

**Oakland A's rally, avoid sweep against Texas Rangers**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Coco Crisp is headed for free agency this winter, and he's bringing a checklist with him.

On it are all the things he finds most important when choosing a team.

"The things most ballplayers look at are a chance to win, location and the financial situation," said Crisp, who provided the game-winning RBI in Thursday's 4-3 A's victory over the Texas Rangers. "For me, it's those three in order. When you're older, you just want to go someplace where you can win."

Crisp, still just 31, believes the A's have the ingredients to be a contender in 2012, so that's a good starting point if the team tries to bring back the switch-hitting center fielder for a third season.

"We have some great players, especially the pitching staff," Crisp said. "Everybody is going to come back healthy next year. So it's a good place to play and an opportunity to win."

The A's face several important decisions on impending free agents, most notably left fielder Josh Willingham, their home run and RBI leader. But the call on Crisp also is crucial.

He ranks second in the American League with 43 stolen bases, leads the A's with 67 runs, and his .270 batting average is second among A's regulars. He's also chipped in eight homers and 52 RBIs.

But there's no one stat that defines what Crisp means to the team. Throw in the excellent range and sure hands he provides in center, and he rates as the A's best all-around player.

Thursday Crisp scored Jemile Weeks with an eighth-inning single that helped the A's avoid a three-game sweep in their final home game.

"When we play good games, he always seems to be right in the middle of it," A's manager Bob Melvin said recently.

The A's have no in-house replacement ready for Crisp, whose only weakness is a below-average arm.

Ryan Sweeney is quite capable defensively but doesn't have Crisp's power or base-stealing ability.

Grant Green, the A's 2009 first-round pick, was converted from shortstop to center field this season with Double-A Midland. It's unlikely he'll be major league ready out of spring training.

Top 2010 pick Michael Choice played center for Single-A Stockton but appears to be at least a season away.

So the A's figure to try to re-sign Crisp after picking up his \$5.75 million club option this season.

Weeks, the rookie second baseman who along with Crisp provides the A's a speedy 1-2 combo atop the lineup, said he's learned from Crisp the importance of studying opposing pitchers.

"I think he's showed me a more controlled way to do things," Weeks said. "The way he does it is off of pre-knowledge. He's not out there running wild."

Crisp returning may depend on how hard he's pursued by other teams.

He has a reputation for being injury-prone, but he's played in 130 games this season, his most since 2007. He's missed time with calf and ankle injuries but has avoided the disabled list.

Crisp probably would be the top free-agent center fielder available in an overall weak outfield class unless Cleveland were to decline Grady Sizemore's \$8.5 million option for 2012.

"I love playing here," Crisp said. "I love the guys. I'm a huge Raiders fan, I have family out here, and I love California. It's where I'm from. But you weigh your options and go from there."

**Oakland A's update: Jemile Weeks hits first major league homer in 91st game**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Jemile Weeks was hearing it from his teammates, and it wasn't just the typical rookie hazing.

The second baseman was being ribbed about when he would finally hit his first major league home run.

It came in the sixth inning Thursday, when Weeks took Colby Lewis deep to right and helped the A's rally to beat the Texas Rangers 4-3.

That snapped his 90-game homerless streak, the second longest to open a career in Oakland history behind Mike Bordick's 132 games.

"Every day, I got something said about me or someone telling me something about the home run deal," said a smiling Weeks.

On Thursday he went 3 for 3 with a walk and needed just a triple for the cycle.

The A's had lost 12 of their past 13 to Texas and finished 6-13 against them in 2011.

"It's a team you've got to find a reason to not like," A's manager Bob Melvin said of the Rangers. "They're a good club, and we respect them. But a team that beats up on you like that, you better have a little extra hate for them."

Left-hander Dallas Braden began throwing a few days ago for the first time since having surgery in mid-May to repair a torn anterior capsule in his left shoulder.

Braden said he expects to be full strength by spring training. But both he and general manager Billy Beane say it's possible he might start next season in the minors as he rebuilds his arm strength.

Braden is traveling with the team on its season-ending trip to Anaheim and Seattle, but his absence from the clubhouse through most of his rehab has been noticeable.

Braden said he feels as if he's a distraction when he's not contributing on the field.

"I know myself," Braden said. "For me to be at my locker, not talking to anybody, probably picking a fight with someone, is not being a good teammate."

Trevor Cahill established a career high with 2002/3 innings and has one start remaining.

The A's finished 43-38 at home. Their total paid attendance was 1,476,791, an increase of 58,400 over last season. But they ranked 13th out of 14 A.L. teams, ahead of only Tampa Bay.

### Monte Poole: Hiring of Bob Melvin shows Billy Beane has changed since "Moneyball" days

By Monte Poole, Bay Area News Group

The old Billy Beane, a firebrand on a mission to discover a new baseball frontier, ignores Bob Melvin.

The new Billy, grayed and bespectacled, embraces and rewards Melvin.

The old Billy, ambitious and stubborn and ruthless, clings tightly to his dogma.

The new Billy, his vision altered and dramatically expanded, lives with baseball's reality.

The A's, despite their losing ways in recent years, will be better off for difference. They will blend analytics and philosophy with athleticism and intuition, resulting in more comprehensive and diversified rosters.

They will have dimensions lacking a few years ago and, once again, become interesting and alluring enough to attract larger audiences at the stadium and on TV.

Melvin, 49, is a solid choice to steer the A's back toward respectability. He's a respected baseball mind, an eager communicator and understands the benefits that can be derived from effectively massaging egos in the clubhouse and the front office.

More to the point, Melvin's new deal to manage the A's through 2014 is the latest proof of the evident transformation undergone by Beane, in his 14th season as general manager. Melvin is in Oakland for the foreseeable future because the Billy Beane seen on screen in the "Moneyball" movie released Friday no longer runs the team.

"When I have questions about lineups, I call him," Melvin said Thursday. "He doesn't call me."

Beane of a half-decade ago almost certainly would have bypassed Melvin as interim manager in June. Beane would have acknowledged Bob's credentials, yes, but he would have been too conventional, too establishment to seamlessly manage an A's team immersed in the unconventional. Melvin would not have been properly faithful to Beane's methods, and surely not blindly devoted to carrying them out.

Even Melvin, 49, isn't sure he would have taken a job in Oakland a few years ago.

"I don't know," he said after his pregame autograph-signing routine. "I've always gotten along very well with (Beane). We've had a very good professional relationship. We've always talked about baseball, always had an open line of communication.

"All I know is what I've seen from afar and what I've experienced here. And I can't imagine a general manager making things easier than he's made for me here."

Melvin thus becomes perhaps the most prominent beneficiary Beane's evolution. Billy still competes, still desires to crush opponents. But he's broadened his methods. He once dismissed the significance of speed and defense, was fairly rigid in his beliefs. He wanted a manager who felt what he felt, saw what he saw, believed what he believed.

So Bob Geren, Billy's longtime friend and fellow New Age baseball enthusiast, got the gig in 2006, when Ken Macha was dismissed after reaching the A.L.C.S.

Geren, a polite man who knows baseball, failed the most important test of leadership. He could not gain the trust and loyalty of his charges. Though he generally satisfied his boss, any people skills Geren may have had were walled in by his Sheetrock persona.

Melvin is no cardboard cutout. He's an affable former big-league player who comprehends the vast benefits of an open mind.

Coincidentally, Beane's mind has become more receptive to a wide spectrum of ideas. He also has a different lifestyle. He was single a decade ago -- his daughter lived with his ex-wife in Southern California -- and could throw himself into the work, perhaps disproportionately. Now remarried with young twins, it stands to reason his perspective would be altered.

The outcome is an executive infinitely more flexible, without former assistant Paul DePodesta (the Peter Brand character in the movie) advising strict adherence to philosophy but with a new appreciation for such factors as speed and defense.

That's why, for example, the A's selected fleet infielder Jemile Weeks in the first round of the 2008 draft. Weeks was promoted this season and already is a fixture at the top of the lineup.

Beane, 49, also has readily conceded the impact pitching had on his best teams. Those A's would not have had success without the tremendous trio of Tim Hudson, Mark Mulder and Barry Zito anchoring the rotation.

Expect, as the A's go forward, fewer Daric Bartons and more Brandon Allens.

"He's a smart guy, so I think he adjusts to the times," Melvin said of Beane. "Times are a little different. Runs are at a premium now. Pitching and defense are bigger factors. Times when on-base (percentage) and homers were most prevalent, that's what he relied on. He's able to adjust and adapt on the fly."

The new Billy, overseeing five consecutive non-winning seasons, doesn't have much to show for his broader perspective, accept a manager he would not have. But if Beane sticks around, and Melvin cultivates the talent, he will.

### **Chin Music: Lineups and notes for A's-Rangers series finale**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune 9/22/2011 12:27pm

The lineups as the A's try to avoid a sweep against the Rangers ...

A's — Weeks 2B, Crisp CF, Matsui DH, Willingham LF, DeJesus RF, Pennington SS, Allen 1B, Suzuki C, Sogard 3B; Cahill RHP.

Rangers — Kinsler 2B, Andrus SS, Hamilton LF, Young 1B, Beltre 3B, Murphy RF, Cruz DH, Torrealba C, Gentry CF; Lewis RHP.

A's manager Bob Melvin was asked an interesting question about Jemile Weeks, who enters today hitting .297. If Weeks was teetering at .300 on the season's final day, would Melvin consider sitting the rookie to preserve that batting average? "That's a good question," Melvin said. "I think he'd fight me on it, to tell you the truth. He likes to play."

With the A's 17 games under .500, such individual milestones are more interesting to ponder than what's going on from a team perspective, that's for sure ...

### **Struggling Trevor Cahill looking better in A's win**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

With Bob Melvin now firmly in the A's manager spot for next year and beyond, he can start to reflect on issues that he'll be looking at next spring.

One of the primary questions, just as it is most years for most teams, will be the rotation. The A's have a wealth of young pitching talent, but with starters Dallas Braden and Brett Anderson coming back from shoulder and elbow surgery, respectively, and Rich Harden a free agent, there will be some juggling.

Trevor Cahill, who started Oakland's 4-3 victory over Texas on Thursday, remains the projected No. 1 starter despite his troubles since May 15, and he has put together two OK starts in a row, allowing three runs in each. On Thursday, he gave up 10 hits, walked one and struck out one in 6 2/3 innings. He entered the day with the second-highest post-break ERA (6.58) in the majors.

Gio Gonzalez, tonight's starter, is equally solid in his status as the No. 2 starter, though he, too, had a bit of a second-half stumble, with a 7.90 ERA over one five-start stretch.

Both Cahill and Gonzalez have been All-Stars, and both have been generally healthy, Gonzalez in particular.

Brandon McCarthy, more than reliable when available, is only a question mark when it comes to health; he's missed substantial time in the past three seasons with repeat shoulder stress fractures. He's under team control for 2012, and why wouldn't he be planted in the rotation? McCarthy's 3.26 ERA is the best among the A's current starters.

Braden has begun playing catch, according to Melvin, and the left-hander, the longest tenured Oakland pitcher, would have to be in line for a spot if he is ready at the end of spring training.

A healthy Braden and Guillermo Moscoso would be the favorites for the final two spots; Moscoso has a 3.35 ERA and has been a hard-luck starter - the A's were shut out in five of his starts.

Others in the hunt will be Josh Outman and Graham Godfrey, while Harden could be a potential free-agent signing again - he loves working with pitching coach Ron Romanick and he loves the Bay Area. Brett Anderson, who is recovering from Tommy John surgery, will not return until the second half.

"It looks like a great mix," Melvin said. "If you're one of the five starters, you know there are guys pushing you, and that's always a good thing."

Cahill left Thursday's game with the A's trailing but did not add to his career-high loss total of 14. Oakland tied the game 3-3 in the seventh. David DeJesus singled with one out, went to third on Cliff Pennington's base hit and scored on a groundout by pinch-hitter Scott Sizemore.

In the eighth, Weeks doubled with one out off Mike Adams, and Coco Crisp singled him in. Crisp stole third later in the inning; his 43 steals are a career-high and second most in the league. He has been successful in all 17 of his attempts since the All-Star break.

### **A's Jemile Weeks hits his 1st major-league homer**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Recently, Jemile Weeks' teammates were starting to get on him about his lack of home runs.

"They said, 'You've just got the bagel on the board; fill the board up,' and 'Anyone think he'll get to hit one out today? I don't,' " Weeks said with a laugh Thursday afternoon.

Weeks silenced the rest of the [A's](#) with a solo shot to right off Colby Lewis in the sixth inning Thursday, his first big-league home run. It took him 90 games to record the homer. That's the second longest homerless streak to begin a career in Oakland history after Mike Bordick's run of 132 games, which ended May 10, 1992.

"The home run put some extra pep in his step today," manager Bob Melvin said.

"It's awesome to see him get his first one," Oakland starter Trevor Cahill said. "We've been joking with him to get it, and especially here, with the big ballpark, it takes the pressure off."

Weeks went 3-for-3 and scored the winning run in the eighth inning. He's batting a team-high .303.

Final figures: Oakland drew 1,463,943 for the season, an increase for the second year in a row, and that's despite playing 80 dates instead of the usual 81; a traditional doubleheader counted as one gate.

"The group that comes out here is passionate and vocal," Melvin said. "It's nice to win for a lot of reasons, but the fans are a big part of it."

Briefly: Starter Gio Gonzalez was named the A's "Good Guy" by the Bay Area chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America. The award recognizes outstanding cooperation with the media. Gonzalez ended Kurt Suzuki's two-year winning streak. ... Dallas Braden has played catch each of the past three days, 50 throws per day, and he remains well ahead of schedule as he returns from surgery to repair the capsule in his left shoulder. ... Andrew Bailey earned his 21st save of the season in 23 opportunities, and he is a perfect 36-for-36 in his career after the All-Star break. ... Scott Sizemore got the day off; he has a touch of shoulder tendinitis, according to Melvin.

Leading off

Deciding the West: Oakland is playing its role in the AL West - the A's have helped Texas quite a bit, going 6-13 against the Rangers but 9-7 against the Angels. Oakland opens a series in Anaheim tonight with the Rangers' magic number down to three.

### **Drumbeat: Final home game almost underway, can A's beat Texas?**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 9/22/2011, 12:39pm

The A's season mark against the Rangers is starting to resemble Oakland's shellacking of the Mariners in 2006, which helped boost Oakland into the playoffs that year. Texas might want to send the A's a thank-you card this winter – the Rangers have won 12 of the past 13 meetings and they're 13-5 vs. Oakland overall this season. Plus, the A's have helped Texas out by playing well against the Angels, going 9-7 against the Rangers' top competitor in the AL West.

Here's the lineup, with Trevor Cahill starting for the A's: Weeks 2b, Crisp cf, Matsui DH, Willingham lf, DeJesus rf, Pennington ss, Allen 1b, Suzuki c, Sogard 3b.

It's just a day off for Scott Sizemore, who has a touch of shoulder tendinitis, according to manager Bob Melvin. I asked if he's had a history of such a problem and Melvin said he has not. When I asked if perhaps the longer throw from third, or the many hours learning to play third base perhaps have contributed to the shoulder barking at Sizemore a bit, Melvin said that's possible.

The local chapter of the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA) presented starter Gio Gonzalez with the "Good Guy" award for 2011. The award recognizes standout cooperation with the media.

### **'Moneyball' review: Just a bit outside reality**

Peter Hartlaub, Chronicle Pop Culture Critic, San Francisco Chronicle

Moneyball

Sports drama. Starring Brad Pitt, Jonah Hill, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Royce Clayton. Directed by Bennett Miller. (PG-13. 133 minutes. At Bay Area theaters.)

"Moneyball" the movie is the greatest argument yet for fantasy baseball managers who are convinced they can run the Oakland [A's](#).

With its pro-statistics themes and backroom-deal plot turns, the film provides a well-scripted insider look at baseball. Among other revelations: Giants General Manager Brian Sabean is an easy mark, baseball scouts use the "ugly girlfriend factor" in their player reports, and the inside of the Oakland Coliseum actually looks worse than the parts that fans can see.

But the big-screen adaptation of Michael Lewis' engaging 2003 book is also filled with compromises. Someone crammed "Major League"-style sports clichés into a more nuanced story about baseball and progress - and then tried to fit a Brad Pitt star vehicle inside of that. The result is an interesting but frustrating near-miss.

Pitt stars as A's general manager Billy Beane, in a movie that uses a surprising number of real names. (The most surreal bit of casting: Former Giants shortstop Royce Clayton plays former A's shortstop Miguel Tejada.) Faced with a low payroll budget, Beane decides to rewrite the rules of baseball, eventually recruiting an Ivy League economics major (Jonah Hill), who uses statistical Sabermetrics instead of scouting and intuition to craft a team. An early losing streak tests their faith, before their "island of misfit toys" ballclub has a chance to make history.

Chronology and context are mucked with liberally. This happens in almost every sports movie based on real events, although A's fans will be blown away that Tim Hudson, Barry Zito and Mark Mulder and their combined 57 wins in 2002 are scrubbed from existence here. Of the three, only Hudson gets a cameo, and he blows his start.

Instead, we spend a lot of time with Scott Hatteberg, David Justice and pitcher Chad Bradford, bargain-basement players who helped the A's excel. The contributions of Bradford in particular are elevated considerably. He was a good middle reliever who pitched 75 innings in 2002. In "Moneyball," he's framed as a "Major League"/Ricky Vaughn team savior.

"Moneyball" is too long - what do the Sabermetrics people say about 133-minute running times? - and yet much appears to be cut out. Robin Wright, as Beane's ex-wife, gets high billing, then shows up in one scene. The actress who played Beane's second wife appears to have been removed altogether.

The screenplay by Aaron Sorkin and Steven Zaillian is the standout here. The first 25 minutes masquerade as a great movie, piling on the wonky-cool details that made "The West Wing" seem good even when it wasn't. Mad scientist Beane wears a tracksuit bottom in one scene, and the top shows up a couple of days later. He lectures his daughter not to read the papers or listen to sports radio. Much like the Sorkin-scripted "The Social Network," this film appeals to our curiosity.

Sports fans in particular will enjoy the minutiae surrounding player deals, and the antagonistic relationship between Beane and former A's manager Art Howe, who is portrayed with loping cluelessness by Philip Seymour Hoffman. Pitt opens a window into Beane's psyche with a mannerism-heavy performance. Bay Area moviegoers will appreciate the local touches, including broadcasting warhorse Greg Papa playing himself, and guitar wizard Joe Satriani performing the national anthem.

But the grittier details in the script don't fit with the filmmakers' insistence on clichéd plot turns. The 2002 A's story is arguably more of a moral victory than an actual one, but the narrative squeezes in a moment straight from "The Natural" anyway. Baseball fans who follow the game closely will question whether the team and its forward-thinking executives have accomplished all that this movie suggests they did.

Naysayers have been claiming for years that the "Moneyball" book wouldn't work as a movie. But ultimately, it's the cinematic touches that keep this film version from becoming something exceptional.

### **Weeks' three-hit day sparks A's in home finale**

#### **Rookie belts first home run, falls triple short of cycle**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Ever since his early June arrival, Jemile Weeks has found a way to keep himself in conversation, whether by way of his speed, his grit or any other intriguing facet of his game.

It's a safe bet that "home run hitter" will never be added to that list. But the A's rookie got to experience the feeling of one for at least a day on Thursday, as he collected his first big league homer as part of a three-hit day in a 4-3 A's win over the Rangers.

"We've seen him come up with a lot of big hits for us over the course of the time he's been here," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "I think the homer probably put a little extra pep in his step today. I told him, 'That's one. You got it out of the way. Don't worry about any more.'

"He seems to be bigger and bigger in big situations and a guy we count on."

"Jemile Weeks is a pretty good hitter, and he's going to be a good hitter for a long time," Rangers manager Ron Washington said.

Weeks was just a triple shy of the cycle and was responsible for scoring three of the club's four runs, including the first and final ones -- the last a go-ahead tally buoyed by an RBI single from Coco Crisp against Texas righty Mike Adams in the decisive eighth inning.

The speedy duo's efforts erased what was a 3-2 Rangers lead and treated fans present for the last home game of the season to quite the entertaining affair, which prevented a three-game sweep. All the while, Texas' magic number remained at three.

"Our fans were big for us today, they really were," Melvin said. "They were into it big time at the end. We wanted to play well on the last day. The group that comes out here is so passionate and vocal. We have 15,000 fans out here sometimes and it sounds like 30,000."

"That was a big deal for me," Weeks said. "I came in with my normal approach trying to get it done against this tough team out here, and for me to go out and have a big day meant a lot to me, and I know it meant a lot to the fans. They've been supportive all the way through for me, and what more can I ask for? Grateful fans, that's what you want as a player."

Weeks' homer was a sixth-inning leadoff shot off Texas starter Colby Lewis that found its way over the right-field wall, snapping a streak of 90 consecutive games without a long ball -- marking the second-longest such career-opening streak since Mike Bordick went 132 games before hitting his first home run on May 10, 1992.

The A's second baseman, who upped his season average to .303, was more than happy to see that streak come to an end, if for no other reason to rid himself of the daily ribbing from playfully mocking teammates.

"Every day, I got something said about me or someone telling me something about the home run deal, but I think it's all in fun, and I took it all in fun," he said. "They definitely gave me the silent treatment when I came in, but they all came back to congratulate me."

Among that group was righty Trevor Cahill, who in his past two starts has showcased more of the same consistency recognizable from the beginning of the season, when he began the year 6-0 with a 1.72 ERA. Entering Thursday, he was 5-14 with a 5.27 ERA since that time but, for a second straight start, displayed a respectable showing, giving up three runs on 10 hits with one walk and one strikeout.

Cahill threw 94 pitches -- 61 for strikes -- while boosting his season innings total to 200  $\frac{2}{3}$ , a career high. That number will escalate again on Tuesday, when the young righty makes his final start of the year in Seattle.

"He threw a lot more strikes than balls, he got ahead in the count and gave up some hits, but when you're working with strike one and ahead of the count, it gives you that much more confidence as a pitcher," Melvin said. "That's a lineup you want to be picky with, but I think he had enough of that and threw the ball over the plate and trusted his stuff."

Confidence, Cahill agreed, served him well, as he finished the year 3-2 with a 3.10 ERA in six starts against the Rangers.

"I think, for some reason, I always feel sharp against them," he said.

"We've always played Texas pretty good in the past and this year they've beaten us up pretty good. To kind of finish on a positive note is good, plus to get some momentum going into Anaheim because they're going to be playing us hard."

The Angels are still within striking distance of the Rangers in the American League West, though their Wild Card chances remain stronger. Either way, the A's this weekend could ultimately stand in the way of the Halos and a postseason berth.

Melvin wouldn't mind such a scenario. In the meantime, he'll be soaking up his club's victory over Texas, a team that had claimed 12 of the last 13 from Oakland.

"That's a team, if you can't get up for playing those guys, they continually give it to you and, as a team, you have to find a reason to not like, and you have to motivate yourself even more so," he said. "They're a good club and you respect them, but a team that beats up on you like that, you better have a little extra hate for them, and I'm glad we came back and won that game."

### **Slimmed-down Anderson shapes up in rehab**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- More than 20 pounds lighter and nearly two months free of any carbonated beverage, including what was before an everyday intake of Coca-Cola, lefty Brett Anderson isn't just going through the motions of the usual rehab process.

Rather, he's taking advantage of it, using the time to get himself in excellent condition as he prepares to further a big league career that was stalled in July because of Tommy John surgery.

"It kind of puts everything in perspective," Anderson said this week. "When you're pitching and healthy, you think everything's going good, and when you're hurt, it [stinks] you figure it out then because you realize you could have been doing it all along, but it's one of those things I want to get in the best shape possible and back to where I was in the middle of '09."

It was during that season he set an Oakland rookie record with 150 strikeouts while also leading the pitching staff in wins (11), tying for second in starts (30) and finishing with an 11-11 record and 4.06 ERA -- all at the age of 21. In the following season, Anderson lowered his ERA by more than a run (2.80) but also endured two stints on the disabled list with elbow problems.

His July procedure should cure those ailments, and the 23-year-old southpaw is hoping to showcase his improved health on the mound in a year's time dating to the surgery, much like the way the Nationals' Stephen Strasburg did. The right-handed pitcher returned just three days after the one-year mark of his elbow procedure and, though limited in innings as a precaution, has allowed just two earned runs while fanning 11 in 14 innings.

"A year, that year mark seems to be right where everyone wants to be," Anderson said. "It's nice to see the success he's had in his last couple starts. I think I'm on track, maybe ahead of schedule even. My range of motion came back pretty quickly.

"I know it's going to take some time, and it's going to be a grind, and you're going to have days where you're kind of tired of doing some of the rehab stuff, but the goal in the end is to be healthy and be back in the big leagues, and it takes knowing all that to get there."

Anderson's next appointment with Dr. James Andrews, who performed his surgery, is at the end of October, and he's hoping he'll exit the visit cleared to start throwing. Fellow rehabbing lefty Dallas Braden -- whom Anderson has been rehabbing with, along with general manager Billy Beane, who had shoulder surgery -- was recently cleared to throw, and manager Bob Melvin said Thursday he should be only slightly behind other pitchers in Spring Training.

"From what I understand, he's on schedule, if not, slightly ahead," Melvin said of Braden. "I found, with my limited time around him, he's more of a guy you have to back off than push. He's got some energy and likes to compete, wants to be part of it. He's certainly a guy that's not going to lack work and desire to be out there. And based on what I've heard leading up, we're probably in pretty good shape for him to only be a little behind in Spring Training. Whether he's ready at the end of Spring Training, I'm not sure. But it wouldn't surprise me."

As for Anderson, who will spend most of his offseason rehabbing in Austin, Texas, Melvin has been equally impressed.

"Unbelievable," he said. "I've really been impressed with the work he's put in, with the rehab and the losing weight and getting in better shape for next year. I think he's at that point in his career where he realizes that it's very important, especially when you have an injury, that nothing's really given to you and you have to work hard all the time."



Melvin keeping close eye on pitchers' innings

OAKLAND -- Even opposing Rangers hurler C.J. Wilson anticipated a complete game from Brandon McCarthy on Wednesday, when the A's righty exited his start after seven innings with just 79 pitches to his line.

But the early pull was part of an ongoing effort by Oakland manager Bob Melvin to carefully monitor the innings of each of his pitchers, especially those like McCarthy who have a long history with injuries.

McCarthy compiled just 56 1/3 innings with Texas' Triple-A affiliate last season, which was interrupted by shoulder problems, but following Wednesday's performance was at the 162 2/3 mark this season. Fellow righty Rich Harden pitched 115 1/3 innings last year and, in just three months this season, has racked up 76 2/3 innings. Meanwhile, Guillermo Moscoso -- who, like McCarthy and Harden spent the 2010 season in Texas' organization -- is up to 167 1/3 innings between Triple-A and Oakland this year after throwing 124 last season.

"We're cognizant of all that," Melvin said. "We've got a lot of number-crunching going on to make sure we're not overworking these guys and giving them a chance to stay healthy."

It's a plan that has served well for Harden, who despite not making his first start of the year until July 1 has been injury-free since -- marking a rather encouraging time for the oft-injured veteran. He's slated to make just one more start this year, on Sunday in Anaheim.

"I know he's proud of the fact he's getting to the finish line healthy and still pitching effectively," Melvin said.

Worth noting

- Second baseman Jemile Weeks entered Thursday batting .297 and when asked if he'd consider benching the rookie on the final day of the season if he were at the .300 mark, manager Bob Melvin said, "I think he'd fight me on it, to tell you the truth."

"He likes to play," Melvin said. "He's a very tough competitor, I've found in a short amount of time. He takes a couple 0-fers, he doesn't get down, he gets mad, and you're able to see the tenacity he brings against good pitchers."

Melvin's done it before, though, in 2008 while with Arizona, when he sat former D-backs and A's outfielder Conor Jackson to allow him to finish the year with a .300 average. Weeks likely wouldn't allow such a scenario.

"I think he'd come in and say, 'I want to play,'" Melvin said.

- Scott Sizemore, who has been battling shoulder tendinitis for nearly two weeks, was given the day off Thursday, with Eric Sogard making a start at third base. Adding into the equation was Sizemore's career numbers against Texas right-hander Colby Lewis, against whom he's just 1-for-11 with four strikeouts.

- Rehabbing outfielder Ryan Sweeney (upper quad) took some swings off a tee on Wednesday but has yet to hit in the cage or take part in batting practice, making his return by season's end a slim possibility with just six games remaining after Thursday.

- With Wednesday's 3-2 loss to the Rangers, the A's fell to 18-25 in one-run games, which is the worst record in the American League. The losses are also the most by an A's team since 1987, when they went 20-27.

### **Angels draw ace vs. A's in Wild Card chase**

By Adam Berry / MLB.com

As if the Angels already couldn't afford to lose at this point, Thursday night's 4-3 defeat put them in an even more desperate situation in the American League Wild Card and West standings.

Following a 12-inning, walk-off defeat against the Blue Jays, the Angels are three back of the Wild Card-leading Red Sox and five behind the division-leading Rangers with six games to go. Even if the Angels sweep the A's, the Rangers could clinch the division this weekend by taking two of three at home against the Mariners.

"Once we leave the locker room, with a long flight home, we're not going to think much about it," Howard Kendrick said. "You do that sitting here after the game, thinking about things you could have done. All we can do is play the game and play well. We've got another game tomorrow. We have to come out and take a couple from Oakland."

Fortunately for the Halos, they will have the right man on the mound to keep them afloat Friday against Oakland: right-hander Jered Weaver. So will the A's, however, as they start Gio Gonzalez.

Weaver has enjoyed tremendous success this season against the A's, and Gonzalez has also fared extremely well against the Angels. Both are coming off strong starts resulting in wins, meaning Friday's showdown at Angel Stadium has all the makings of a pitchers' duel.

"We're going to start to design some things for Oakland on the flight home. We're not looking back," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "We're in this. We need to play every pitch, win every pitch. Hopefully that adds up to winning games."

Gonzalez, making his second-to-last start of the season, is 3-1 with a 2.10 ERA in four starts against the Angels this season. And he can enter this matchup with plenty of confidence, having gone 5-1 with a 3.20 ERA over his last six starts following an 0-5 stretch that included a 7.90 ERA and .304 opponents' batting average. That includes a seven-inning outing in which he allowed only one run despite struggling to find the strike zone early in the count.

But Weaver has been even better against the A's this year, going 3-0 in four starts with a 1.21 ERA, 1.15 WHIP and .241 opponents' average. And Weaver will be back to his normal routine after pitching six strong innings on three days' rest in Sunday's win over the Orioles.

With two more scheduled starts, Weaver has a chance to become the seventh 20-game winner in Angels history. He has allowed one or no runs in 19 of his 32 starts this season. The last Major League pitcher to allow no more than one run in at least 60 percent of his starts in a season of at least 30 starts was Bob Gibson in 1968.

A's: Sizemore expected to return

- Third baseman Scott Sizemore, battling shoulder tendinitis for the last two weeks, will likely return to the starting lineup for Friday's series opener in Anaheim after getting the day off Thursday. Eric Sogard got the start at third Thursday, but Sizemore still managed to make an impact with an RBI groundout in the seventh inning as a pinch-hitter.
- Rehabbing outfielder Ryan Sweeney (upper quad) took some swings off a tee Wednesday, but he has yet to hit in the cage or take part in batting practice. That makes his return this season a slim possibility with just six games remaining.

Angels: Haren expected to be ready for next start

- Dan Haren was feeling better Thursday after taking a line-drive smash off his left wrist Wednesday night, and Scioscia expected the right-hander would be "good to go" for his scheduled start Monday against the Rangers. Haren was still a little sore and bruised, but he did not think that would affect his normal between-starts routine.

"It shouldn't limit anything," he said. "I'm going light in between starts this time of year anyway. I'll be fine in a day or two when it loosens up."

- According to the Elias Sports Bureau, no team in Major League history has had a rookie with 30 saves and one with 30 home runs in the same season. Jordan Walden has 31 saves this year and Mark Trumbo has 29 homers.

"Trumbo has awesome power. He's done some things you just don't see," Torii Hunter said. "He's one of the biggest reasons we're where we are."

- The Angels will play their final six games at home, where they are 44-31 this season. The Angels also put together a winning road record for the sixth time in eight seasons.

Worth noting

- The Angels have won 10 of their last 13 meetings with the A's at Angel Stadium.
- The A's lead the season series with the Angels, 9-7. The Halos have not lost a season series to the A's since 2003.

### **Weeks hits first homer as A's avoid sweep**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — With one swing of the bat, Jemile Weeks stopped the constant ribbing he had been taking from teammates.

Weeks' first career home run, a solo shot in the sixth inning, sparked Oakland's comeback as the Athletics rallied past the Texas Rangers 4-3 Thursday. He was 3 for 3 with a walk and scored three runs.

Coco Crisp hit a go-ahead single in the eighth to help avoid a series sweep.

"That is awesome to see," A's starter Trevor Cahill said. "We've been joking with him quite a bit about it and he finally got it. He's a guy we depend upon to score runs."

Grant Balfour (5-2) pitched a 1-2-3 eighth for the win, then Andrew Bailey finished for his 21st save in 23 chances as the A's snapped Texas' four-game winning streak and handed the Rangers just their second loss in 10 games.

Pinch-hitter Scott Sizemore hit a tying RBI groundout in the seventh against Darren Oliver. Crisp's hit came against Mike Adams (1-3) and helped stop a three-game skid.

Rangers catcher Yorvit Torrealba left in the eighth after experiencing some nausea following a foul tip that hit his mask.

Adrian Beltre hit an RBI double, Nelson Cruz added a sacrifice fly and David Murphy also drove in a run for the Rangers, who couldn't hold a 3-1 lead.

Colby Lewis went 4-0 in six starts against his former A's team this year but missed a chance to join Ferguson Jenkins in becoming the only Rangers pitchers to win five games against Oakland in a season. Jenkins had been the lone pitcher in Texas history to beat an opponent five times in one year — against the A's and Minnesota in 1974.

Lewis struck out the side in order in the fourth and finished with seven Ks and two walks. He allowed three runs and four hits in 6 1-3 innings.

Weeks, who also doubled ahead of Crisp in the eighth, showed rare power for a speedy 5-foot-9, 160-pound leadoff man. His drive to right came in his 379th career at-bat.

"If I'm leading the league in home runs then it might as well be me who gives it up," Lewis said. "His first one."

Weeks snapped a 90-game homeless streak, the second-longest to start a career in Oakland history behind Mike Bordick's 132 games without a longball before connecting on May 10, 1992.

"When I hit it, it was like a relief but I wasn't surprised," Weeks said. "My game is not to be a home run guy. If I try to hit home runs, it lessens my chances to get on base."

Oakland avoided falling a season-worst 18 games below .500, which would have been its lowest since finishing the 1997 season 32 games below.

The A's completed their home schedule a day after manager Bob Melvin received a new three-year contract to be the permanent skipper. Oakland went 43-38 at the Coliseum for its second straight winning season at home. The A's finish with three games in Anaheim, then three in Seattle.

Crisp crashed his left side hard into the center-field wall trying to make a play on Beltre's second-inning double. He went down briefly but stayed in the game.

NOTES: Sizemore didn't start as he nurses shoulder tendinitis. ... Actor Danny Glover threw out the ceremonial first pitch. ... A's LHP starter Gio Gonzalez received this year's "Good Guy" award from the local chapter of the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Gonzalez (14-12) starts Friday night against the Angels trying to become Oakland's first back-to-back 15-game winner since Mark Mulder in 2003-04. Gonzalez is 5-1 with a 3.20 ERA over his last six starts.

### **A's general manager Billy Beane is thrifty, but no genius**

By: Glenn Dickey, San Francisco Examiner

A's general manager Billy Beane has made a place for himself in Oakland by getting value from players he signs, but he's not the innovator "Moneyball" makes him out to be. (AP file photo)

It's good news that "Moneyball" is reminding people that the A's were a record-setting playoff team before being bought by Lew Wolff and John Fisher. But the idea that Billy Beane was blazing a new trail that others have copied is nonsense.

Beane was simply trying to get the most bang for his buck, which is not exactly a new strategy, in baseball or business. But the interesting thing about the 2002 draft class, which was featured in Michael Lewis' book, was that it was largely a failure.

With compensation picks, the A's had seven selections in the first round, but only three are still in the majors now, all with different teams, Nick Swisher (Yankees), Joe Blanton (Phillies) and Mark Teahen (Toronto).

The draft pick who was the prototype for that draft, catcher Jeremy Brown, played four minor league seasons and retired.

Not a lot of production for all that ballyhoo.

Another player who was featured in the book, Scott Hatteberg, is also more of an example of the failure of the Beane style than the successes. The A's championship teams in the 1988-90 seasons and in 2000 featured power-hitting first basemen. Mark McGwire set a rookie home-run record with 49 in 1988. Jason Giambi had seasons of 33, 43 and 38 home runs before he left for the Yankees. Hatteberg hit 15 in 2002, and the A's haven't had a power-hitting first baseman since.

The 2002 A's were actually built in a very traditional way, around the pitching staff. Mark Mulder and Barry Zito were first-round draft picks, Mulder the second player chosen when he came out. Tim Hudson was only a sixth-round pick because there were questions about his durability. Hudson has had injury problems, including needing Tommy John surgery, but he was very productive for the A's and has had a good career, with 180 career wins at this point.

Nor is Beane's baseball philosophy ground-breaking, even for the A's. Sandy Alderson, his predecessor as Oakland's GM, was a firm believer in the importance of on-base percentage. Sandy wasn't a ground-breaker, either.

Baseball men going back as far as Branch Rickey with the Cardinals in the 1930s have believed it was more significant than batting average.

The A's in the Alderson era were one of the first teams to use the sabremetric principles to evaluate players. Many writers scorn these, mostly because they don't understand them, but they're widely used throughout baseball now.

Where, then, have the A's gone wrong? I don't have access to their financial books, but I believe they're simply not spending enough money.

In both the Haas family and Steve Schott/Ken Hofmann ownerships, much money was put into scouting and minor league teams. In both eras, the A's found and developed outstanding players. They're not doing that, apparently because the money is not there.

It isn't being spent on the major league level, either. Wolff and Fisher are content to keep the payroll down and collect revenue-sharing money from other clubs.

It's a convenient story for the A's to claim that Beane gave away all his secrets in "Moneyball," but that's just an excuse — and it simply isn't true.

## **For enjoyment, this film on the 'Money'**

By MIKE VACCARO, New York Post

Put it this way: If you are a baseball fan, and you walk into the theater wanting "Moneyball" to disappoint you, it probably will. There are some facts that are played fast and loose. There are some details that aren't adhered to, and some larger issues that go ignored. Paul DePodesta, a Harvard man who resembles a poor man's Ben Affleck, becomes Peter Brand, a Yalie who looks like a rich man's Jonah Hill.

If these things are inclined to bother you?

Then you won't like "Moneyball" very much at all.

So this is what I urge you: Don't let those things bother you. Suspend your disbelief. It's what allows sports fans to absorb the corniness of "Pride of the Yankees," and space buffs to enjoy "The Right Stuff" and "Apollo 13," and media addicts to get to the heart of "All the President's Men" and "The Insider."

It also will allow you to see "Moneyball" for what it should be: an enjoyable, funny, smart movie that is about baseball in the way that "The Social Network" is about computers: as background, as a soundtrack of sorts. It isn't a documentary. It isn't supposed to be. You want those, check out "Scared Straight" on A&E, the Bobby Fischer tale on HBO (or, if I may, "1941: Summer of Legends," on MLB Network tomorrow at 5, with an appearance by your humble narrator).

Documentaries are bound by facts.

Movies -- even movies "based on a true stories" -- aren't, and shouldn't be. Look, we can all have fun at how serious the new generation of baseball numbers crunchers take themselves, and it's more fun to point out that Billy Beane, sage of Sabermetricians, has yet to win even one game in the ALCS, let alone win a World Series. You may ask yourself, and with good reason: Why, then, make a movie about that?

It's a fair question. But it is also an awfully good film. Hill steals the movie, but Brad Pitt is terrific, too, and it's impossible not to get a kick out of Philip Seymour Hoffman as the overmatched and outwitted Art Howe that we got a good, close-up look at when he finally was paroled from Beane's numbers hell and took a wrecking ball to the Mets for a couple of years. And count me as someone who would watch a movie that Aaron Sorkin wrote even if it was an adaptation of the phone book.

In this case, though, it's an adaptation of the best sports book I've ever read, written by Michael Lewis, a book that may or may not have changed the way you look at baseball but did a masterful job of showing how and why others did. For years, I was skeptical that a movie was really lurking in those pages. But it was. And it is.

Suspend your disbelief. Turn your mind off for a few hours. And just enjoy yourself. Too few movies allow you that pleasure anymore. This one does.

## **A's Have Struggled to Live Up To 'Moneyball's' Promises**

Casey Tefertiller, Baseball America, 9/22/2011

OAKLAND—It seems so long ago, when a book managed to capture the conversation around baseball and captivate readers who yearned for something new in a sport filled with tradition.

That was 2003, when "Moneyball" hit the bookstores and became the primary topic of discussion around the game. In the brashest of terms, the book told the story of Athletics general manager Billy Beane and his staffers, and how their collective brilliance allowed the cash-starved A's, who were on the way to their fourth straight playoff appearance, to compete in the big-money world of major league baseball.

No book so rocked the game since Jim Bouton's "Ball Four," which in 1970 told about the real lives of players. "Moneyball" was very different. It directly confronted the baseball establishment, showing how the smart guys were about to take over the game from those old curmudgeons; how objective analysis was superior to the subjective opinions of scouts. "Moneyball" did not just challenge the traditional ways of thinking, it ridiculed them.

Publicly and privately, industry officials reviled the work. ESPN analyst Joe Morgan became almost a spokesman for the establishment, criticizing the book and accusing Beane of doing the writing. Of course, Beane did not pen the book. That was done by Michael Lewis, a business writer from Berkeley, a BART ride away from the Oakland Coliseum.

Years passed and the discussion faded. Baseball wrestled with bigger matters as steroid revelations displaced just about every other subject. But "Moneyball" was not about to be forgotten. The book that shook baseball is now a major motion picture, starring Brad Pitt as Beane, with the same flipped hair and crinkly smile, looking so much alike they could be confused in a dark corner of a clubhouse.

The movie tells a fictionalized story of a plucky band of innovative daredevils who found a new path to victory. And while the throngs see the movie, the A's languish in the American League West, out of the race since the all-star break. Many of the concepts espoused in "Moneyball" have been abandoned. The once-heralded draft picks and trade acquisitions have floundered.

This was not the way it was supposed to be.

## The Org Of The Future

The book told the compelling story of Beane and then-assistant GM Paul DePodesta searching out a new way to compete. It was David and Goliath, "Hidalgo" and "The Bad News Bears" all combined into one kind of, sort of, almost true story. The A's provided Lewis with enormous access to the inside workings of the team. He spent much of the 2002 season with the A's, an organization that had reached the playoffs the previous two seasons despite small payrolls. In Northern California, at least, Beane had already been draped with that dreaded genius tag.

The book was not just about how the Athletics had succeeded: it was a dictum on how the organization would continue to excel by using new tactics in the draft. According to the book, the A's had developed a new way to evaluate talent. With computers and statistical analysis, they wouldn't have to rely on those stodgy old scouts with their individualistic and inconsistent evaluations. Amateur talent and the draft had always been a haphazard, subjective process. Now it could become objective and consistent.

From the beginning, this was more about Lewis's vision of the A's than reality. Beane was never so arrogant that he believed scouts were outmoded and worthless. He had been an advance scout himself, with a terrific eye for talent. He knew there were things scouts could know that computers could not. He had maintained a scouting corps that included both veteran and young scouts under the guidance of former scouting director Grady Fuson, who had built a reputation of his own as a draft guru after such selections as Eric Chavez, Mark Mulder, Barry Zito and Tim Hudson. Yet Lewis presents Fuson as the foil—and fool—of the book.

Beane and Fuson did have a falling out of sorts at the 2001 draft. Moments before the draft, Beane screamed a profanity and threw a chair against a wall as he looked at Fuson's draft board. Fuson wanted a high school pitcher, either Jeremy Bonderman or Cole Hamels, and prep pitchers did not fit the Moneyball plan. Fuson liked them enough to deviate from the plan, and he selected Bonderman. He left the A's after the season and was an assistant GM with the Rangers when Lewis received access to the Athletics' inner sanctum in 2002.

After Fuson's departure, the A's embraced advanced metrics even more. Beane knew how inexact scouting and development were—he had been a touted first-round draft pick of the Mets, only to stumble through a mediocre career as a backup outfielder—and if all these numbers could make the process more scientific, then bring on the numbers. The A's plan was always about finding inefficiencies in the system. Baseball organizations usually play follow-the-leader, and Beane sought to be the leader, not the follower. A big part of this was the emphasis of on-base percentage, and it did work, to some degree, at the big league level. In post-expansion, steroid-fueled baseball, finding hitters who could take pitches would wear down a pitching staff and lead to short starts and reliance on bullpens. As more and more strike throwers came into the league, the philosophy became less effective.

For scouting amateurs, it never paid the dividends predicted in the book. But Lewis saw only the first year of the new era in A's scouting, and he told the story with a brash "we're smarter than you" perspective. Baseball has a tradition of humility, almost to the point of superstition, and that carries into the front offices. And there was absolutely nothing humble about "Moneyball." So before the A's scout-by-the-numbers plan even had time to evolve, it was presented in a national best-seller as the future of baseball. Lewis placed Beane in the bizarre position of being labeled a genius for a plan that had not even been tested. Eight seasons later, as the movie hits theaters, how has the whole Magnificent Athletics Plan For the Future worked out?

Little short of a disaster.

That 2002 draft was to be the beginning of a rebuild. The A's had seven of the first 39 picks because of free-agent departures, and a big draft could mean a big future. With Fuson gone to Texas, this was the year Beane instituted a new way of thinking. Lewis reported how Beane and DePodesta took over the 2002 draft meeting, and DePodesta put up a list of targeted players, many of whom were not highly valued by traditional scouting standards: Jeremy Brown, Stephen Stanley, John Baker, Mark Kiger, Shaun Larkin, John McCurdy, Brant Colamarino and Brian Stavisky.

Don't bother to check the all-star rosters. Only Baker has had significant big league time, as a backup catcher. The '02 draft did produce Nick Swisher, Mark Teahen and Joe Blanton among the A's first seven picks, but Swisher and Blanton were both consensus first-round talents. Teahen has survived in the majors mostly as a backup.

Oakland did another by-the-numbers draft in '03, selecting pitcher Brad Sullivan and third baseman Brian Snyder in the first round. Sullivan was a top-ranked pitcher who was coming back from injuries, and that gamble did not work out. Snyder went the way of the other Moneyballers. Second-rounder Andre Ethier became a star after being traded to the Dodgers, but the athletic outfielder does not fit the Moneyball prototype.

## A Slumping System

The A's would reach the playoffs again, in 2006, making it to the American League Championship Series before losing to the Tigers. Beane then began a rebuilding effort that has moved in fits and starts but never really come together. The once-

prized minor league system has fallen into mediocrity, still recovering from the bad drafts of the Moneyball era and numerous trades that failed to produce.

Beane took over as GM in 1997, building on a firm foundation left by Sandy Alderson. Beane fostered an atmosphere of mutual respect around the organization that led to shared success among scouts and instructors, and the A's were Baseball America's Organization of the Year in 1999. After Fuson's departure and the beginning of the Moneyball era, things started to change. The once single-minded Beane emerged as a celebrity, serving on corporate boards, becoming a highly paid motivational speaker and pursuing an interest in international soccer. DePodesta left before the 2004 season to become GM of the Dodgers. He lasted two years, caught on with the Padres and this year joined Alderson and the Mets as vice president of scouting and player development.

The A's quietly stepped away from the mantras of "Moneyball." By 2006, they used their top pick on high school pitcher Trevor Cahill, a refutation of the principles that dictated that premium picks should not be squandered on prep pitchers. Fuson returned to the organization before the 2010 season as a special adviser.

The draft strategy that Lewis touted simply did not work. The A's elevated on-base ability to the level of the most coveted tool, and the organization found itself with one-dimensional players who could not find positions or excel in the majors, leaving the A's short on talent and struggling at the big league level. For a small-market team, drafting and development is critical, and the draft had failed the Athletics.

So as "Moneyball," the movie, hits theaters, Moneyball, the philosophy, collapses into rubble, and "Moneyball," the book, begins to look like a literary antiquity.

Old hands will call this the wages of hubris and mutter about the Baseball Gods. In retrospect, it was preposterous to boast about the genius of a plan that had never been tested. Viewing the book now, eight years after publication, is like walking through a museum of the obsolete. Not only does Lewis gloat about the inevitable success of the A's new approach, but he extols the virtues of derivatives and Wall Street brilliance. That does not carry the same luster in 2011.

One irony of Lewis's tirade against the old guard is that other teams have sought (and found) different ways to succeed in the wake of "Moneyball." One American League scout said, "The book made you realize there are other ways to think. It made people look at things from a different perspective." The Twins and Rays, to cite two examples, have put together sustained success while battling payroll issues. Most teams now use sabermetrics both in scouting and to prepare for upcoming opponents. Teams are always looking for an edge, and "Moneyball" made creative thinking more acceptable.

So "Moneyball" did change baseball, just not in the ways Lewis predicted. Scouts remain highly respected, and most teams (even the A's) seek athletes over statisticians' delights. While other teams have found creative ways to thrive, the A's experimented and failed. This would not have been such a big deal had there not been a national bestseller trumpeting its inevitable success. With the movie shining the spotlight again, the oddest twist of fate may be that other teams benefited far more from "Moneyball" than the A's.

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### **How important was Moneyball to the success of the 2002 A's?**

Cliff Corcoran, Sports Illustrated

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Putting aside for a moment the larger issues it addresses about building a better mousetrap and what makes Billy Beane tick, the movie Moneyball, based on the 2003 best-selling book of the same name by Michael Lewis, is about how the A's, having won 102 games and made the playoffs in 2001, planned to get back to the postseason in 2002 despite losing Jason Giambi, Johnny Damon and Jason Isringhausen to free agency.

The answer supplied by the film is that by employing the analysis of newly recruited assistant general manager Peter Brand (a fictional version of Oakland general manager Beane's actual assistant Paul DePodesta), the A's were able to break down the contributions of his departed players to their component elements and comb the market for undervalued players who could collectively contribute in similar ways. In reality, that was just one piece of the puzzle that made the A's perennial contenders a decade ago, when they averaged 95 wins, captured four AL West titles and made five playoff appearances over a seven-year span from 2000 to 2006.

The Moneyball revolution is born in the film in a scene in which Beane, with Brand in tow, holds a meeting with his scouting staff and informs them that he plans to fill the hole free agency has created in the A's offense with former Red Sox catcher Scott Hatteberg, aging Yankees star David Justice, and Giambi's younger brother, Jeremy. Though the meeting is a piece of fiction, the dialogue is drawn directly from a passage in the book in which the 2001 on-base percentages of the elder Giambi (.477), Damon (.324), and designated hitter Olmedo Saenz (.291), who was "headed for the bench," are averaged to produce a .364 OBP that Beane and DePodesta hope the younger Giambi, Justice, and Hatteberg (who averaged a .352 OBP in 2001) can replace.

That all lines up pretty well, and it shouldn't be a spoiler to baseball fans that the 2002 A's did indeed return to the postseason by winning 103 games. However, exactly how they did it was quite a bit different than how both the film and the book suggest.

The biggest problem with the idea of Jeremy Giambi, David Justice and Scott Hatteberg as this trio of "Moneyball" players who were picked off the scrap heap to help return the A's to glory in 2002 is that Jeremy Giambi played 124 games and made 443 plate appearances for the A's in 2001. This is completely ignored in the film, which opens with the A's losing the 2001 Division Series to the Yankees, but makes no reference to the younger Giambi's failure to slide on the famous Derek Jeter flip play in Game 3 of that series.

Even the book makes only a passing reference to one of those three players being "promoted from within the organization," but Jeremy Giambi actually saw more major league playing time than Saenz in 2001, and as things played out, Giambi and Saenz combined for 784 plate appearances with the A's in 2001 and just 365 PA with the A's in 2002. So Jeremy Giambi wasn't so much replacing anyone as he was being replaced himself.

Another problem with the way the film portrays the dilemma of replacing the big name trio of the elder Giambi, Damon and Isringhausen is that the latter two were rather easy to replace. Damon had his worst major league season in 2001 and Isringhausen was a closer who threw just 71 1/3 innings that year. The film makes a big show of the player banners hung on the exterior of the Oakland Coliseum, showing ones for Giambi, Damon and Isringhausen resplendent during the 2001 ALDS only to come crashing down along with Beane's spirits as all three depart as free agents that winter. The next season, there is just one lone banner -- that of the faded star Justice.

However, the three departing players were in no way equals coming out of the 2001 season. As Lewis clearly states in the book, "...the departures of Johnny Damon and Jason Isringhausen, both proven stars, were not great blows to the Oakland A's."

According to Baseball-Reference's Wins Above Replacement (bWAR), Damon, who hit just .256/.324/.363 in 2001, was worth 2.7 wins above replacement that season, making him the A's fifth most valuable non-pitcher. Isringhausen, who had a fine season as the A's closer in 2001, was worth 2.2 wins above replacement, making him the A's fifth most valuable pitcher. Those two thus combined for 4.9 wins above replacement, less than half of the 10.3 wins credited to Giambi.

Though the film doesn't address it, the A's replaced Isringhausen perfectly by flipping minor league third baseman Eric Hinske and minor league righthander Justin Miller to the Blue Jays for their closer, Billy Koch. Hinske won the American League Rookie of the Year award with the Jays in 2002, but saw his value halved in 2003 and hasn't been worth more than a single win above replacement in any season since. Koch, meanwhile, threw 93 2/3 innings for the A's in 2002, matching Isringhausen's value exactly (2.2 bWAR), and was then flipped to the White Sox after the 2002 season in a deal that brought in his replacement, Keith Foulke, who was even more valuable in 2003, only to leave as a free agent himself, joining Damon on the 2004 World Champion Red Sox.

There's a thread to follow there about the fungibility of relief pitching, the A's disregard for the so-called "closer mentality" in employing set-up men Arthur Rhodes and Octavio Dotel in the role in 2004, and their success with home-grown closers Huston Street, Brad Ziegler and Andrew Bailey ever since, but the film doesn't have time to follow it, and doesn't bother to clutter its dialogue with the idea that closers having more perceived value than actual value is another market inefficiency for low-budget teams to exploit.

Getting back to the 2002 A's, the pieces didn't fit as well in the lineup. In terms of the defensive alignment, Hatteberg did replace Jason Giambi at first base in 2002, and by pushing 2001 leftfielder Terrence Long into Damon's vacated spot in center, Justice did replace Damon in the outfield, but Hatteberg and Justice, despite averaging a .375 on-base percentage, did not fully replace the combined production of Giambi and Damon, a total of 13 wins above replacement in 2001. In fact, they didn't come close, combining for just 4.1 bWAR.

Justice got on base, but his power was gone and he played in just 118 games, losing most of May to injury. As a result, he failed to match even the low standard set by Damon in 2001, batting .266/.476/.410 with 11 home runs.

Hatteberg, who hit .280/.374/.433 with 15 homers, was nearly twice as valuable as Justice, but he was tasked with replacing the irreplaceable, a season in which Giambi followed his AL MVP campaign of 2000 by hitting .342/.477/.660.

Hatteberg managed to only fill a quarter of that hole in terms of wins above replacement.

To make matters worse, Long wasn't up to the challenge of centerfield and collapsed into a replacement level player, costing the team another two wins (there's a moment in the film when Beane tells his manager, Art Howe, that "fielding doesn't matter," which feels particularly dated given that team defense was the market inefficiency that the Rays exploited to win the AL pennant in 2008).

Per the following table, even after adding Justice and Hatteberg and moving Long, the A's still had a Giambi-sized hole to fill, a larger one in fact, on the order of 11.1 wins above replacement:

Position	2001 Player	bWAR	2002 Player	bWAR



First Base	Jason Giambi	10.3	Scott Hatteberg	2.7
Centerfield	Johnny Damon	2.7	Terrence Long	-0.1
Leftfield	Terrence Long	2.1	David Justice	1.4
	2001 Total 15.1		2002 Total 4.0	

So, where did the 2002 A's find those missing 11 wins? The cold hard fact is it was mostly luck. As portrayed in the film, Beane got fed up with Jeremy Giambi's off-field behavior in late May and, per the book, "in a silent rage, Billy called around the league to see who would take Jeremy off his hands. He didn't care what he got in return. . . . The Phillies offered John Mabry. Billy hardly knew who John Mabry was." Mabry was a 31-year-old journeyman who had hit .271/.324/.397 to that point in his career, but he had a hot four months for the A's and added two wins above replacement to their ledger as a corner outfielder and first-baseman. (Note that, in the film, Beane trades Giambi and rookie first baseman Carlos Peña in a single outburst, needing just two terse calls to the Tigers to unload Peña. In reality, Peña was traded more than a month after Giambi in a three-team, seven-player mega-deal that also involved the Yankees, Tigers ace Jeff Weaver, a young Ted Lilly and Oakland's 2001 first-round draft pick, Jeremy Bonderman, and surely took more than two brief calls to orchestrate.)

That leaves nine wins unaccounted for, but according to Pythagorean record, a team's projected record based on the number of runs they scored and allowed, the A's actually were eight wins worse in 2002 than they were in 2001, they just outplayed their own ability by roughly the same amount.

It's not hard to see how luck played a role in the 2002 A's success. Just look at their record in one-run games. Teams' records in one-run games tend to trend toward .500 because games that close are hardly more effective than coin flips in illustrating which team is actually better. In 2001, for example, the 102-win A's went 21-19 in one-run games, just one game better than .500 in an equal number of games (20-20). In 2002, however, the A's went 32-14 (.696) in one-run games. In 2003, they fell back to 25-20 in one-run games and won 96 games overall, exactly the number of wins in their 2002 Pythagorean record.

What is emerging here is the fact that, from 2001 to 2003, the A's, even after losing Jason Giambi, maintained a level of play that put them around 95 wins annually (their 104 Pythagorean wins in 2001 minus Giambi's 10 wins above replacement put them right around that number). Ninety-five wins would have been enough to earn the A's the wild card in 2001 and 2002 and the AL West in 2003. The extra wins they piled up in 2001 did them no good because the Mariners won 116 games, and winning the division rather than the wild card in 2002 did them no good as they were dispatched in the first round of the playoffs by the Twins anyway. The whole issue of replacing Giambi thus becomes moot.

As to what made the A's so good even without one of the top run producers of the day, here are the five most valuable players on the 2002 A's according to bWAR along with when and how they entered the organization:

Position	Player	bWAR	Acquired
SP	Tim Hudson	6.6	1997 draft (6th rd)
SP	Barry Zito	6.5	1999 draft (No. 9)
SS	Miguel Tejada	5.2	1993 amateur FA
SP	Mark Mulder	4.3	1998 draft (No. 2)
3B	Eric Chavez	3.6	1996 draft (No. 10)

Hudson, Zito (the Cy Young winner that year) and Mulder were a stellar trio of young starting pitchers who were known as the Big Three and anchored **one of the best starting quartets in the game's history**. Tejada won the AL MVP after hitting 34 home runs and driving in 131 runs and Chavez was a Gold Glove and Silver Slugger winner. None of those players came out of Paul DePodesta's computer. He joined the A's in 1999 (not following the 2001 season, as is the case with the film's fictional Peter Brand) and, according to the book, didn't participate in the draft until 2002.

However, one mustn't see that as a reason to dismiss the importance of DePodesta and statistical analysis in the A's success. A replacement level team would win roughly 50 games. The players above were worth 26.2 wins in 2002. Upgrading a replacement level team with those five players alone wouldn't even result in a winning record. To turn that core into a perennial contender, Beane and DePodesta had to tease another 20 wins above replacement out of one of the smallest budgets in the game.

That is where the term "Moneyball" comes from. It isn't about trying to turn water into wine by pretending Scott Hatteberg can replace Jason Giambi. It is about wringing the maximum number of wins out of each additional dollar by identifying value where other teams have yet to detect it. It's about marginal wins, the ones that separate a playoff team from a runner up, about getting over the hump.

Scott Hatteberg was the third most productive non-pitcher on the 2002 A's. He cost \$900,000 because no other team recognized his value as an on-base threat or his potential to move to first base after elbow problems put his career as a catcher in jeopardy. He cost the A's \$333,333 per win above replacement in 2002. Jason Giambi was nearly three times as productive as Hatteberg in 2002, but cost the Yankees more than four times as much per win, making Hatteberg far more valuable on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

Hatteberg was the 2002 A's greatest success story, but Beane and DePodesta deserve credit for far more. The three-team trade that brought Damon to the A's prior to the 2001 season and rid the A's of Ben Grieve and Angel Berroa, two other players who fell off steeply after winning the AL Rookie of the Year, also brought second baseman Mark Ellis and righty Cory Lidle to Oakland. Lidle became the fourth starter and combined with Ellis for 5.7 wins above replacement in 2002.

Meanwhile, Damon's departure as a free agent after the 2001 season netted the A's the compensation draft pick with which they claimed Nick Swisher that June. A deadline deal for pending White Sox free agent second baseman Ray Durham added another win and two more draft picks. Add up Hatteberg, Justice, Koch, Ellis, Lidle, Durham and submarining righty reliever Chad Bradford, and that's 14.5 of those 20 marginal wins right there. Of those seven players, only Justice and Lidle were paid seven figures by the A's in 2002. Only Justice, who was having more than half of his salary paid by the Yankees, cost the team more than a million dollars per win. The A's didn't pay Durham a dime as the White Sox covered his entire salary in exchange for minor league righty Jon Adkins.

That last is a credit to Beane's savvy on the trading block, which is illustrated in the film in a scene taken directly from the book in which he plays three teams off each other in order to acquire lefty reliever Ricardo Rincon, and is further evidence that success has many fathers.

So did the A's win because of Moneyball? Well, sort of. They won because they had a core of high-ceiling talent identified by their scouts, because they were able to supplement that core with cost-effective role players identified by DePodesta's analysis and because Beane made a number of savvy trades that resulted in both player upgrades and salary relief. Take away any one of those elements, and we're no longer talking about a playoff team and we're almost certainly not going to be watching a movie about them.