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NOT A LOT OF MEET

By **GEORGE KING** and **NICK PARISH**

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GEORGE STEINBRENNER

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November 2, 2005 -- The sexier story would be that representatives from each arm of the dysfunctional Yankees family yesterday greeted each other with clumps and hugs and vowed to work as one unit.

Or that the Bronx family and the Tampa family barge the first round of organizational meetings at the Regal Hotel and immediately began cussing out each other about who will make decisions and when.

However, the truth is, the initial meeting of what appears to be a busy offseason for George Steinbrenner's swoll Inner Circle provided all the excitement of reading your lease.

Yes, it was held in New York instead of Tampa. Yes, were many more people involved this time. And, supposedly, The Bronx and Tampa will try to commu better after years of bickering that helped push pitch coach Mel Stottlemyre into retirement.

But as far as big developments sliding out onto Park Avenue, it didn't happen.

Brian Cashman, asked if he got the vibe that Tampa The Bronx were on the same page, was non-commit

"I couldn't describe it that way," Cashman said of the four-hour meeting. "We had an agenda and we will continue to do so. Obviously, this was the first of many more meetings about how we can put the best pro on the field for 2006."

Another round of meetings is set for today.

Steinbrenner traveled Monday from Tampa with general partner and son-in-law Steve Swindal and a bev; aides including Billy Connors and Bill Emslie, who were at the center of The Bronx-Tampa ill will this summer due to their second-guessing of Joe Torre, Cashman and Stottlemyre.

As Steinbrenner was leaving the hotel last night, he said he was pleased with the meetings so far.

"They went well," The Boss said. "The results are not complete yet."

For the first time since 2002, Torre was a part of the meetings. He stopped by Tampa briefly three years ago to offer an opinion after a first-round playoff loss to the Angels. But, generally, Torre isn't involved in these meetings. Yet, because The Boss wanted them held in New York, and Steinbrenner is willing to listen to his manager, Torre was a part of it.

Also on hand was club president Randy Levine.

You didn't need a bugging device to understand what went on in the room: The Yankees need a center field middle-relief help, and must sign Hideki Matsui. And though they are saving roughly \$40 million with Kevin Brown, Bernie Williams, Steve Karsay, Tom Gordon, Paul Quantrill and Mike Stanton coming off the book, the team isn't expected to spend wildly.



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It's not likely the Yankees are going to chase Red Sox free agent Johnny Damon, and there are voices w/ against trading Robinson Cano for the Twins' Torii Hunter. Other minds are wary of bringing troubled Milt Bradley from L.A.

A possibility is prying Vernon Wells away from Toronto, but it would be very difficult for the Blue Jays to nr deal that would upgrade their AL East rival in their weakest position. Florida's Juan Pierre's name will surt too.

Free-agent Orioles lefty B.J. Ryan will be recruited hard, and righties Kyle Farnsworth (Braves) and Juliar Tavarez (Cardinals) will draw interest.

According to Matsui's agent, Arn Tellem, discussions with the Yankees will get serious at the GM meeting next week.

The Yankees have until Nov. 15 to sign the left fielder or lose him.

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