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trade: Carter, who has averaged more than 100 RBI for five years, will move into an outfield that expects to lose free agent George Bell. Alomar, 22, will fill Toronto's search for an all-around second baseman. McGriff, with 105 home runs in the last three seasons, will take over first base, a position that figured to be vacated soon with Jack Clark becoming a new-look free agent.

The Padres came to the meetings looking to replace aging shortstop Garry Templeton, and Fernandez is considered one of the game's premier all-around shortstops. Fernandez, 28, hit .276 last season with four homers, 66 RBI and 27 stolen bases. He led the American League in fielding percentage in 1986 and 1989 and won four Gold Gloves from 1986-89.

Carter, 30, and McGriff, 27, are marquee power hitters, and trades of this magnitude are rare. In 1959, a blockbuster deal sent slugger Rocky Colavito from Cleveland to Detroit for batting champ Harvey Kuenn.

At last year's meetings, Carter was traded by Cleveland for Sandy Alomar Jr., who became the 1990 American League Rookie of the Year; this time, Carter was traded with Alomar's brother.

The swap came together so fast that the teams had difficulty reaching the players involved. "It was a real shock," Alomar said. "I really didn't hear anything about it. Well, at least I'll get to see my brother more."

The Blue Jays plan to move Manny Lee to shortstop, and John Olerud probably will play first base. If the Blue Jays can keep Bell, a left fielder, Carter will play right field. They acquired Devon White earlier this week from California, and either he or Mookie Wilson can play center.

Meanwhile, a team executive who wasn't at the meetings made the most noise by railing against a commissioner who wasn't there, either. Former Yankees owner George Steinbrenner blamed commissioner Fay Vincent — at home recuperating from a respiratory illness — for reliever Dave Righetti's escape to the San Francisco Giants. Last summer, Vincent forced Steinbrenner to give up daily control of the Yankees; in September, Vincent denied Steinbrenner permission to handle free-agent talks. "If I were involved, this never would've happened. If I'm there, he doesn't get away," Steinbrenner said.

The Mets, who lost free agent Darryl Strawberry to the Los Angeles Dodgers, dipped into the free-agent market for the first time since 1980 (when they signed Rusty Staub, Dave Roberts and Mike Cubbage) and gave Coleman a four-year contract worth $11.95 million. He ends the Mets' search for a leadoff hitter and will play left field. Kevin McReynolds will move to right field.

Coleman, 29, stole an average of 91 bases in each of six years, all with St. Louis, and was successful 83 percent of the time. He was at his best against the Mets, safely stealing the first 57 times he tried against them. Coleman batted a career-best .292 last season and stole 77 bases.

The Brewers and Higuera, 31, agreed to a four-year, $13 million deal. Higuera, who was 11-10 with a 3.76 ERA last season, had been talking with the Padres and a third club that wasn't identified but chose the Brewers when they offered a fourth year. The $3.25 million average annual value ties him with Kansas City's Mark Davis as the third-highest paid pitcher behind Oakland's Dave Stewart ($3.5 million) and Texas' Nolan Ryan ($3.3 million).

Bream signed with Atlanta for three years and $5.5 million. The Braves had offered a three-year, $5.4 million contract to Stubbs, and the Twins had offered three years for just more than $5 million. But Stubbs, who set a Houston Astros record with 23 homers by a lefthanded hitter last season, got a three-year, $6 million deal from the Brewers. Stubbs, primarily a first baseman, will play right field, a slot left open when Rob Deer went to Detroit.

Toronto lured Tabler, 32, with a two-year, $1.6 million contract. He is 40-for-80 lifetime with the bases loaded.

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Ard is 10 years younger than Bedrosian, is big (6-5, 220) and durable (29 starts and 180 innings for Class AA Orlando in 1990) and has a career minor league record of 32-17.

"It's difficult to part with Ard," MacPhail said. "This deal certainly comes at a cost because we've delved into our stable of young arms, but you have to deal from what you have, and that is the one area where we have a lot of talent."

Bedrosian, in the final year of a contract that will pay him $1.45 million next season, could depart as a free agent after 1991, but MacPhail said even that worst-case scenario would result in the Twins receiving two draft picks from the team that signed him.

Bedrosian, who won the National League Cy Young Award by saving 40 games for the Philadelphia Phillies in 1987, is coming off the most trying of his 10 major league seasons. During the season's first week, his 3-year-old son, Cody, was diagnosed with leukemia. Understandably distracted, Bedrosian struggled early in the season and still had not rounded into form by July. During one stretch in late July and early August, he allowed 11 earned runs in five innings.

Bedrosian recovered nicely and had two victories, seven saves and a 1.54 ERA in 10 September appearances, earning the NL Rolaids Relief Man award for the month. He finished 9-9 with 17 saves, but with a 4.20 ERA that was more than a run above his previous career average.

"He did a good job for us in the face of extreme adversity," Rosen said.

Said MacPhail: "Our scouts saw him late in the season and raved about him. His velocity was good, and he had a great slider. ... It's understandable why he struggled a little bit early in the season, and we think it's reasonable to anticipate a better performance than last year. And now, if there is a concern about Cody's condition, which we understand is in remission, the one thing Minnesota is world-famous for is health centers. That may lessen the concern a bit."

The Twins suddenly find themselves with a glut of righthanded relievers, particularly if Berenguer (51 appearances in 1990) is retained. Terry Leach made 55 relief appearances and Tim Drummond 31. The Twins also are high on two potential righthanded closers, Richard Garces and Park Pittman. The club has not given up on Jack Savage, either. MacPhail said it was "conceivable" that Aguilera, Bedrosian, Berenguer, Leach and Drummond all could stay in the bullpen.

As for moving Aguilera into the rotation, a switch that would have been made had Righetti been signed, MacPhail said, "There are those in the organization who think Bedrosian can close, which would enable us to do that." MacPhail said he would be "delighted" if Bedrosian emerged as the closer.

However, the Twins are obligated to make such a decision before spring training, as Aguilera has indicated he would like to have his role clearly defined. Aguilera has said he will start or relieve but would prefer not to move back and forth. MacPhail said he plans to honor that request, adding, "We have to go into spring training with an idea of what we're going to do about that."

Notes/ Most of the Twins staff will leave the winter meetings today, and MacPhail will fly out Friday. However, most teams already have left, and MacPhail said he did not anticipate any further trade activity. "It would be a shock to me if anything else happened," he said. "We're pretty happy with what we've got accomplished here. We've had some talks about things that are contingent on free agents signing and the situation with the new-look guys, things that could happened down the road a bit."

Responding to a rumor that had the Twins trading Allan Anderson to the Cincinnati Reds for second baseman Mariano Duncan, MacPhail said: "We have no interest in moving Allan Anderson. Period. Even if people aren't figuring we're trying to get rid of him and make us a decent offer, he's a good pitcher who won 16 and 17 games for us." The Reds need a lefthanded starter to replace departed free agent Danny Jackson and have Duncan available after signing Bill Doran to a three-year deal. Anderson is from Lancaster, Ohio, about 120 miles from Cincinnati.

MacPhail chafed at the suggestion the Twins were making bids at free agents merely as a public-relations ploy while knowing they would be unable to land a player such as Righetti or Gibson. "I thought we'd get Gibson," MacPhail said. "And there was a time when I thought Righetti was a real possibility. I wouldn't invest our time and everything just for show. We had to make an effort for these guys. It's just that you don't always win."

'U' probe finished, sources say

The NCAA's two-year investigation into possible improprieties in the Gophers men's athletic department finally is completed, sources say, and the university can expect a letter of official inquiry soon.

"I don't know for sure when we'll get it, but it could be any day now," athletic director Rick Bay said.

The letter of inquiry will list allegations to which the Gophers will have to respond at an NCAA infractions committee meeting, probably Feb. 1 in San Diego. University attorney Bill Donahue and in-house investigator Mike Slive have been negotiating with the NCAA over which specific allegations should appear in the letter of inquiry, sources say.

The issues the NCAA has been investigating include what role Luther Darville played in the athletic department. Darville was convicted of swindling the university out of nearly $200,000 and said he gave some of that to athletes. Allegations could include violations in the football, wrestling and basketball programs.

Bay said the letter will be made public after university officials spend 24 to 48 hours digesting the charges and removing names in accordance with privacy laws.

— Curt Brown

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