

[Boston Globe Column On Purported Deal With Indians](#)

By Chris Snow, Globe Staff - January 23, 2006

The Red Sox, according to a source with knowledge of the deal, have reached agreement in principle with the Indians on a complex six-player deal centered upon 26-year-old Coco Crisp that also will bring to town a quality setup man in 28-year-old David Riske and young catcher Josh Bard.

Boston will ship top prospect Andy Marte, reliever Guillermo Mota, and catcher Kelly Shoppach to Cleveland. The deal is contingent upon physicals. The only player in the deal with a known and recent injury issue is Mota, who missed a month last season with the Marlins because of inflammation in his throwing elbow.

It's possible Mota's medical records could raise enough concern that the deal would be killed or reworked. However, consummating the deal has required more than 75 phone calls between the clubs in the last month, and it's likely, given the time and energy committed, that if a problem were to be detected during a physical, the teams would try to revise the package of players.

Because of the need to exchange and carefully process medical records, the deal is unlikely to be announced any sooner than the middle or end of this week.

Furthermore, the Indians don't have an in-house successor to Crisp and are believed to have been working on a deal for the Phillies' fourth outfielder, Jason Michaels. If that were to fall through, or if the Indians were unable to get a left fielder to replace Crisp in a concurrent deal, that also could put in peril the Crisp deal, given that Cleveland then would have a gaping hole in his absence.

The Red Sox, provided the deal goes through and they give up Marte, then figure to turn to free

agent shortstop Alex Gonzalez, who at last check was believed to be seeking approximately \$5 million per season for at least two seasons. The Sox had been pursuing Tampa Bay shortstop Julio Lugo, but Tampa Bay wanted Marte or young pitching in return.

Provided the trade goes through, the Red Sox will have found a capable successor to Johnny Damon, in the field and atop the order, for at least the next four seasons. Crisp, who made \$365,000 last season, is likely to land in the neighborhood of \$3 million this coming year, either in arbitration or through negotiation, and is set up to earn about \$20 million over the next four seasons if he performs as he has. He doesn't become a free agent until after the 2009 season.

Last year, he hit .300 with 16 homers, 42 doubles, 69 RBIs, a .345 OBP, and a .810 OPS (on-base percentage plus slugging) and was named best defensive left fielder by the Hardball Times. He played left rather than center because the Indians have another young talent there in Grady Sizemore. Damon hit .316 with 10 homers, 35 doubles, 75 RBIs, a .366 OBP, and a .805 OPS last season.

Riske, 29, was 3-4 with a 3.10 ERA in 58 games last season. In 72 2/3 innings, he struck out 48 and walked 15, though he did allow 11 home runs for the second consecutive season. He did have a fantastic WHIP -- walks plus hits per innings pitched -- of 0.96.

Among American League relievers last season, only New York's Mariano Rivera (0.87), Cleveland's Bobby Howry (0.89), Chicago's Cliff Politte (0.94), and Toronto's Justin Speier (0.95) posted a better WHIP than Riske. Righties hit just .204 vs. Riske, while lefties didn't do much better, at .213. In six seasons with Cleveland, the righthander is 17-12 with a 3.55 ERA. Riske is signed for one year at \$1.8 million and, like Mota, will become a free agent at season's end.

The switching-hitting Bard, 27, has hit .238 with 13 homers and 61 RBIs in 156 major league games over four seasons, including 34 last year. He made just \$318,000 last season and would be under the Red Sox' contractual control for several seasons.