

A's news Clips, Thursday, November 19, 2009

A's Lieppman wins 'Chief' Bender Award

Director of player development in 40th year with organization

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Keeping any sort of job for 40 years is astounding. Doing it in professional sports borders on unreal.

Yet Keith Lieppman, director of player development for the A's, will be celebrating four decades with the organization next season, and before that the organization -- and the rest of baseball -- will be celebrating his myriad contributions over that time.

Lieppman, who turns 61 in January, has been named the recipient of the second annual Sheldon "Chief" Bender Award, presented by Minor League Baseball to "someone with distinguished service who has been instrumental in player development."

The award was established after Bender, who oversaw the Reds' farm system from 1967-88 and had 64 years of baseball service, passed away at the age of 88 last year.

"I've always been kind of an under-the-radar guy; I'm not an awards guy at all," Lieppman told MLB.com by phone on Wednesday morning. "But to be recognized like this is really nice."

Having served in his current capacity for the past 18 years, Lieppman will be presented with the award at baseball's annual Winter Meetings, which start on Dec. 7 in Indianapolis.

"I'm humbled and appreciative for being selected for this award," said Lieppman, who began his career with the A's as a Minor League player in 1971. "I had the privilege of knowing and working with Chief Bender, and I respect all that he represented and brought to the game. It's an honor to be associated, through this award, with such a man of integrity and the numerous accomplishments he has achieved."

After managing at every level of the A's organization, most recently with at the Triple-A level from 1985-87, Lieppman was named to his current position and charged with the assignment of development and evaluation of players throughout the farm system, which consistently ranks among the best in the game.

In 2009, Oakland's top two Minor League affiliates combined for a .580 winning percentage. Triple-A Sacramento posted an 86-57 record on the way to a first-place finish in the Pacific Coast League Southern Division, and Double-A Midland went 78-62 mark en route to the Texas League title.

"We are extremely proud that Minor League Baseball is recognizing Keith Lieppman as this year's recipient of the Chief Bender Award," said A's vice president and general manager Billy Beane. "His consummate professionalism and dedication to the development of young baseball players has been a cornerstone of this organization. ... Receiving this much-deserved award, named for a highly respected figure in our business, is a testament to Keith's unparalleled record of service with the A's."

Selected out of high school by the Dodgers in the 70th round of the 1967 Amateur Draft, Lieppman chose to attend the University of Kansas, from which he graduated with a degree in journalism after turning down an offer from the Braves following his junior season.

He was selected by the A's as a shortstop in the "secondary phase" of the 1971 First-Year Player Draft, and following nine seasons on the playing field, he spent eight years as a skipper in Oakland's system, beginning at Modesto in 1980. He also managed the Licey Tigres of the Dominican Winter League in 1986.

Lieppman, who also coordinates field instruction for the entire A's Minor League system, lives in Prescott, Ariz., with his wife, Corinne, and their 21-year-old twins, son Burke and daughter Lauren. He expressed gratitude for Oakland's family-first philosophy, which enabled him to "do just about everything a normal father gets to do."

"It's unusual to spend 40 years in the same organization, especially these days," Lieppman said. "But it's been great. Billy has always been big on letting people work their schedules around family stuff, making sure people are happy away from the job, and [former GM] Sandy [Alderson] was like that, too."

"I feel pretty lucky to be where I am."

Beane looking to go young in offseason

GM to pursue youth rather than spending on free agents

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com 11/19/09

OAKLAND -- The 15-day window in which teams hold exclusive negotiating rights with their own free agents closes at 9 p.m. PT on Thursday, at which point the A's will be free to start their holiday shopping.

But based on general manager Billy Beane's comments on Tuesday after a press conference honoring Andrew Bailey for being named the American League Rookie of the Year, fans ought not to expect Oakland to whip out its proverbial wallet any time soon.

Yes, Beane is interested in bringing back a couple of his own free agents -- right-hander Justin Duchschere and infielder Adam Kennedy. Both figure to get plenty of interest on the open market, though, and Beane suggested that he's content to let the free-agent frenzy play out without his active participation.

In other words, he's staying the course that he set a couple of winters ago before appearing to veer a bit off last offseason with the acquisitions of veteran stars Matt Holliday, Jason Giambi, Orlando Cabrera and Nomar Garciaparra.

Beane, now more than ever, is committed to going young. If he doesn't think a current need -- third base, first base, shortstop and left field are unsettled -- can be filled by a prospect from within the organization, he'll be looking to acquire such players via trade.

Those players, he suggested, would have to be up-and-comers. He seems to have little to no interest in down-siders such as Vladimir Guerrero, Miguel Tejada and Carlos Delgado.

Only if Plans A and B fall through will Beane dive into what's considered a fairly shallow free-agent pool.

"I think our first goal this winter is, the positions we need to fill, fill them with young guys," he said. "If we get into January and we haven't acquired a young player, then we'll consider a guy to fill in temporarily. The first goal is to find a young guy. Our long-term goal is to create a team with continuity that is going to be here for a number of years.

Thus, if Kennedy is sincere in his desire to return to Oakland, he'll likely have to wait a while before getting an offer. Duchschere's situation is slightly different in that the A's could use a veteran to complement their stable of gifted young starters, but the message is the same.

Whatever money is available to upgrade the team's talent might stay in the coffers unless it's used to pay the salaries of young players brought in via trade.

"We're going to look at young players to fill spots, first and foremost," Beane said. "If those players we'd like to acquire aren't obtainable, we'll consider bringing in guys who can hold the positions down. We're going to stay disciplined and try to do everything we can to fill those spots with young players."

Ideally, top prospects such as third baseman Brett Wallace and first baseman/outfielder Chris Carter will quickly blossom into the positional equivalent of Bailey.

"We've always been proud of our player development history here," Beane said. "Really, if you look at when the club has been good, this has been a precursor to many of those good years. This is the fourth [Rookie of the Year] we've had since '98, and usually following that we've had some pretty good success."

With success, of course, comes excitement. And Beane knows that the patience of Oakland's small but passionate fan base is wearing thin on the heels of three consecutive losing seasons.

"Ultimately when you start winning games is when they get really interested. I'm aware of that," Beane said. "So the next step is to continue to bring guys like Andrew up here. That's our responsibility, and I know the deal.

"To sign a couple free agents and have three or four press conferences during the winter doesn't get it done," Beane said. "We're going to be disciplined."

Haddon Heights' Bailey on top with A's

By Marc Narducci , Inquirer Staff Writer 11/19/09

It was a few weeks ago and far away from the spotlight Andrew Bailey had performed under as one of the true feel-good stories of the 2009 season in major-league baseball.

He was going back to his roots.

The season had been long, and Bailey, 25, a 2002 graduate of Paul VI High School in Camden County, was spending much of his off-season in Connecticut with his fiancée, Amanda Scalzo.

He made a trip to the town where he grew up, Haddon Heights.

Bailey went to Mike DeCastro, a former coach who was an old friend, and he and his fiancée spent a few hours at DeCastro's home.

Since 1985, DeCastro has been the successful head coach of the Haddon Heights American Legion team, but he was also a Little League coach in the town and had known and coached Bailey since he was 9 years old.

On Monday, Bailey was named the American League's rookie of the year as a relief pitcher after completing an improbable season with the Oakland A's.

Bailey and DeCastro's son, Marc, are longtime friends and were teammates for both Paul VI and an American Legion team.

While DeCastro was happy to see his former pitcher, who helped Haddon Heights win one of eight berths in the American Legion World Series in 2003, the veteran coach was taken aback when Bailey presented him with memorabilia.

Bailey gave DeCastro the ball he received after gaining his first major-league save.

He also handed DeCastro a jersey the righthander wore as a member of the American League all-star team this year.

"I think that tells you what type of kid he is," DeCastro said. "He is so down-to-earth, and we spent a couple of hours together, and it was great."

The world has been moving rapidly for Bailey, who was 6-3 with an ERA of 1.84 for the A's. He started the season as a long reliever but moved into the closer's role, the true pressure cooker when games are on the line.

Bailey saved 26 games in 30 opportunities.

It was a remarkable first year, and it brought him an award that is difficult to win. Just one member of the current Phillies, Ryan Howard, has been a rookie of the year. That occurred in 2005.

It's possible Bailey will spend the rest of the off-season grasping what it all means.

"I talked to my manager earlier, and he said you will always be the rookie of the year, and nobody can take that away from you," Bailey said in a telephone conversation with The Inquirer shortly after the award was announced. "I don't think the whole year has hit me yet."

He said he was honored and humbled to win the award, which was the latest accolade in a year nobody could have forecast.

In 2008, Bailey was a struggling minor-league starting pitcher for double-A Midland, in Texas, when, during midseason, he was switched to relief. He was 1-8 with a 6.18 ERA as a starter but flourished in the bullpen with a 4-1 record and 0.92 ERA in his final 22 games.

He then pitched well in the Arizona Fall League, a place for many top young players.

The momentum continued during spring training, when he made the A's, which had been considered a long shot.

Bailey continued to impress the A's and eventually was moved to the back of the bullpen as the closer.

In midseason, he was named to the American League all-star team, a wide-eyed pitcher in the locker room with players who would eventually help ruin the Phillies' season such as Derek Jeter and Mariano Rivera of the New York Yankees.

"That was an awesome experience and one I'll never forget," Bailey said of his all-star selection.

He never lost his focus, but those who know him are more impressed at how he has handled the sudden fame.

"If anything, he has grown as a person with the way he has handled himself with all the attention," said Kate Bailey, who is his older sister by two years and is extremely close with her brother. "All this success hasn't changed him."

Maybe that is why so many who knew Bailey before he was thrust into public consciousness are enjoying his stunning success.

"He's an awesome kid, and it couldn't happen to a better person," said Tony Mitchell, Bailey's coach at Paul VI, who is now the school's athletic director.

Coming out of high school, Bailey was considered more of a college prospect, and he accepted a scholarship to Wagner College on Staten Island.

"I remember catching him in high school, and a couple of times I had to ice down my index finger from catching his fastball," said Mike Miller, who was a year behind Bailey at Paul VI and is now an assistant athletic director for marketing at Wagner. "You could tell he was going to have success at the college level, but I'd be lying if I said I thought he'd be in the major leagues at that time."

At Wagner, Bailey encountered both success and frustration. He compiled 14 career wins and a school-record 237 career strikeouts. Yet during his junior year, in 2005, he attracted attention from major-league scouts but injured his elbow.

On May 5, 2005, he underwent Tommy John surgery, in which a ligament is transplanted into the injured arm. His recovery took about 10 months, but it was three months ahead of schedule.

"That was the toughest time of my life, when he had that surgery," said his father, Bill, who along with his wife, Lori, now lives in Cherry Hill. "The toughest night was when we found out, and we took him out to dinner because we didn't know what the future held."

Despite the injury, Andrew Bailey was selected in the 16th round of the 2005 major-league draft by the Milwaukee Brewers.

He declined to sign, went back to Wagner, went through an arduous rehabilitation, and was pitching by the spring of 2006.

"You didn't have to push Andrew," said Joe Litterio, now in his 11th year as the Wagner head baseball coach. "He knew what was in front of him and made sure he did everything he had to in order to come back."

Hedging against future injury, Bailey also received his degree in business administration with a concentration in finance.

Bailey showed enough during the 2006 college season to be drafted by the A's in the sixth round, and 188th overall, that year. He signed for a bonus of \$135,000 and began the difficult process of working his way through the minor leagues.

"The move to the bullpen changed everything and got me back to the mentality I had before double A," Bailey said. "I was trying to pick corners as a starter, and the move to the bullpen allowed me to be more aggressive."

That aggressive, bulldog demeanor on the field hasn't been evident off it.

"He has never given us any problems," Lori Bailey said. "With both of our kids, we have been blessed because they are really good people."

Those talking about him frequently mention how humble Bailey has remained.

"You just feel so good to see the success happen to such a great person," Litterio said.

Rookie award another example of great baseball played here

by Midland Reporter-Telegram 11/19/09

We are delighted that Oakland A's closer Andrew Bailey has been named American League Rookie of the Year. After all, we can't but help believe that he is one of our own.

Just two summers ago Bailey was a member of the Midland RockHounds pitching staff and it could be said that his stint in Midland helped him earn the honor he enjoys today.

As a member of the RockHounds, Bailey was moved from the starting rotation to the bullpen. That is usually considered as a demotion in professional baseball, but Bailey made the most of it. He earned 26 saves and posted a 1.84 ERA this past summer as the A's closer.

Bailey becomes the third Oakland player to earn rookie honors in the past six years, joining closer Huston Street in 2005 and shortstop Bobby Crosby in 2004. Street was also a closer for the A's, but Bailey's save total topped Street's team rookie record, and his ERA was third best among all AL relievers. He didn't blow a save after June 16 and finished the season with 21 consecutive saves, the second longest saves streak in Oakland history.

The A's really didn't want Bailey on this year's roster. First, he'd never pitched beyond Double-A Midland. Also, he had only converted from starter to reliever during the 2008 season. He was the last man to make the team, largely because of injuries, according to an account in the Sporting News. Bailey, who is just 25, came to the A's spring training as a non-roster invitee.

But the rest is history as Bailey was named first on 13 of 28 ballots and finished with 88 points. He beat out Texas Rangers shortstop Elvis Andrus, who was second with 65 points.

We also hope this amazing story is not lost on Midlanders. It is just another example of the talent we get to watch mature right here in our own beautiful minor league ballpark. Baseball's future is really being played out right before our eyes. Sometimes we don't realize what kind of talent is on hand during our summer season.

Bailey isn't even unique in his situation. He actually joins a long list of minor leaguers who have made the jump to the Major Leagues. He isn't even unique in his role reversal. Lee Smith is another former player to come through Midland who was a starter in the minors and went on to become one of baseball's all-time great closers. In fact, Smith is currently a viable candidate for the Hall of Fame.

And, of course, there is one Bruce Sutter, who was a closer for the old Midland Cubs. He is now in the Hall of Fame.

So, it's easy to see that we are blessed to get to see some of baseball's great stars parade before us every summer night. Many take the RockHounds for granted, but it only takes an Andrew Bailey to bring us back to our senses.

We offer Andrew our congratulations with hopes this is just a beginning of bigger and better things. And we can always say we knew you back when.

Oakland A's MLN: Off-Season Rehab Updates

Melissa Lockard
OaklandClubhouse.com

Nov 17, 2009

The off-season is a time for healing. So how are some of the Oakland A's prospects doing with their recoveries from in-season injuries? We have updates on Andrew Carignan, Sean Doolittle, Dusty Coleman, Jason Christian and more. We also report on another member of the A's organization taking home post-season hardware and give an update on winter

and fall league news inside...

Rehab Updates: Carignan Improving; Doolittle Recovering

There is mixed news on the injury front for two Oakland A's top prospects who missed much of the 2009 campaign with injuries. The good news falls with reliever [Andrew Carignan](#), who is throwing on the mound again after battling an elbow injury that cost him all but two innings of the 2009 season. According to Oakland A's Director of Player Development Keith Lieppman, Carignan recently returned from a three-week stint at the A's Instructional League camp in the Dominican Republic, where the right-hander threw seven innings to test his arm. Carignan "came out of the program healthy with same velocity and stuff he had shown the previous year. His command and pitches were not quite there but [it was] not to be expected," Lieppman wrote in an e-mail to OaklandClubhouse.com on Tuesday. Carignan is expected to rest for the remainder of the off-season and report to spring training as normal. The A's fifth-round pick in 2007 had a 2.01 ERA and 28 saves in 2008, his first full professional season, and he was a non-roster invitee to the A's major league spring training camp last spring.

The news was not so good in regards to [Sean Doolittle](#), who was sidelined five weeks into the season with a tear in his left patella tendon. Doolittle attempted to rehab the injury without surgery, even undergoing plasma rich platelet therapy, a series of injections designed to help the injury heal without surgery. Doolittle's rehab seemed to be going well at various points during the regular season, but every time he was close to returning to the field, the date for his return was pushed back. He has now had the surgery to correct the tear, according to Lieppman, and it is too early to tell whether the recovery will delay his arrival at spring training this year. Doolittle was batting .267 with an 811 OPS in 28 games with the Triple-A Sacramento River Cats at the time of his injury. The A's 2007 supplemental first-round pick hit 22 homeruns during his first professional season in 2008 and was also a non-roster invitee to the A's big league camp this past spring.

In other rehab news, A's infield prospects [Dusty Coleman](#) (wrist) and [Jason Christian](#) (shoulder) have not yet suffered any set-backs in their respective recoveries from injury. Assuming no further set-backs, both infielders are expected to be ready for spring training, although Lieppman cautioned that these types of rehabs can often endure some sort of set-back.

Lieppman also noted that top A's pitching prospects Fautino De Los Santos (Tommy John surgery) and [Michael Ynoa](#) (elbow tendonitis) are progressing well in their rehabs and are almost ready to pitch in real games at the Dominican Instructional League. Susan Slusser of the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported earlier on Tuesday that both pitchers threw in simulated games recently.

Lieppman also mentioned that A's outfield prospect [Tyreace House](#) is spending a month at the A's Dominican Instructional camp to work "on his bunting, stolen bases, leadoff-type approach, and overall game." House hit .291 with a .365 OBP in 56 games for the short-season A Vancouver Canadians this season. He was first on the team in stolen bases, fourth in batting average and third in on-base percentage, but he was caught stealing 10 times and managed only three extra-base hits. House was the A's sixth-round pick in 2008. Lieppman noted that House was doing well in the program. A's minor league infield coordinator and Mexican baseball legend Juan Navarrete is running the A's Dominican Instructional camp.

Lieppman Honored By Minor League Baseball

Lieppman was honored with Minor League Baseball's Chief Bender Award on Tuesday. The award is designed to honor "someone with distinguished service who has been instrumental in player development." Lieppman has served as the A's Director of Player Development for the past 18 years. Under his watch, the organization has produced six minor leaguers who have gone on to win the American League's Rookie of the Year award -- [Ben Grieve](#) (OAK, 1998), [Eric Hinske](#) (TOR, 2002), [Angel Berroa](#) (KC, 2003), [Bobby Crosby](#) (OAK, 2004), [Huston Street](#) (OAK, 2005) and [Andrew Bailey](#) (OAK, 2009). The A's have also produced two homegrown AL MVPs (Jason Giambi, 2000, and [Miguel Tejada](#), 2002) and one homegrown AL Cy Young Award winner ([Barry Zito](#), 2002) during Lieppman's tenure.

Lieppman, a University of [Kansas](#) alum, has spent 39 years as a member of the A's organization. He was the A's second-round pick in 1971 and spent nine seasons as a player in the A's minor league system. He was later a manager in the A's system, working at every level from Rookie Ball to Triple-A. Lieppman will receive the award at baseball's Winter Meetings, scheduled for the week of December 7th in Indianapolis. This is the second year for the Chief Bender Award. Minnesota Twins Director of Minor League Operations Jim Rantz was the first recipient in 2008.

Fall/Winter League Notes: Rodriguez Won't Start This Winter After All

According to Venezuelan newspaper *El Universal*, *Aguilas del Zulia* manager Eduardo Perez has decided against having Oakland A's prospect [Henry Rodriguez](#) start for his team this winter. We had reported last week that the *Aguilas* were considering moving Rodriguez into the rotation. Instead, Rodriguez will continue his role as a reliever. Rodriguez,

according to the newspaper, had received permission from the A's to act as a starter this winter should the Aguilas need him in that role. However, Perez determined that Rodriguez would benefit the team more out of the bullpen because the team already had more than enough starters and Rodriguez would be limited to a pitch count of 40 or so pitches per outing.

Rodriguez was a starter in the A's organization until midway through the 2008 season, when he was switched into a relief role. He was a reliever throughout the 2009 season and made his major league debut out of the bullpen this September. Through Monday, Rodriguez had appeared in two games for Zuila this winter, allowing six runs in only 1.2 innings of work.

* A's prospects will have a chance to win an AFL ring for a sixth consecutive season this Saturday. The Phoenix Desert Dogs clinched a spot in the league's championship game on Monday. Grant Desme, Corey Brown, Jemile Weeks, James Simmons, Sam Demel, Justin Friend and Mickey Storey are the A's representatives on the Desert Dogs' squad. Phoenix, which carries A's prospects every season, has won the last five AFL titles.

* A's left-hander Dana Eveland is in discussions to join the Aguilas de Mexicali of the Mexican Winter League during the second half of the league's season, according to Mexicali's *La Cronica.com*.

* Minor league free agent Jerome Williams, who spent the entire 2009 season with the Sacramento River Cats, is pitching in relief in the Puerto Rican Winter League. He has tossed 3.1 scoreless innings over two appearances for the Gigantes de Carolina and he has converted his only save opportunity.

* Fatigue may be starting to catch-up with some of the A's prospects playing in fall or winter leagues. Top prospect Chris Carter is 0-for-his-last-7 with five strike-outs for Guasave of the Mexican Winter League. He is batting .212 with a .770 OPS in 17 MWL games. Weeks has seen his AFL average drop to .250 as he is only five-for-his-last-32 with four walks and two extra-base hits. Matt Carson has gone hitless in his last six games (0-for-18) and is batting only .212 with a .558 OPS for Aguilas of the Dominican Winter League. James Simmons has allowed six runs over his last seven AFL innings and his ERA has risen to 4.50.