

A's News Clips, Wednesday, October 27, 2010

Tuesday's Arizona Fall League roundup

Pirates' Harrison busts out of slump with four-hit game for Sox

By/ MLB.com

Solar Sox 18, Saguaros 9

Pirates prospect Josh Harrison had four hits and scored five times to lead Mesa. Harrison slugged a solo homer and doubled twice, finishing with three RBIs. Jeremy Moore (Angels) extended his hitting streak to 11 games by going 4-for-6 with a two-run blast, and Pirates Minor Leaguer Andrew Lambo plated four runs for the Sox. Eduardo Escobar (White Sox) slugged a two-run homer, his third of the fall season for Peoria.

Rafters 5, Desert Dogs 3 (10 innings)

Adron Chambers (Cardinals) drove in three runs, including the go-ahead one with a 10th-inning sacrifice fly, to pace first-place Surprise. Brewers prospect Hunter Morris slugged a solo homer and Pete Kozma (Cardinals) was 2-for-3 with a pair of runs scored for the Rafters. Chance Ruffin (Tigers) picked up his first win, allowing a hit in one inning of relief. Yankees farmhand Brandon Laird doubled in a run for Phoenix.

Javelinas 7, Scorpions 4

Red Sox prospect Juan Carlos Linares, batting .474 in the AFL, slugged a two-run homer to pace Peoria's win. Nate Tenbrink (Mariners) added a two-run blast of his own, and Astros farmhand Koby Clemens drove in a run. Maikel Cleto (Mariners) fanned four and allowed a hit over three innings for the win. Nationals prospect Michael Burgess had three hits, falling a homer shy of the cycle, and drove in two runs for Scottsdale.

Professional Athlete Talks About Rare Disease

Donors On The Diamond Seeks Help

WYFF4.com, 10/26, 2010

GREENVILLE, S.C. -- Landon Powell, who plays baseball for the Oakland A's, wants to get his story out -- and plans an event to get people to help.

"It's called Donors on the Diamond and basically what we are doing is we are having a big party out on the baseball field with a sit down dinner, live auction, bounce houses and kids activities." Powell said.

It's goal is to raise money and raise awareness for organ and tissue donations through Donate Life South Carolina.

Powell, now a catcher for the A's, played for the USC Gamecocks from 2000 to 2004, he was twice named All-SEC performer as well as being named to the All-American team in 2003 and 2004.

He was a healthy athlete, husband and father, then "in January of 2009, I was working out here in Greenville and I collapsed and had to be taken to the hospital and found out I had liver disease called autoimmune hepatitis." Powell said.

It's rare and there isn't a cure.

The disease means he will have to have a liver transplant within the next 10 to 15 years.

Landon said that is why he is using his position on the field to help those off the field.

He said, "there are 18 people that die everyday across the country waiting for transplants, and every 11 minutes another person is added to the national transplant waiting list. If people realize all those facts, they will understand how important organ donation is."

Leaders & Success

Charlie Finley, A-Plus Owner

By Pete Barlas, Investor's Business Daily 10/27/2010

Charlie Finley worked so hard at setting sales records as an insurance agent in 1946, he wound up in the hospital with a bout of tuberculosis.

The life-threatening disease couldn't stop the 26-year-old.

All he did was parlay his misfortune into a thriving business.

During his 27 months in the hospital, Finley discovered that many doctors and surgeons didn't have group disability insurance. So he got right to work on a business plan.

By age 35, Finley was a millionaire.

And he kept going.

A longtime baseball fan, Finley overcame repeated resistance from Major League Baseball's clique of owners to buy a team — and landed the Kansas City Athletics in 1960.

By 1972, Finley had moved the A's to Oakland, Calif., and oversaw the first of three straight world titles.

Finley's Keys

- As owner of the Oakland A's, he guided them to three straight world championships and changed baseball by lobbying for night games in the World Series and the designated-hitter rule in the American League.
- "Sweat plus sacrifice equals success."

The 6-foot Finley was imposing and enigmatic. He could be irascible and pernicious one minute and charming and generous the next.

He was consistent in one area, says Michael Green, co-author of "Charlie Finley: The Outrageous Story of Baseball's Super Showman."

"He wanted to win and he was willing to pull out all the stops to do that," Green told IBD.

Finley used a similar strategy to push his ideas onto the game. MLB dismissed some of them, such as orange baseballs and a three-ball walk rule. Others, such as playing World Series games at night and the designated-hitter rule in the American League, are still in play.

The Salesman

Finley was a visionary, said Mark Conrad, a law and ethics professor at Fordham University: "He was smarter than most other baseball owners in understanding how to sell a product."

Finley (1918-96) was born in Ensley, Ala., an industrial city near Birmingham. His father and grandfather were steelworkers. Young Finley got going by selling newspapers and magazines in Birmingham. At age 12 he mowed lawns six days a week, then organized a crew to handle the manual labor while he acquired new clients.

And he got into baseball, playing and later working as a batboy for the minor league Birmingham Barons.

In 1933, the elder Finley was laid off. The family moved to Gary, Ind., so he could join another steel mill.

After Charlie finished high school in 1936, he did steel mill work while taking college engineering classes.

Over the next 10 years, he took management jobs at steel and ordnance plants while selling life insurance.

After World War II ended in 1945, Finley set sales records while working for Travelers Life Insurance Co.

He was a natural, Green wrote: "One of Finley's great strengths, demonstrated throughout his life, was the ability to convince others to do what he wanted: in this case, purchase insurance policies."

While recovering from tuberculosis in Indiana, Finley stayed in the game. He devised insurance plans for doctors that would provide coverage and still be profitable for an insurance broker.

Finley's long recovery gave him time to study the numbers.

"All you got to do is lose your health and you do a hell of a lot of serious down-to-earth thinking," he told one interviewer.

Once healthy, he was broke. He sought financial backing from insurance firms to underwrite his new venture. All balked. So he returned to the first company on his list and cut a deal. Enter Charles O. Finley & Co. to dispense the policies. He sold his first plan in 1950.

Moving Up

In a few years, 92% of the doctors in the Chicago area were Finley clients. He had moved his company there from Gary, Ind., in 1952 because "he believed he needed a big-city address to have true national success," Green wrote.

He found another underwriter to offer his program nationally. One policy sale to the American College of Surgeons provided him with nearly \$450,000 in commissions.

Finley was a millionaire less than two years after launching his firm.

He continued to add big clients like the American Medical Association.

And he shrewdly invested his insurance profit in the stock market.

By 1954, his personal wealth was \$5 million, worth \$40 million today.

In With The A's

Finley spent the rest of the decade trying to buy a baseball team. He struck out three times, fanning on the Philadelphia Athletics, Detroit Tigers and Chicago White Sox.

Yet he wouldn't sit down. In late 1960, he offered \$2 million for 52% ownership of the A's, who had moved to Kansas City, Mo. Baseball said yes. A year later, he bought the remaining 48% from minority owners for \$1.9 million.

Finley filled the bases with ideas. He used direct marketing and nine-game ticket plans to help boost the team's ticket sales. The A's were a flop on the field, so he invested in the farm system and oversaw draft choices. The top talent he plucked from the college ranks was Reggie Jackson, who would bloom into one of the great power hitters of all time.

In 1964, Finley signed 80 players for an unheard-of \$650,000, or \$4.5 million today. One of them was pitcher Catfish Hunter, who like Jackson would spark the A's dynasty in the next decade.

Building a winner took time. Finley tried shooting fireworks from the scoreboard, installing a message board and a small zoo for fans and adopting a mule as a mascot. Some Finley innovations, such as picnic tables, are used today, especially in the minor leagues. "Finley was one of the first owners to recognize the importance to market the game directly to families," Green said.

Finley wasn't happy with his profit in Kansas City, so he moved the A's to Oakland in time for the 1968 season.

With his team loaded with promising talent, Finley kept tabs on games from his office in Chicago or his farmhouse in La Porte, Ind., by having someone at the stadium fasten a radio to a phone with rubber bands.

He was, after all, general manager during most of his years as owner. He aggressively traded for players who could help the team win. And he frequently replaced managers.

Those moves paid dividends in 1971, when Oakland won the American League West. The A's really cashed in the next year, when they beat Cincinnati in the World Series.

Their run continued with Series triumphs over the New York Mets in 1973 and the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1974. The A's made it five straight division titles in 1975 before losing in the playoffs.

Then Finley slid. He had suffered a heart attack in 1973. His marriage was falling apart. Suddenly he had less cash for his players.

Their salaries were about to soar, thanks to free agency, a system launched in 1976 that let players switch teams for bigger paychecks.

In 1976, Finley tried to sell three player contracts for \$3.5 million and invest the money in his farm system. Commissioner Bowie Kuhn said no, the move was bad for baseball.

Down And Back

Oakland attendance plummeted from 1 million in 1973 to 300,000 in 1979, when the A's crashed with a 54-108 record.

Finley quickly hired Billy Martin as manager, and he saved the team, creating a winning aura that jacked attendance back over 800,000. Profit rocketed to \$1 million.

By then, Finley was saying he couldn't compete amid free agency's salaries. He sold the team for \$12.7 million before the 1981 season.

Lee MacPhail, then president of the American League, decried the loss of Finley as an owner: "Baseball has lost its No. 1 innovator."

Finley died of heart disease in a Chicago hospital.