

Smart trades to boost your team

BY KYLE STACK
Special to amNewYork

Fantasy baseball owners who enjoy making gutsy decisions about ways to maximize their team's performance have to embrace their league's trade market. A trade represents the ultimate boom-or-

bust scenario. Some owners shy away from trades for fear of acquiring a player who might not play as well as before the swap. Others recognize the advantage of selling high on a player or dealing from a position of strength to shore up an area of weakness. Here are four steps for improving your squad via trade:

Find your weaknesses

Identifying your team's weak points is critical but don't be afraid to get creative. If another team appears willing to deal an impact player at a position that isn't necessarily a need for you, it could still pay off to discover that impact player's price tag. Acquiring a high-impact player at a reasonable price is smart no matter your depth.

Negotiate

Don't be the person who makes an obvious lowball offer — a trade proposal made with the assumption that it's only a starter offer and would never be accepted by the other owner. It'll likely alienate your trade partner and could kill any potential deal.

Communicate

A response to an offer should always

come within two days of the proposal. During negotiations, there shouldn't be more than a two- or three-day gap between some level of dialogue.

Don't hound your potential trade partner for an immediate response. Make an offer, wait for an answer and hatch a counterproposal if the prior one is declined.

Execute the trade

Your level of comfort with the trade partner can become a factor here. You'll understand what buttons you can push if you know the owner.

Remember that displaying patience and a slight detachment could make an owner increase his trade proposal if he wants you to sign off on a deal.

FIVE SENSIBLE SWAPS

Send: Gavin Floyd (SP, White Sox)

Receive: Geovany Soto (C, Cubs)

Floyd has 17 strikeouts with just two earned runs allowed in his last two starts after a slow start to the season (6.64 ERA through his first 11 starts). Soto hit .318 in seven games between May 30 and June 12.

Send: Kelly Johnson (2B, Diamondbacks)

Receive: Shaun Marcum (SP, Blue Jays)

Marcum gave up 11 total earned runs and double-digit hits in back-to-back outings June 2-9; his Cy Young candidacy seems to be over. Meanwhile, Johnson still holds a .917 OPS at a position that doesn't offer much power.

Send: Adam Dunn (OF, Nationals), Jeff Niemann (SP, Rays)

Receive: Andrew McCutchen (OF, Pirates), Barry Zito (SP, Giants)

The loss of Dunn's power and run production

(and his .285 average) is offset by McCutchen's .314 average and his 17 steals. Zito and Niemann don't have great strikeout ability, but they offer fantastic pitching averages.

Send: Ryan Howard (1B, Phillies)

Receive: Garrett Jones (1B, Pirates), Felix Hernandez (SP, Mariners)

This might look lopsided now considering that Howard and Jones have comparable numbers and King Felix is an elite starter. But Howard has a reputation for destroying pitchers after the All-Star break, which increases his price tag.



(PHOTOS: GETTY)

Headlines

MLB

- A-Rod (hip) returns to Yankee lineup as DH; missed 4 games
- Phillies contact Pedro for possible second-half return
- Padres' Torrealba suspended 3 games for contact with ump
- Orioles contact ex-Yanks skip Showalter about manager job

NBA

- Celts C Perkins (knee sprain) to miss Game 7 at Los Angeles
- L.A. C Bynum limited by knee but says he'll play tonight

NCAA FOOTBALL

- Bush will 'fully support' USC appeal of NCAA sanctions

NFL

- Haynesworth skips practice, demands trade from Redskins
- RB Johnson willing to hold out of camp for contract demand

NHL

- Champ Blackhawks, Lightning to play exhibition in Winnipeg

TENNIS

- No. 2 Federer given top seed at Wimbledon over No. 1 Nadal

WORLD CUP

- Goalie Howard on Slovenia's win prediction: 'Talk is cheap'

NBA FINALS

- L.A. Lakers 3, Boston 3**
Lakers 102, Celtics 89 • Celtics 103, Lakers 94 • Lakers 91, Celts 84 • Celts 96, Lakers 89 • Celts 92, Lakers 86 • Lakers 89, Celts 67 • Today: at Lakers, 9 p.m. ABC

TV SPORTS TODAY

CYCLING
VERSUS Tour de Suisse, Stage 6, 7 p.m.

GOLF
ESPN U.S. Open, first round, Pebble Beach, Calif., 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.

NBC U.S. Open, 3 p.m.

MLB
YES Philadelphia (LHP Jamie Moyer, 6-6, 5.03) at Yankees (LHP Andy Pettitte, 8-1, 2.46), 7 p.m.

SNY Mets (RHP R.A. Dickey, 4-0, 2.78) at Cleveland (RHP Jake Westbrook, 4-3, 4.62), 7 p.m.

WORLD CUP
ESPN and UNI Group B, Argentina vs. South Korea, Johannesburg, South Africa, 7 a.m.; Group B, Greece vs. Nigeria, Bloemfontein, 9:30 a.m.; Group A, France vs. Mexico, Polokwane, 2 p.m.

Last night's Phillies-Yankees and Mets-Indians games ended too late for this edition.

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