

Written by  
Tuesday, 12 February 2008 08:46

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Sounds like a butler doesn't it?

Actually, it is just a contract that former players sign with a major league team in order to work in the front office or simply help in ways that vary depending on what you have to offer as a coach, executive or both.

**Craig Biggio** [became the latest former Houston Astros player](#) yesterday to sign such a deal (for three years), joining former teammates

**Roger Clemens**

,

**Jeff Bagwell**

and

**Nolan Ryan**

. The latter was released from his obligations when he was hired as the

**Texas Rangers President**

last week

(

[read a Biz of Baseball story on that subject](#)

)

.

"I've already moved on to the next chapter of my life," Biggio said Monday. "I'm excited to see how the other aspects of the game work."

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He'll work as a special assistant to the general manager, helping coach young players as well as assisting the Astros on the business side. He'll split time between the Astros and St. Thomas High School, where he's working as an assistant baseball coach. His oldest son, Conor, plays for the team

"My mornings are free, and my nights are free, so that works out very nicely for meetings, and it works out for games," Biggio said. "It's going to make the days really long, but I'm excited about that."

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As the second chapter to his successful career, the 42-year-old says he plans on helping with the amateur draft and scouting and doesn't reject out of hand a possible position in the Astros Front Office in the future.

"A lot of people bring it up," Biggio said. "Five years down the road, that would definitely be the icing on the cake. It would be something and you never strive for as a player, but now you're in a situation you have a chance to be included in an elite company. That would be really nice."

This agreement between the Texan club and the future Hall of Famer resembles the one **Jeff Bagwell** [signed in December 2006](#)

The Astros also announced an ongoing personal services contract between the club and Bagwell, through the 2009 season. As part of the agreement, Bagwell will assist the club's Major League baseball operations staff with its Major and minor league player development programs, the Astros hitting development program, the amateur draft, scouting and minor league team operations and evaluations. He will also spend time with the club in Spring Training, providing instruction to players and staff and evaluating both Major and minor league players.

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One of the question here is: do players make better executives or even scouts?

My theory on it is very simple.

For example, most hitting coach, though not all, are guys that had not the best natural talent, but had to really work at it and breakdown every single part of their swing in order to get the best results in the end. That study and attention to details usually results in the player having a better knowledge of what it takes to build an effective swing and their ability to analyze other's swings is greatly improved, though putting it in practice is actually much harder.

As catchers generally make good managers or coaches, because they see everything on the field and become maestro for the whole crew, not all players deserve or should be coaches or scouts when their career is done.

This is not to say that the current players signed to personal services contract with the Astros will fail, but the thinking behind these deals seems to be that if you were an important player for the franchise, you deserve to be in the front office.

Adding to that, it would also be interesting to see exactly how much input these former players actually have on decisions the Astros make and how these guys work with the personnel already in place.

As General Manager, **Ed Wade** has the following assistant: **Ricky Bennett**, **David Gottfried**, **Enos Cabell**

,

**Matt Galante**

,

**Al Pedrique**

,

**Jeff Bagwell**

and now

**Craig Biggio**

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Then you have **Tal Smith** as President of Baseball Operations (*read [an interview](#) and*

*[Questions With...](#)*

*&quot;*

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,  
**Jay Edmiston**

as Assistant Director of Baseball Operations,

**Allen Rowin**

as Coordinator of Baseball Operations,

**Traci Dearing**

as Executive Assistant of Baseball Operations,

**Paul Ricciarini**

as Director of Player Personnel,

**Bobby Heck**

as Director of Amateur Scouting and

**Michael Burns**

as Assistant to Player Development.

Despite all this qualified staff, they got only 99 innings out of **Jason Jennings** (and not resigning him after 2007) after they traded top prospect

**Jason Hirsch**

,  
**Taylor Buchholz**

and

**Willy Taveras**

. Plus, they sent what remained in the farm system to obtain

**Miguel Tejada**

, ONE DAY before the release of the

**Mitchell Report**

, when was widely expected that this player's name was going to appear in the historic document. Don't forget that they also gave a limited no-trade clause to

**Kaz Matsui**

, a guy who could not keep a starting job a year earlier and had a .249 batting average out of Coors Field.

The structure of this front office either needs to be significantly altered or the personnel has to change. Bringing more guys only for the fun of it doesn't seem to show satisfying results so far.

The new approach, if they are serious about giving guys like Biggio and Bagwell a role in amateur scouting, will need to focus on signing their draft picks (unlike in 2007 where they first two picks -3rd and 4th round) and not be restrained by major league's slotting system, with teams like Boston, New York and Detroit not respecting the non-binding recommendations by the Commissioner and its staff.

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