

The Never Ending Story Called Relocation of the A's

Written by Angie Picardo

Friday, 01 February 2013 21:54



What could have been... Cisco Field in Fremont

This is a guest article by Angie Picardo

"It's getting ugly in Oakland" might best describe the A's ongoing battle. Despite over 40 rich years of history in their fair city, the Athletics are preparing for a future approximately 40 miles south in San Jose. The man behind the upheaval of an Oakland institution is none other than A's owner Lew Wolff. To paint Wolff as a Grinch may be uncalled for. He's simply a businessman with roots in the real estate industry, who has gone on record as starting that there is no viable long term solution in Oakland. To many in Oakland, however, he is evil incarnate.

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Despite a season that defied expectations and included a Western Division title and the organizations first playoff berth since 2006, the A's are no closer to obtaining a new home than before. However, 2012 brought a renewed interest in the team, and their passionate fans were lauded for their support during the season's final weeks. Overall attendance still failed to impress. A total attendance of 1,679,013 made their way through the turnstiles in 2012, leaving the A's in the very bottom of the league and finishing 27th out of 30 teams. This is nothing new to Wolff and fellow owners, who have watched attendance plummet since taking over the team in 2005.

Wolff's first move in Oakland was to propose a move south to Fremont, California in 2006 ([see computer renderings of the Cisco Field design in Fremont](#)). The inception of the idea was generated around the idea of the creation of a "baseball village" which would include a grand shopping, residential, and sports facility that would be constructed over a 143-acre parcel of land near interstate 880. The plan was met with a mixture of confusion and animosity from A's fans, who didn't understand why Wolff would move their team to a less populated area. In Fremont, Wolff saw the opportunity to implement his vision without the constraints of Oakland's economy and lack of suitable space for development. The idea fell through before they could break ground due to concerns over public transportation and a high level of resistance from the Fremont community and city council.

During this time, Wolff quickly dismissed any and all [overtures](#) from the city of Oakland to keep the team. With the outdated and decrepit Oakland Coliseum failing to meet the needs of either the team or fans, options and proposals have been set forth with little resolution.

Wolff has turned his attention further south to the tech savvy and affluent San Jose area, aligning himself with the supportive city council of the city. He has made progress in recruiting corporate sponsorship through Cisco enterprises, and has purchased land around the proposed area for a stadium. In many ways, the team is operating under the belief that San Jose will be the eventual future home of the Athletics. Standing in their way are the San Francisco Giants, who refuse to relent territorial rights over the area. These rights however, are only in their hands thanks to the goodwill of former Athletics owner Walter Haas who gifted the Giants with the territory in the mid 80's when they sought to relocate away from Candlestick Park. For now, an agreement that appeases both ownerships is on the agenda for Commissioner Bud Selig whose had not been able to come up with a compromise after more than two years of sitting on the issue.

The city of Oakland, fighting to hold onto a trio of teams that desperately want to leave have

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continually stood by the stance that they have the ability to support professional sports. A committee organized by the mayor's office, has proposed a pair of locations within the city to build a park to keep the Athletics. Both locations which near Jack London Square, have been shot down by Wolff and his cohorts and deemed as having "no ability to be implemented for a ballpark".

With the team's future essentially on hold, and playing season after season in the only active multi-purpose ballpark in sports, the time is now for a decision. If the Athletics cannot be moved within the Bay Area, Lew Wolff must sell the team to a buyer who will form an alliance with the city and build the stadium that the true fans deserve. After all, isn't it true that "if you build it, they will come"?

We'll just have to wait and see.

Angie Picardo is a staff writer for NerdWallet, a personal finance website.