

Twins need to trade Joe Mauer

Written by Fred Easter

Friday, 14 December 2012 09:36

I fully expect President Obama and Speaker of the House, John Boehner will manage to do what the electorate needs them to do and I can turn my attention to an opinion on a local issue for a week.

The Twins need to trade Joe Mauer.

In a sport where pitchers are nearly half the roster, a team cannot be successful if one player, a non-pitcher, consumes more than 20 percent of the payroll. Half price, cut rate pitchers do not lead their teams into the playoffs.

Joe Mauer, while a lousy singer, is a great hitter, above average receiver and all around good guy – with or without his sideburns. I get that as a home grown product, it will be more painful to trade him than it was to move Kevin Garnett. It was probably unfortunate that the building of Target Field and Mauer's free agent year nearly coincided. The Twins would've seemed money grubbing and miserly if they'd let this local legend leave via free agency while begging public money to help build the finest baseball venue in the nation. Now, the stadium is here and empty seats are beginning to appear as the Twins put together "worst in the league" win-loss records. In a trade, Mauer can command front line pitchers. Yeah, maybe two of them. And his salary savings could pay them without blowing up the payroll. No catcher, in the game, will hit with Mauer; but Drew Butera and Ryan Doumit are a more than adequate tandem. Doumit can hit and Butera can shut down a running game. Imagine our Twins running Josh Beckett or Zack Greinke out there every five days (though the latter will probably not happen as Greinke was just traded to the Dodgers).

I will miss Denard Span and Ben Revere, but, I understood the moves. We should still be able to field a better defensive outfield than any we had that included Delmon Young. Maybe I'm a purist, but, I like watching teams that are built on pitching and defense. I hate watching guys kick balls around the outfield while they're thinking about their next shot at that slider they whiffed on last inning. I miss the piranhas. Hit, bunt, run the bases, do all the little things. Justin Morneau and Josh Willingham will be up soon.

Carl Pavano was a nice guy. He ate innings, had a great work ethic and was probably a good influence on the younger arms. But, 88 mph fastballs on the fists are a clear and present danger to folks sitting in the left field seats. We need some power arms that can keep hitters from sitting on the pitches on the outside part of the plate. And, we need bona fide top of the rotation arms.

I must also say that I'm not impressed with the team's ability to assess and develop pitching talent. Too many pitchers experience marked improvement when they leave – and don't, when they stay. Francisco Liriano and Nick Blackburn are examples of the latter. Examples of the former are too numerous to mention. If we trade Mauer for already successful major league pitchers, our coaching weakness will hurt us less. I think Steve Little and Jerry White were scapegoats. If White's responsibility was infield defense, he was hamstrung by an infield with faster moving parts than the cards in a three-card monte game.

Wish I could afford a few weeks in Ft. Myers, Fla. this February. It's going to be interesting watching Gardy (Ron Gardenhire) and the guys construct a team from spare parts. Two front

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line pitchers and one fewer catcher would help. But, then, nobody asked me, and nobody's likely to.