

Friday, November 19, 2004

They may be in Washington ...

... but they're still the Expos.

With a shortstop free agent list that includes Omar Vizquel, Jose Valentin, Edgar Renteria, Pokey Reese, Alex Gonzalez (the former Cub), Nomar Garciaparra, Craig Counsell, Royce Clayton, Orlando Cabrera, and Rich Aurilia, the 'spos signed Cristian Guzman to a four-year, \$16.8 million dollar contract.

Guzman's pluses: He's still just 26, so he's got room to improve a little more; he's a switch-hitter who hits about equally well from both sides (unlike such faux-switch hitters as Bobby Kielty [I almost put Valentin here, but he's apparently abandoned the right side of the plate]).

Unfortunately, neither of those pluses is really performance-related, and in that department, Guzman has a lot of minuses. Over the past three years, he's been a barely-above replacement level offensive shortstop, putting up OBP's that hover around .300 and sub-.400 slugging percentages despite decent batting averages. He's never been a spectacular base-stealer, and in the last three years has been actively bad: he's got 40 steals, but it took him 67 tries to get there. About his only saving grace is that he saved 17 runs above the average shortstop last year, according to BP's numbers. It should be mentioned, however, that this came after five straight years of below-average fielding, and there's no reason to think that players can't have spike defensive years the same way they have spike offensive seasons, and that they might not come in the same season. Check out Derek Jeter's defensive stats for this year, for instance.

For all of this wonderfulness, Washington is paying \$4.2 million per year. They wouldn't get Nomar or Renteria for that kind of cash, of course, but they could have spent a lot less on one of the older guys and stopped the gap until they could come up with a better solution. There's really nothing wrong with signing over-the-hill players as long as you know what you're getting into and have an actionable plan for the future as well. The A's, for example, appear to have done just that with Damian Miller this past year, and seem to be content to let him go on his merry way this time around.

I didn't think Jim Bowden would go out and do something dumb quite this quick.

Posted by jason in Baseball at 16:29