

Thursday, April 24, 2008

Frank Thomas an Athletic

The Official Site of The Oakland Athletics: Official Info: A's agree to terms with DH Frank Thomas

I see how it all comes together now. Eric Chavez is transferred to the 60-day to clear a 40-man spot, and Travis Buck is put on the 15-day to clear a 25-man spot. This also explains a little better the Rajai Davis waiver claim, since with Buck out, a new fifth outfielder will be handy. Of course, the Mike Sweeney question still isn't answered. Is he basically a pinch-hitter now? That's fine by me, I guess, since the A's were just taking a flier on him in the first place, although you do hate to see the A's do the dirty on a solid citizen like Sweeney. And what happens to him when Buck comes back? I'd hope that the A's would at that point see the sense in DFAing Rajai Davis, but we'll see, I suppose.

The lineup now is presumably Em(a)il Brown in right, Sweeney in center, Cust in left, Barton at first, Ellis at second, Crosby at short, Hannahan at third (although Donnie Murphy will get more time if Hannahan continues to struggle both with his hitting and with errors), Suzuki behind the plate, and Thomas at DH. The bench, then, is Mike Sweeney, who can pinch-hit for Hannahan and Sweeney; Denorfia, who can pinch-run, play defense for Cust, and spot-start anywhere in the outfield; and Rajai Davis, who can pinch-run and play defense (if he gets any starts, I will throw things). Donnie Murphy and Rob Bowen's roles are obvious.

Chavez is now eligible to come off the DL at the end of May, so you have to wonder whether we'll see him at all this year.

Anyway, this is all pretty exciting, since Thomas will make the pro-rated minimum (i.e. he's basically free) and he'll almost certainly outhit Sweeney. Meanwhile, 1/8 of the way through the season, the A's are +18 in run differential, are tied for the second-best record in the AL, and have allowed the fewest runs in the AL despite no pitchers in the top-20 in baseball in VORP (Dana Eveland is 21st). Seattle and Texas clearly aren't that good, so the A's are putting themselves in a position to make a surprise run if the Angels falter (e.g. John Lackey doesn't come back fully effective, or they keep suffering injuries to players like Lackey and Howie Kendrick, or Garret Anderson gets 650 plate appearances). And of course this is all without mortgaging the future in any way. Thomas isn't blocking anybody, just like Mike Sweeney wasn't.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Oakland A's at 13:12