

A's News Clips, Friday, February 5, 2010

Evelyn Haas, philanthropist wife of former A's owner, dies

Couple's foundation has donated more than \$364 million

Staff report, Contra Costa Times 2/4/2010

Evelyn Haas, a prominent Bay Area philanthropist and widow of former Oakland Athletics owner and Levi Strauss CEO Walter Haas Jr., died Wednesday. She was 92.

Her death was announced on her charitable foundation's Web site, haasjr.org.

Haas led her foundation, the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, to donate more than \$364 million to hundreds of cultural, civic and social service organizations.

The couple owned the A's from 1980 to 1995.

Haas was well known in the Bay Area for her leadership of the board of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. She and her husband helped to raise \$95 million to build the museum's new home on Third Street, which opened in 1995.

Haas and her family spearheaded the restoration of Crissy Field into a national park and donated \$30 million to the project, the largest cash gift ever made to the National Park Service.

She was a leading advocate for the Season of Sharing Fund, which her husband co-founded with the San Francisco Chronicle in 1986 to benefit people who need emergency financial assistance, and gave the fund a \$10 million grant to spread classical music to homes and schools.

Haas also spent time on the San Francisco War Memorial Board and the Stern Grove Festival Association and was a trustee of the Children's Hospital of San Francisco and the California Pacific Medical Center.

Haas was born in Elberon, N.J., in 1917 and grew up in New York City. She attended Wheaton College in Massachusetts.

She married her husband in 1940, when the family moved to San Francisco. Her husband died in 1995. A public memorial service is planned for 2 p.m. Monday at Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco.

Philanthropist, arts patron Evelyn Haas dies

Michael Cabanatuan, Chronicle Staff Writer 2/4/2010

Evelyn Haas, philanthropist, patron of the arts, matriarch of one of the Bay Area's most prominent families and expert fly-fisherman, died Wednesday in San Francisco at age 92.

Mrs. Haas, widow of Walter A. Haas Jr., led the family foundation, the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, which has contributed more than \$364 million to hundreds of community and cultural organizations that make the Bay Area what it is. They include the San Francisco Symphony, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the restoration of Crissy Field and The Chronicle's Season of Sharing Fund. The Haas family also owned the Oakland Athletics from 1980 to 1995, a period cherished, and missed, by many Bay Area baseball fans.

Friends and civic leaders said that Mrs. Haas was as comfortable wading in a trout stream or walking around Crissy Field as she was enjoying a concert at Davies Symphony Hall or perusing an exhibit at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. She was passionate about those interests, but more concerned that everyone would get to share them.

"She didn't like to talk about her philanthropy," said Ira Hirschfield, president of the foundation. "What was really important to Evie was that it make a difference and touch people's lives in tangible ways.

"It was about leveling the playing field so that all families could live and raise their families with equality and dignity, to make sure all families had an equal chance to enjoy their lives," he said.

Greg Moore, executive director of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, said that desire was what drove Mrs. Haas to lead the effort to restore Crissy Field, which was completed in 1999. "Today it is just a beautiful place, which is what she wanted - to create a beautiful place that everyone could use and enjoy."

From the time she studied for her bachelor's degree at Wheaton College in Massachusetts, Mrs. Haas had a passion for the arts. After she and her husband married and moved to San Francisco in 1940, she grew to love the Symphony and SFMOMA. She was a longtime leader on the museum's board, and she and her husband were instrumental in raising the \$95 million to build the new museum in 1995. He died later that year.

"SFMOMA was the love of her life - except for her husband, Walter, and her children," said Elaine McKeon, former president of the museum. "But she was just the sweetest person, interested in everyone she met. She was a real mentor to me."

San Francisco Symphony music director Michael Tilson Thomas said Mrs. Haas, who served on the Symphony board for 40 years, loved classical music and wanted others to learn to love it, too. She helped to do that by funding "Keeping Score: MTT on Music," a classical music program for children on public radio, television and the Internet.

"You got the impression from Evie that she had a real passion and interest in the Symphony, that it was a delight for her and that she wanted to share it with other people," Thomas said.

But Haas didn't confine her interests to the arts and philanthropy. She was an avid fly fisher - an interest she picked up from her husband. In 1979, she co-authored the book "Wade a Little Deeper, Dear," considered a classic among fly fishers.

"I met her through her foundation," said John McCosker, senior scientist at the California Academy of Sciences, and a friend, "but I also knew her because she and Wally were mad about fly fishing. That was a side of her most people didn't know."

Mrs. Haas is survived by her three children: Robert D. Haas, chairman emeritus and past CEO of Levi Strauss & Co., and his wife, Colleen Gershon Haas; Betsy Haas Eisenhardt, civic leader and volunteer, and her husband, Roy Eisenhardt; and Walter J. Haas, co-chairman of the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund and past chairman and CEO of the Oakland Athletics, and his wife, Julie Salles Haas. She is also survived by six grandchildren, Elise Haas, Jesse Eisenhardt, Sarah Eisenhardt, Simone Haas Zumsteg, Charlotte Haas Prime and Walter A. Haas III; great-grandson Andy Zumsteg; and great-granddaughter Olivia Evelyn Prime.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Monday at Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco.

The family asks that memorial donations be made to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Chronicle Season of Sharing Fund or Wheaton College in Norton, Mass.

Marty Lurie's show heads across the Bay

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 2/4/2010

You might have seen reports today that Marty Lurie's radio show, "Right Off The Bat," won't be a part of A's pre-game programming anymore. Apparently the A's flagship station, KTRB-860, wanted to go in a different direction. Marty has since landed a gig w/KNBR-680 to host a Giants pre-game and post-game show.

I'll miss seeing him in the Coliseum press box and dining room, and hearing his voice being piped through the press box speakers during batting practice. Marty has more pure love for baseball than anybody I've come across in my three seasons covering the A's. When you're standing next to Marty, he wants to engage you in a conversation about the game. Not just to pass the time or be polite, but because he genuinely wants to know your opinion about whatever topic he brings up. I had the same experience whenever he asked me to come on his show. It wasn't so much an interview as it was an effortless conversation that happened to take place on the air. ... He's just a pleasant guy and a great conversationalist.

Best of luck, Marty. See you over at AT&T ...

Inbox: Which starter's in front at back end

A's fans also submit questions about Outman, Cust, Powell

By Jane Lee / MLB.com 2/4/2010

Spring Training is only weeks away and the A's will open camp with high hopes and plenty of new faces. Although it appears the offseason should stay quiet from here until then, send in your questions and we'll do our best to answer as many as possible.

How do you see the back end of the A's rotation rounding out, and what happens when Josh Outman gets healthy?

-- Jordan E., Kalamazoo, Mich.

Both Billy Beane and Bob Geren have made it clear that the fifth spot in the rotation -- next to Ben Sheets, Justin Duchscherer, Brett Anderson and Dallas Braden -- is up for grabs. Trevor Cahill has the edge going into Spring Training based on experience, but the still-young righty -- who turns 22 in March -- will have to prove he can keep the ball down and avoid another season that sees 27 balls leave the yard.

At the same time, Gio Gonzalez has a real shot at breaking into the rotation, given he shows up to camp with improved command and poise. Geren recently admitted Gonzalez may have "the best stuff" on the staff, but the 24-year-old southpaw is the first to admit he needs to keep his composure if he wants to stay with the big boys. A couple of weeks ago, Gonzalez said he feels he's turned a page when it comes to a healthy mound mind-set, but whether that proves to be true has yet to be seen.

Vin Mazzaro rounds out the obvious candidates for the fifth spot, but he'll likely start the year at Triple-A to polish things up and work on his walks-to-strikeouts ratio. As for Outman, an immediate spot in the rotation upon his return doesn't seem as likely as it did before Oakland re-signed Duchscherer and then went out and got Sheets. He's a hard thrower with excellent command and not a whole lot left to prove, so he could get a long look when he returns midseason if the fifth starter's struggling. He could also potentially act as another middle-inning relief threat.

Why did the A's let Adam Kennedy get away? He was one of the few bright spots in the lineup last season.

-- Debbie B., Brentwood, Calif.

There's no doubt Kennedy was one of the biggest surprises of the 2009 season, but he just turned 34 in January and simply doesn't fit into the A's picture anymore. Kennedy is a natural second baseman, and Oakland has one of the best defensive ones already in veteran fan favorite Mark Ellis. With the recent signing of Kevin Kouzmanoff, the A's are also now set at third base, where Kennedy filled the position admirably last season but also made a variety of errors. And if

you're all caught up with Monday's hoopla of news that brought in two utility infielders, you know Oakland is pretty much set from a depth standpoint.

Congrats on the new job! Your articles are full of energy and great reads. I'd like to request your prediction for the team in 2010. Will they have a better record and actually be in the hunt for a division title or Wild Card?

-- Jeff P., San Jose, Calif.

Thanks, Jeff. The answer is yes, but it comes with a lot of "ifs." For example: If Sheets and Duchscherer stay healthy all year, then, yes, the A's rotation will be a formidable presence against opponents. If Daric Barton snaps out of his tiring offensive funk and we all witness a breakout year from Ryan Sweeney, then, yes, the offense will finally produce some much-needed power against the division's top pitching. So much of Oakland's immediate future depends on health and development, but if the A's see mostly everything go right for them this year, expect a tight AL West race. Spring Training may offer us a clearer picture of how Oakland's offseason pickup pieces exactly fit a winning puzzle.

I love what Billy Beane has done this offseason, but I'm still wondering about Jack Cust. Please promise me we at least won't be seeing his glove this year.

-- Kevin L., Fresno, Calif.

Sorry, Kevin, no promises. While the plan is for Cust to see most of his time at DH, don't expect him to halt orders on his outfield gloves. That just wouldn't make sense from a depth standpoint given the A's recent injury history. And although the A's are bringing what seems like four dozen outfielders to camp in a couple weeks, the team is surely going to look to Cust to play in the field from time to time -- a notion Geren recently confirmed. However, it's best if he sticks with batting gloves.

Will we be seeing much of Landon Powell this year? I haven't heard much about him recently.

-- Mark P., Antioch, Calif.

Mark, a couple of weeks ago, Powell looked to be trimmer and in great shape. He's been working out near his offseason home in South Carolina and has been putting in a lot of time taking balls at first base -- where we could possibly see him spell probable starter Barton. Along with his duties of backing up Kurt Suzuki, Powell hopes to make himself more indispensable to the team this year. He drove in 30 runs in 46 games last season but also walked away with a .226 average, so he'll have to show a more consistent bat if he wants to occasionally slip into the DH role every now and then, as well.

AL West outlook: Division closing the gap on Angels

Stan McNeal, The Sporting News, 2/3/2010

Suggested motto for the AL West: If you can't beat 'em, raid 'em.

After watching the Angels win three consecutive division titles, the Rangers and Mariners went roster poaching and landed three players who had been vital to the Angels' success.

And for the first time in recent memory, the Angels no longer are locks to finish atop the division. "They're a great organization and have been a great team for a long time," Rangers lefthander C.J. Wilson says. "But they lost four good players and all the teams except them have gotten significantly better. We're looking at it as this could be our year."

Most teams would be in even worse shape than the Angels are after losing their No. 1 starter (who at least left the division), All-Star leadoff man, cleanup hitter and top lefthanded reliever. But Los Angeles hasn't spent the winter merely counting the dollars saved by letting John Lackey, Chone Figgins, Vladimir Guerrero and Darren Oliver leave for more than \$128 million combined.

The Angels made noise, too, even if it wasn't as much as their closest pursuers.

The moves so far (ranked by strength of moves)

With the M's, Cliff Lee will be part of one of best 1-2 pitching punches in the big leagues.

Mariners. No club improved more last season than Seattle, which went from 101 losses to 85 wins. That turnaround proved merely a warmup for the offseason. The Mariners have emerged as pennant contenders after making two of the biggest acquisitions of the offseason. First, they snatched the best infielder on the free agent market, signing Figgins to a four-year, \$36 million contract. Then they acquired October hero Cliff Lee from the Phillies. The Mariners now have one of

the game's top 1-2 lineup punches with Ichiro Suzuki and Figgins and one of the top 1-2 rotation punches with Felix Hernandez and Lee.

Thinking defense, the Mariners also traded for first baseman Casey Kotchman and added low-cost free agent Ryan Garko to provide a needed power boost as well as versatility.

Mariners general manager Jack Zduriencik, however, might have swung one deal too many. Taking on outfielder Milton Bradley, the man who wrecked the Cubs in 2009, is a high-risk, questionable-reward move that could derail Zduriencik's good work. Mariners manager Don Wakamatsu knows a challenge awaits.

"We wouldn't have made the trade if we didn't think this was going to work for Milton," Wakamatsu says. "I've talked to a lot of players, and a lot of players respect him. They respect him because he's very competitive and that might be one of the things that gets him in trouble. A lot of people I've talked to like Milton and I'm looking forward to him."

Rangers. Plug Julio Borbon into center field for the departed Marlon Byrd and, at first glance, the Rangers don't look much different from the club that hung with the Angels into September last season. Look a little closer, though.

The Rangers will have a new No. 1 starter in Rich Harden after Kevin Millwood and his \$12 million salary were shipped to Baltimore. They will have a new DH in Guerrero, who always has been at home in Rangers Ballpark. In 50 games there, he is a .394/.471/.705 hitter with 14 homers. The addition of Oliver, who had a 2.71 ERA in 63 appearances last season, gives Texas another capable lefty for the late innings.

The Rangers also brought back starter Colby Lewis after being impressed with his work in Japan the past two seasons. Lewis, who owns a 6.71 ERA in 72 major league appearances (34 starts), went 26-17 with a 2.82 ERA and averaged more than a strikeout per inning for the Hiroshima Carp.

Angels. Not wanting to commit to Lackey for five years and \$82.5 million, the Angels signed Joel Pineiro for two years and \$16 million. Both are 31, and though his career numbers do not measure up to Lackey's, Pineiro was more effective in 2009 when he finished with the fewest walks in the majors and the most groundballs per nine innings while winning 15 games for the Cardinals.

Not wanting to risk watching Guerrero break down further, the Angels opted for the lefthanded-hitting Hideki Matsui, who is six months older. While Matsui doesn't stack up to Guerrero over the past six years, Matsui was more productive last season. He outhomered Guerrero, 28-15, while hitting .274/.367/.509. Matsui also fits the Angels' new, more disciplined approach better than the free-swinging Guerrero.

The Angels compensated for the loss of Oliver by signing Fernando Rodney and trading for Brian Stokes. Coupled with the return of Scot Shields, L.A. should have the deepest bullpen in the division.

The loss of Figgins will be tough to overcome. Besides playing Gold Glove-caliber defense, he was second in the A.L. in reaching base and scoring runs. The Angels will turn to 24-year-old Brandon Wood, who has been one of their top prospects since being drafted in the first round in 2003. But in 236 big-league at-bats, he is hitting .192.

Athletics. Oakland didn't land any of the Angels' free agents but still spent more money than was expected. The A's committed \$10 million to Ben Sheets to lead their young rotation, even though Sheets missed 2009 because of elbow surgery. They also gave \$5.25 million to a center fielder, Coco Crisp, who missed most of last season and is coming back from surgery on both shoulders.

The A's did acquire one player who was healthy last season, third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff. He takes over after Brett Wallace was traded for outfield prospect Michael Taylor. Another young player, Jake Fox, was acquired from the Cubs and is expected to get time in the outfield, third base and catcher. The A's added more versatility by trading for Adam Rosales, who played all four infield positions for the Reds in 2009.

To-do lists (ranked by moves still needed)

Ben Sheets could be trade bait by mid-season.

Mariners. They have the two best starters in the division, but the back of their rotation is a question. Plenty of proven veterans remain on the market, however. Even after adding Garko as a righthanded bat, the Mariners could use more power. They showed little interest in re-signing their leading home run hitter, first baseman Russell Branyan.

Angels. After sending Gary Matthews Jr. and his bad contract to the Mets, the Angels could use a veteran to pinch hit and add outfield depth. Garret Anderson, the club's all-time hits leader, remains on the market after a year with the Braves.

Athletics. They lack experience in their bullpen but likely will see how the season unfolds before pursuing help. If the A's are struggling at the trading deadline, Sheets will give them a Matt Holliday-like chip to deal.

Rangers. They could use a backup bat or two in case Guerrero is as brittle as he was last season. David Murphy is the club's only experienced option to back up in the outfield, at first base and DH. But he doesn't have that much experience and never has played first in a major league game.

Sizing up 2010

The result of all this roster upgrading should be the best race in the majors. The Angels no longer are overwhelming favorites, but they still are the team to beat because of their superior rotation and bullpen. The Rangers rate a slight edge over the Mariners because of their pitching depth. The A's will be improved and have the potential to surprise, depending on the development of their young starters.

A's radio host bids farewell

Longtime voice Lurie heads across Bay to Giants

By Jane Lee / MLB.com 2/4/2010

OAKLAND -- A familiar face will be missing from the A's ballpark this year.

However, his voice -- an even more familiar sound -- will be heard just across the Bay.

Longtime A's radio host and baseball aficionado Marty Lurie confirmed Thursday that he's taking his wildly popular pregame show to the other side of the bridge, where he will be heard on KNBR's pre- and postgame Giants programming.

For 12 years, most recently on KTRB, Lurie presented fans with "Right Off The Bat" -- a unique show that celebrates the game's history through interviews with old-timers, national writers, club executives, scouts and the like.

A longtime lawyer with an even longer love for baseball, Lurie has bought and sold his own time slots each year. This offseason, though, he never quite landed on the same page as KTRB, which recently agreed to a long-term contract to broadcast A's games through 2019.

"Each year I would negotiate to make sure I had a spot for the next season," Lurie said Thursday morning. "Toward the end of September, I started contacting KTRB but couldn't get answers to any of my e-mails or phone calls as to what the plans were for this next season. It went into late November when I found out that they were looking into different programming."

Said programming now represents the opinions of conservative talk-show host Michael Savage, who will run the airways 3-6 p.m. before the station turns it over to A's broadcasters Ken Korach and Vince Controneo, who will still have a 45-minute pregame show.

"Essentially they said the A's had too much pregame time and they wanted to have a talk show on," said Lurie, whose show always aired at 5 p.m. on days Oakland played night games. "I had an inclination this was happening and had heard rumors in September, so it was obvious I wasn't in their plans."

Coincidentally, Lurie said he ran into KNBR executives at the beginning of the offseason and, once learning KTRB was only willing to allocate a few hours on the weekend, began pursuing talks with the Giants radio station.

"KNBR has always respected everything I did, and they said they wanted to expand their pregame programming," Lurie said. "They were just so helpful and made me feel so welcome. That's when I thought it's time to make a change if I can work it out."

The result: A weekend show before and after every Giants game that will fill an estimated 5-6 hours for a combined 140 hours during the season. However, Lurie assured his longtime following of A's fans that they can expect much of the same from his new gig.

"A lot of it will be similar to what I was doing," he said. "I'll take more calls from fans -- fans of all parts of baseball. I want to try to give a broad view of baseball, mainly through the Giants' eyes, of course, but certainly I want to bring the essence of baseball to KNBR."

The hour-long shows, aptly dubbed the "KNBR 680 Giants Pre-Game with Marty Lurie" and "KNBR 680 Post-Game with Marty Lurie," will begin March 6 with San Francisco's first home Spring Training game.

"I started out with a 20-minute show and went to an hour and 15 minutes last year," he said. "I've been on all stations with the A's from 1998 forward, but they just wanted to do things differently, and it was obvious it wasn't going to work for me.

"I'm not bitter. I understand the business side of things."

Lurie also realizes his new home will not completely take him away from the fans he's spoken to for more than a decade.

"The A's fans are fabulous, and I've gotten so many nice e-mails from them," he said. "We kind of grew up together through the great years of the A's, and I really enjoyed working on the show. It's definitely bittersweet for me, but KNBR presents a great challenge and a good audience.

"They want my take on baseball, and it's nice to be wanted."

Rebuilding blocks include trades, free agents, homegrown talent

By Mel Antonen, USA TODAY 2/4/2010

Although fans don't like to hear the dreaded r-word, rebuilding projects are a staple in baseball.

The Pittsburgh Pirates, who haven't had a winning season since Barry Bonds played in their outfield in 1992, are the most extreme example of a team that is starting to build from the ground up.

But tearing down comes in various degrees. Baseball executives say the first step in rebuilding a franchise is to invest in scouting and player development. Then you find depth, hire as many pitchers as possible and support them with good defensive players.

Rebuilding programs come in piece-by-piece increments and not with headline-grabbing free agent signings. And, executives say, the most productive rebuilding programs start before they appear necessary.

"You have to know where your club is at," says Oakland Athletics general manager Billy Beane, who, in several cases, has traded established players before they reach free agency to acquire prospects.

"The worst thing that you can do is pretend that you don't need to rebuild. You have to be honest with your team, staff, fans and the media. You have to know that sometimes starting over is a necessary step."

How notable teams are approaching, or have approached, the rebuilding process:

—**Seattle Mariners:** The Mariners, losers of 101 games in 2008, came back to win 85 games in 2009, and their moves this offseason indicate they think they can do even better this season.

Mariners general manager Jack Zduriencik knows the value of having plenty of pitching. Last season, Seattle had 72 starts made by pitchers who weren't on its opening-day roster.

Pitching is an important building tool, but when one hits rock bottom, "A team takes whatever it can get," Zduriencik says. "If there is a power bat available, you take it. If there is pitching available, you take it. You usually need a lot of parts."

After their 101-loss season, the Mariners added power (first baseman Russell Branyan), defense (center fielder Franklin Gutierrez), a bullpen arm (right-hander David Aardsma) and a clubhouse leader (Ken Griffey Jr.) for 2009. Branyan had a breakout season, Gutierrez was steady on offense and terrific on defense, and Aardsma saved 38 games.

All of those players, including Griffey, are slated to return except Branyan, who was an unsigned free agent when Sports Weekly went to press.

This winter, the Mariners signed free agent third baseman Chone Figgins to a four-year, \$36 million contract and acquired pitcher Cliff Lee and left fielder Milton Bradley, who will hit in the middle of the order. They also acquired Casey Kotchman, another excellent defender and solid hitter, from the Atlanta Braves.

—**Cleveland Indians:** Like the Toronto Blue Jays, the Indians are rebuilding their pitching staff.

In 2007, the Indians were within a victory of making the World Series. Since then, financial issues have forced them to trade their two top starting pitchers, CC Sabathia and Cliff Lee, who won back-to-back American League Cy Young awards while in Cleveland uniforms.

The Indians have a new manager, Manny Acta, formerly of the Washington Nationals. Acta doesn't think the team is starting over, even though the Indians lost 97 games and tied with the Kansas City Royals for last place in the AL Central in 2009. But Acta does say the Indians have to rebuild their rotation.

He says with proven players such as Shin-Soo Choo, Grady Sizemore, Jhonny Peralta, Asdrubal Cabrera and Kerry Wood, the Indians aren't starting at rock bottom.

Two of the pitchers the Indians got from the Philadelphia Phillies for Lee are Carlos Carrasco and Jason Knapp, both of whom could reach the big-league rotation soon. When the Indians traded catcher Victor Martinez to the Boston Red Sox, they got Justin Masterson for their rotation as well as minor league pitchers Bryan Price and Nick Hagadone.

But with Sabathia and Lee gone, the Indians are counting on healthy Jake Westbrook, a return to form for Fausto Carmona and progress from Masterson, who has 25 career big-league starts. Westbrook hasn't pitched in the majors since having elbow surgery in 2008.

"The first thing is we need to stop dwelling on the guys that left, because they are not coming back, and embrace the new kids that came aboard and are already ready to contribute," Acta says. "This is what we are going to do. We need to work hard, outsmart, outwork, outscout, whatever we have to do now (without) falling into the excuse that we don't have the right payroll."

—**Oakland Athletics:** GM Billy Beane is trying to build up his current pitching staff. He saw a glimmer of hope last season despite the team's 75-87 record. Closer Andrew Bailey was the AL rookie of the year winner last year and led a solid bullpen. The A's have a young starting corps, from which Brett Anderson and Trevor Cahill combined for 62 starts.

"We could use depth in the rotation," manager Bob Geren says. "Another starter would fit in really well. It's impossible to have too much depth in starting pitching. We're always trying to develop talent from within and get to the point where we can keep those young players for the long term."

Beane's A's are defined by losing good players and rebuilding with youth.

"With young players, one of the things you learn is that improvement can be exponential and you can take great leaps forward once young players believe in themselves," he says. "It's scary how fast they can improve."

—**Baltimore Orioles:** The Orioles, trying to end a streak of 12 consecutive losing seasons, have been rebuilding for the last two years after shedding payroll and trading experienced players such as pitcher Erik Bedard and shortstop Miguel Tejada.

The Orioles have focused on adding young players who could be on their big-league roster for a long time. They chose a potential ace (Brian Matusz) in the first round of the 2008 draft and traded for an outfielder (Adam Jones) who became an All-Star in 2009. This added to a youthful base that includes catcher Matt Wieters (a 2007 first-rounder) and productive outfielders Nolan Reimold and Nick Markakis.

This season's rotation will be anchored by Jeremy Guthrie and Kevin Millwood, but the key to the Orioles' future will be how well prospects projected for the rotation — Chris Tillman, Brad Bergesen and Matusz — progress.

Andy MacPhail, the Orioles' president of baseball operations, wants to build talent and depth at all positions in the minor leagues. Tillman and Jones were two of the five players who came from Seattle in the Bedard trade. Another of those

players, lefty closer George Sherrill, was traded last season to the Los Angeles Dodgers in a deal that brought blue-chip infield prospect Josh Bell.

Says MacPhail: "If you want to have 11 quality pitchers on your staff, you need 25 good ones in your system. My philosophy has always been: You grow pitchers and you pay for bats."

—**Chicago White Sox:** GM Ken Williams says he's constantly rebuilding and trying to contend at the same time. If a team doesn't try to infuse homegrown prospects from the system into the big-league roster on a regular basis, he says, it can go dormant.

In 2005, the White Sox had a rookie closer in Bobby Jenks. But after winning the World Series, the White Sox kept mixing youth into an experienced core of players. The White Sox had a 90-loss season in 2007 and a 79-83 record in 2009 but won the AL Central in 2008.

The White Sox have added pitchers John Danks, 24, and Gavin Floyd, 27, to their rotation through trades. The team was using Clayton Richard in its rotation last season before trading him in a package of prospects to the San Diego Padres for former Cy Young Award winner Jake Peavy.

And the White Sox have given young players from their system a chance for starting jobs. The current group includes shortstop Alexi Ramirez and second baseman Gordon Beckham.

Williams says giving prospects a chance at the big-league level sends a positive message throughout the organization and gives players an incentive to work harder.

"And you never want to get into the position where you have to build the whole team over," Williams says. "That's a massive project, and it can take years."

Michael Savage show pushes Marty Lurie from A's to Giants

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 2/4/2010

The rumblings of the past month are true: Marty Lurie, who has done such a wonderful job with the A's pre- pre-game show for the past 12 years, couldn't get air time with the team's' new station, KTRB (860), and he'll now be doing the pre- pregame show on the weekends for the Giants on KNBR.

"KTRB could never give me a time," Lurie told me. "I tried every which way I could. They're just in transition over there and I had to make a decision. I'm not bitter, I did my best to make it happen. It just didn't."

The weekday lead-in for A's games this season on an AM outlet that bills itself as a sports station? Conservative talk-show host Michael Savage. Maybe not ideal, as far as the A's are concerned.

"Would we prefer having Marty or some sports-related programming leading in? Absolutely," A's vice president of broadcasting Ken Pries told me. "But we still have a 45-minute pre-game show and a post-game talk show, and the majority of programming on the station is sports-related."

Pries said he made a big push to get Lurie's "Right Off the Bat" show on KTRB.

"Behind the scenes, I've always been one of Marty's biggest cheerleaders," Pries said. "His show helps us, it helps the station, it's a good financial deal for them."

Lurie finds his own advertisers and pays for his airtime, so it's really a no-brainer as far as the A's are concerned - free A's content on the local airwaves, and there's precious little airtime devoted to the team elsewhere. But, Pries said, "The station is going to do what the station is going to do. We respect their decision to run their business as they see fit and do what they think is best for their station."

Savage, a controversial figure, brings the station some notice, helps KTRB make a little bit of a splash, but he still seems a strange fit for a station called "Xtra Sports 860."

Lurie, meantime, does something that is unique: He hustles for in-depth interviews with old-timers, scouts, team execs, Hall of Famers, visiting beat reporters, a format that almost no one follows anywhere else in the country. His library of

chats with former players, many now deceased, is a treasure. He celebrates the game and its history; that's unusual on the airwaves.

"Bill King loved listening to Marty's show," Pries said of the A's late, beloved radio broadcaster. "He loved those interviews."

Now Lurie will take that sensibility over to the Giants' pre-game and post-game blocks on KNBR, filling five or six hours on the weekends, he estimates.

"The essence of baseball, that's what I want to bring to the show," Lurie said. "I still have a lot of love and respect for A's fans, they're wonderful people and they've been so supportive. That's who I feel bad for in all of this."

"I'll miss them, but I'm still on the radio. They can still listen, still call in. And I appreciate the A's giving me the opportunity over there for 12 years, it was a lot of fun."

Said Pries: "It is a loss from our standpoint, absolutely. A loss for us and for our fans. Marty is a real ambassador of the game."