

"When you work with somebody that you haven't worked with before, there is a new dynamic," Vizquel said.

"How do you handle things and all that? There were a lot of misunderstandings and differences between him and myself. All we had to do was sit down at a table and clear everything up. What do you want? What do I want? The only way we solved that problem was sitting down and talking at a table face to face."

When that meeting eventually happened, "it worked out great," Vizquel said.

Although there all sorts of rumors about his ouster -- including what some thought could be political explanations -- Vizquel implied that he simply spoke out of turn in doing interviews about the WBC team.

The composition of the WBC roster is sometimes a matter of delicate negotiation with a player's Major League team, and Guillen may have thought Vizquel was being careless by speculating about a pitching rotation so far in advance of the tournament.

"When you are the manager of a team and they ask you not to talk about the Classic and you have some interviews, the first thing that people want to ask you is about the Classic," Vizquel said. "Probably some things were said that we weren't in agreement on. I got my ears pulled up a little bit: 'Hey, you can't say that, man! You can't talk about that.' That's where the whole confusion started."

Vizquel was allowed to talk about five of the players who have been officially confirmed for his team, including Tigers first baseman Miguel Cabrera.

Cabrera reportedly intervened to resolve the dispute between Vizquel and Guillen, although both men said it was a group effort.

"Everybody helped. All the players," Guillen said. "It's like a clubhouse. It's something you have to keep inside the clubhouse. Sometimes when things are coming out of the clubhouse, people start speculating. It happens everywhere."

Cabrera played with Guillen in Detroit. Along with Vizquel, he is one of Venezuela's most respected and decorated players.

"I know Carlos from a long time ago," Vizquel said. "When we sit down and start talking about baseball, you can feel the chemistry between the two minds. He also played shortstop. We played against each other. It's awesome to have a guy that understands all that and who played the game the same way you did. Once you start talking baseball, I think everything just came out naturally."

Vizquel said he considers managing the Venezuelan team one of the greatest honors of his career "and probably my life" and he understands the importance of the tournament to his country.

"I understand perfectly what baseball means to Venezuela," he said. "If we could, we'd play in the winter, the summer, the autumn and the spring."

Baseball Winter Meetings: Royals watching Tigers' moves in uncertain AL Central

December 6, 2016

By Evan Woodbery/ MLive.com

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. -- Kansas City Royals manager Ned Yost spent much of his talk with reporters on Monday discussing his farm, the quality of deer-hunting in west central Georgia and his new granddaughter.

Hot-stove rumors are the least of his concerns.

"I've got to refill the feeders at the farm and plant some grass," he said. "We finally got some rain, so that's the wish-list that comes up for me.

"Where I live in Georgia, I don't have Wi-Fi, so I've got to walk outside and get 3G. And I've already burned up my data twice. So I kind of pick and choose on what I care to look at."

Despite his rural isolation during the offseason, he's not oblivious to the ways in which the offseason could impact the rest of the American League Central Division.

The Chicago White Sox are reportedly listening to offers on ace Chris Sale; virtually every veteran Detroit Tiger has been linked to trade talk at some point; and even the Minnesota Twins are said to be open to dealing second baseman Brian Dozier, one of their few bright spots in 2016.

"You could probably say no (it doesn't affect the Royals), but the honest answer is probably yeah it does," Yost said. "You're always looking at teams that you compete against and if they were to trade one of their key players that's one less guy you have to contend with in your division."

With that in mind, he's happy to see them trade away their stars. "I hope they do it."

The Royals are also in the midst of an uncertain offseason. They're a smaller market team and have several expiring contracts after the 2017. They're trying to compete this year while still making sure things don't fall apart in 2018 and 2019.

In that sense, their dilemma is similar to the Tigers.

"If we make a deal for anybody, does it make us better? If it makes us better, it's something we're going to have to consider even though it would be hard to part with some of these guys," Yost said. "You have watched them grow up and develop into All-Star-caliber-type players and become World Champions."

Avila: Tigers don't have to shed salaries

December 6, 2016

By Jason Beck/ MLB.com

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. -- Change is coming to the Tigers -- eventually.

General manager Al Avila proclaimed the change in October and reinforced it on Monday as baseball's Winter Meetings began with Detroit as a potential seller and a suddenly thrifty spender. But change, Avila argued, might come slower than expected.

If the Tigers can't work suitable trades for their stars, Avila suggested, they might not happen at all this offseason. And a team that seemed on the verge of an offseason breakup might go into Spring Training with nearly the same group -- and the same payroll concerns -- as it did in 2016.

If the Tigers do make a trade this week, Avila said, it'll be because they want to, not because they have to.

"We would like to shed some of that payroll," Avila said, "but quite frankly, if it's not a deal that we feel is fair for the Detroit Tigers, that will help us, there's no demand to dump the salary."

Although Avila said nothing has changed since he talked about fiscal discipline after the season, Monday's caution seemed at least like a slower pace in the same direction. Detroit's talks with teams this week will tell whether it's a negotiating tactic.

Though Avila said he resumed talks with teams from earlier this offseason and started new ones with several others, he cautioned that none fell under his category of "hot and heavy." Other clubs have suggested that the Tigers want more -- in some cases, much more -- for veteran players than they either expected or are willing to give.

That perception, Avila said, might have come from a mischaracterization of what the team wants to do, though last month's trade of Cameron Maybin and his \$9 million contract option in exchange for relief prospect Victor Alcantara seemingly reinforced the perception.

"This organization, as we move forward, we're going to start working in a different manner," Avila said. "We're going to be more reliant on scouting and player development as we move forward, and signing, developing and keeping our good prospects that we want to keep, as opposed to trying to acquire more veteran players. The other thing is, obviously, that we'd like to reduce payroll and get under the luxury tax, and in doing so trying to get younger, leaner.

"However, that didn't mean we were going to go out there and dump salary. What it meant was that we would be open to listening [to inquiries about] any of our players. As a matter of fact, I've never said we were going to go out and start pushing to trade players."

For Miguel Cabrera and Justin Verlander, Detroit's veterans under long-term deals, that means that unless the Tigers are wowed by an offer, they're not going anywhere. Detroit, which signed both to lucrative extensions two years out from free agency, appears unwilling to eat salary to make a deal work, at least for Verlander. More important, changes to Major League Baseball's luxury-tax penalties make it prohibitive for large-market teams to take on their entire contracts.

Victor Martinez, too, seems tied to Detroit, with two years and \$36 million left on his contract and his 38th birthday coming up this month.

The bigger test will be with players under short-term deals. J.D. Martinez is under contract for next year at \$11.75 million before he's eligible for free agency. Ian Kinsler has an \$11 million salary for 2017, then a \$12 million club option or \$5 million buyout for 2018. Kinsler has a 10-team no-trade list; any team on that list would not only have to pick up the option, it would have to extend his contract beyond that for him to accept a trade.

Then there's closer Francisco Rodriguez, under contract for \$6 million after the Tigers picked up his option last month. Detroit did not entertain trade talks for Rodriguez leading up to that decision, Avila said. Though the free-agent closer market is heating up, Avila said the Tigers are not inclined to trade Rodriguez right now.

Barring a trade of Cabrera, Verlander or Justin Upton, at least one of Martinez or Kinsler will likely have to be traded for Detroit to creep under the \$195 million luxury-tax threshold for next year. But when asked if the Tigers could hold onto them all and remain over the limit, Avila said, "It's a possibility."

If the Tigers take this roster into 2017, they could still try to swing deals at next summer's non-waiver Trade Deadline if they're not in contention. But with the Royals and White Sox potentially trading away established stars, a summer selloff wouldn't necessarily be the end goal.

"[We're] certainly a team that could compete for a playoff spot," Avila said.

Tigers doing their part in auction to honor Forde

December 6, 2016

By Jason Beck/ MLB.com

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. -- The Tigers will auction off game tickets and a tour of the Ernie Harwell Media Center at Comerica Park as part of Major League Baseball's effort to raise money for a renovated field in honor of the late Shannon Forde.

Shannon Forde Field will honor the memory of the former New York Mets public relations executive, who passed away earlier this year after a long battle with cancer. The renovations will update the field across from Forde's childhood home in Little Ferry, N.J., adding dugouts, protective fencing, benches, bleachers, a backstop and a scoreboard, making it a full-fledged home for youth baseball and softball games.

"It's the same field she played on with her sister Alicia and her niece when she was a kid," Jay Horwitz, the Mets' vice president of media relations, said on Monday. "It's the same field that her father, Mike, coached softball for years and years. It's the same field which her young kids, Nicki and Kendall, will play for years and years. Nicki is 9 and Kendall is 6, and they probably don't know what kind of a person [their] mother was. Hopefully, in years to come, when they look up and see 'Shannon Forde Field,' they get an idea of what kind of mom they had."

The auction, part of Major League Baseball's "Play Ball" program, includes items and packages from all 30 big league clubs. The auction is live at MLB.com/Shannon, and runs until Thursday at 9 p.m. ET. All proceeds will fund the renovation through MLB Charities.

Vizquel ready to lead star-studded Venezuela

December 6, 2016

By Jason Beck/ MLB.com

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. -- Omar Vizquel and Carlos Guillen are two former Major League shortstops who were nearly traded for each other 13 years ago. But the Mariners and Indians couldn't resolve their differences after Vizquel's failed physical, nullifying their deal.

It's a fitting memory, given the disagreements last week that nearly scuttled their partnership as manager and general manager for Venezuela's entry in the upcoming World Baseball Classic. Yet as they sat together for a media session Monday at baseball's Winter Meetings, they characterized the week-long dispute and rally by players to support Vizquel as a misunderstanding that they had put behind them.

Get your World Baseball Classic tickets

They see the game and the team the same way, they insisted, and can put together a squad that can contend after struggling in pool play four years ago. They have the star power with Jose Altuve, Miguel Cabrera, Carlos Gonzalez, Felix Hernandez and Salvador Perez, and they say they have the chemistry.

"The best thing that we have for this Classic is the union between the players," Vizquel said. "They really have been working together. From what I see from them in pictures, they're barbecuing [together] and they're talking. They really have been talking as a group to get this going."

Now, Vizquel and Guillen have to do the same. Once they met in person last week in Maracay, Vizquel said, they hashed out the differences that threatened to derail them.

"When you work with somebody that you haven't worked [with] before, there is a new dynamic of things, how you handle things," Vizquel said. "There were a lot of misunderstandings and obviously differences between him and myself. All we had to do was sit down at the table and clear everything up: What do you want? What do I want? The only way that we solved that problem was sitting down and talking at the table, face to face. ...

"I know Carlos from a long time ago. One thing is when we sit down and started talking about baseball, you can feel the chemistry between the two minds, because he also played shortstop and second base. We played against each other. It's awesome to have a guy that understands all that and to kind of play the game the same way you do. Once you start talking baseball, I think everything just came out naturally."

Neither would go into specifics on the differences. Vizquel said he might have said some things in interviews that he wasn't supposed to. Guillen compared it to a clubhouse argument that will stay in-house.

"A little bit of difference," Guillen said, "but just a little miscommunication. That's all."

One thing they agreed on Monday is that Vizquel is the sharper dresser. Another is that their roster has the chance to be stacked.

Among the five players announced, they have the last six American League batting champions in Altuve and Cabrera, a former National League batting champ in Gonzalez, a former AL Cy Young winner in Hernandez and a reigning four-time Gold Glove catcher in Perez.

One key, they agreed, was in building depth beyond that. With new rules limiting how often pitchers can be used, they need arms. Though Cleveland starter Carlos Carrasco hasn't been announced, they're hoping he can be available as another starter. Same goes for Cubs reliever Hector Rondon, who Vizquel said is interested. Tigers closer Francisco Rodriguez has expressed his interest in pitching for them again, Vizquel said, but must receive permission from Detroit. His Tigers teammate, Bruce Rondon, is also on the list, but must report to camp in shape for consideration.

For similar reasons, two potentially important player on the positional side are Astros utilityman Marwin Gonzalez and Brewers infielder Hernan Perez, who can play several different positions while providing impact bats.

But Venezuela has had such talent before and not advanced. For that reason, another key for Vizquel is preparation.

"We need to prepare better, there is no doubt," Vizquel said. "The preparation of players and the scouting reports and all that have to improve. That is something that we've been working on a long time. The preparation we think is one of the biggest concerns from everybody. ...

"We're trying to spread the word that you have to prepare better for this tournament, because we've seen the advantage of other teams, that they're ready to play 100 percent and some of our guys are only going 60 percent. So they know about the challenge."

Miggy commits to World Baseball Classic

December 6, 2016

By Chad Thornburg/ MLB.com

With the World Baseball Classic just a few months away, the rosters are beginning to take shape. More names surfaced Monday as the World Baseball Classic released an initial list of 30 players who are confirmed to be participating in the 2017 tournament.

Spanning 16 countries, the players include 24 Major League All-Stars, but the upcoming WBC, which will take place in March, provides a global stage for veterans and rising stars alike.

In addition to a number of MLB mainstays with well-decorated resumes -- stars such as Andrew McCutchen, Miguel Cabrera and Max Scherzer -- some of the game's promising young talent will be on display as several big leaguers age 25 or younger will represent their countries, including Puerto Rico's Francisco Lindor, Carlos Correa and Javier Baez; the Dominican Republic's Manny Machado; Mexico's Roberto Osuna; the United States' Nolan Arenado; and the Netherlands' Xander Bogaerts.

Other confirmed players are Canada's Russell Martin; Colombia's Jose Quintana and Julio Teheran; the Dominican Republic's Adrian Beltre, Dellin Betances, Robinson Cano and Nelson Cruz; Mexico's Adrian Gonzalez and Oliver Perez; the Netherlands' Jonathan Schoop and Andrelton Simmons; Puerto Rico's Carlos Beltran and Yadier Molina; the United States' Chris Archer, Adam Jones and Buster Posey; and Venezuela's Jose Altuve, Carlos Gonzalez, Felix Hernandez and Salvador Perez.

This year's WBC begins March 6, and games will be played in Guadalajara, Mexico; Tokyo, Japan; Seoul, South Korea; Miami; and San Diego, with the championship round taking place at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles from March 20-22.

This will be the fourth installment of the international tournament, which was first played in 2006. Japan won the first two iterations in '06 and '09, while the Dominican Republic won most recently in '13. The U.S. hasn't finished better than fourth ('09).

LAST UPDATED: TUE, DECEMBER 6, 2016, 01:29 EST

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2016

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
Cincinnati Reds	Tony Renda	Outrighted to Minors
Houston Astros	Carlos Beltran	Signed as Free Agent, (2017)(one-year contract)
Houston Astros	Ashur Tolliver	Acquired Off Waivers From from Angels, Los Angeles
Los Angeles Dodgers	Rich Hill	Signed as Free Agent, (2017-2019)(three-year contract)
San Francisco Giants	Mark Melancon	Signed as Free Agent, (2017-2020)(four-year contract)
Seattle Mariners	Jesus Sucre	Signed, (2017)(avoids arbitration)
Toronto Blue Jays	Steve Pearce	Signed as Free Agent, (2017-2018)(two-year contract)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2016

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
Atlanta Braves	Jacob Lindgren	Signed as Free Agent, (2017)(one-year contract)
Cincinnati Reds	Gabby Guerrero	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Minnesota Twins	Ben Paulsen	Signed to a Minor League Contract

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2016

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
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[Atlanta Braves](#)

[Lane Adams](#)

Signed to a Minor League Contract

[Detroit Tigers](#)

[Casey McGehee](#)

Signed to Play in Japan, (Yomiuri Giants)

[San Diego Padres](#)

[Carlos Fisher](#)

Signed to a Minor League Contract

[Seattle Mariners](#)

[Zach Lee](#)

Designated for Assignment

[Seattle Mariners](#)

[Marc Rzepczynski](#)

Signed as Free Agent, (2017-2018)(two-year contract)

[Seattle Mariners](#)

[Casey Fien](#)

Signed as Free Agent, (2017)(one-year contract)

[Seattle Mariners](#)

[Dean Kiekhefer](#)

Designated for Assignment