

## A's News Clips, Tuesday, October 11, 2011

### 'Moneyball' bit player Korach likes film ... and Howe

Ron Kantowski, Las Vegas Review

Ken Korach's voice can be heard for about 22 seconds in the hit baseball movie "Moneyball," now showing at a theater near you. That's probably not enough to warrant an Oscar nomination, given Anthony Quinn holds the record for shortest amount of time spent on screen as a Best Supporting Actor of eight minutes, as painter Paul Gauguin in 1956's "Lust for Life."

But whereas Brad Pitt only stars in "Moneyball," longtime Las Vegas resident Korach lived the 2002 season as play-by-play broadcaster for the Oakland Athletics, who set an American League record by winning 20 consecutive games.

And though Korach's 45-minute interview about that season wound up on the cutting-room floor -- apparently along with photographs of the real Art Howe, the former A's manager who was nowhere near as rotund (or cantankerous) as Philip Seymour Hoffman made him out to be in the movie -- Korach said director Bennett Miller and the Hollywood people got it right.

Except, perhaps, for the part about Art Howe.

"I wish they had done a more flattering portrayal of Art ... but it's Hollywood," Korach said of "Moneyball," based on author Michael Lewis' 2003 book of the same name. "They wanted to show conflict between Billy and Art."

Billy is Billy Beane, who was general manager of the Athletics then and still is today. Beane is credited with adapting the so-called "Moneyball" approach -- finding value in players based on sabermetric statistical data and analysis, rather than traditional scouting values such as hitting home runs and stealing bases -- to building a ballclub.

The premise, at least for a movie, sounds less interesting than a Royals doubleheader.

But the movie shines, mostly because Pitt is fantastic as Beane, Jonah Hill is fantastic as his sidekick Paul DePodesta (though the character is called Peter Brand in the movie because DePodesta didn't want his name used), and Hoffman is fantastic as Herman Franks, if not Art Howe.

And the guy they found to play David Justice, an actor named Stephen Bishop who played baseball at UC Riverside and then briefly in the low minor leagues, might have a better swing than the real David Justice.

The movie focuses on Beane's failures as a player and on baseball retreads such as Scott Hatteberg and Chad Bradford, the submarine relief pitcher. And on Justice, who by 2002 was 36 years old, supposedly washed up and totally through with Halle Berry.

The movie is not about 2002 A's stalwarts such as pitchers Barry Zito and Tim Hudson and Mark Mulder. It's mostly about Beane, and a new and cheaper way to play the game.

"People say it wasn't a realistic look at what happened that year in terms of identifying the key players," Korach said. "But that's not what they were trying to do."

"Moneyball" is about finding value in unexpected commodities that many small-market organizations espouse today, which might explain why 41-year-old Craig Counsell is still playing for the Brewers. It does not explain why Adam Dunn was allowed to hit .159 for the White Sox this season.

That 2002 season marked the beginning of a trend, in which crusty old baseball men who were educated while sitting on crusty old benches were replaced in the general manager's office by Ivy League types with economics degrees and laptop computers.

Goodbye, Red Man. Hello, Red Bull.

Beane might have stumbled onto something out of necessity in Oakland, but as Korach said, "Moneyball" is based on sound principles that can be applied outside the lines, too.

"In any business, you look for fundamental value where other people haven't found it," said Korach, who recently completed his 16th season in the A's broadcast booth.

Based on the reviews, critics are finding loads of fundamental value in "Moneyball."

It was a boost to Korach's inner deliciousness, as Brian Wilson puts it in those chalupa commercials, to be invited to the premiere at the historic Paramount Theatre in Oakland, to walk the red carpet with the stars and former players, to relive that 20-game winning streak, those calls he had forgotten making with his daughter, Emilee, who is 19 now but was only 10 and mostly missing her dad during the summer of 2002.

Korach said he has seen "Moneyball" twice and plans to see it again.

Even if Philip Seymour Hoffman looks and acts nothing like Art Howe.

Putting it behind him

### **2011 season not one C.R.'s Sweeney will cherish**

by Jeff Johnson, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — Yes, Ryan Sweeney has seen "Moneyball."

He and his Oakland Athletics teammates attended the premiere for the ballyhooed baseball movie about their general manager, Billy Beane, in late September in Oakland, Calif. Sweeney and his wife, Natasha, got to meet Brad Pitt and get some photos taken.

"Only talked to him for about five minutes," said Sweeney, 26. "We went to an after party with everyone, and he had a bunch of (security) guys surrounding him. It was like 'OK, don't bother this guy.'"

Sad to say, but getting to hobnob with some of Hollywood's elite may have been the highlight of Sweeney's summer. The outfielder and Cedar Rapids resident batted .265 with a home run and 25 RBIs in 108 games, with a career-low 264 at-bats.

The A's acquired veteran outfielders Josh Willingham and David DeJesus last off-season, who cut into Sweeney's playing time significantly. He was part-time for the first time, and that was tough for him to adjust to.

"A disappointing season for me," he said.

Sweeney said it was difficult for him to get into a groove offensively because of his sporadic playing time. He hadn't experienced that in pro ball and doesn't really want to again, saying his goal is to be Oakland's starting center fielder next season.

Willingham, DeJesus and fellow outfielders Coco Crisp and Hideki Matsui are free agents, and it's unclear if the Athletics are interested in all or any. Sweeney made \$1.4 million this season, his first as a salary arbitration eligible player.

According to an estimate by the Oakland Tribune, he is looking at about a \$1.6 million salary next season. Oakland has until Dec. 13 to tender him a contract or he will become a free agent.

"We'll see what happens," he said. "Either way, it's not like I'm in a bad situation. I'm not worried about it at all. I'm only 26 years old. I still feel like I haven't touched on what I can do as a player."

Other than a late-season problem with a quadriceps, Sweeney said he made it through the season unscathed from an injury standpoint.

The bottom line is he's happy to be near his family and on the golf course regularly. And he's ecstatic the 2011 season is in the rearview mirror.

"A weird season for me. Such a mentally frustrating season," Sweeney said. "I told everybody that I'm just coming home, and I'm not watching baseball, I'm not talking about baseball for a month."

Choice, Wheeler share Player of Week award

### **Three homers for Choice, 10 hits and five doubles for Wheeler**

By / Arizona Fall League

PHOENIX -- Phoenix Desert Dogs outfielder **Michael Choice** (OAK) and Salt River Rafters third baseman **Ryan Wheeler** (ARI) have been named the Arizona Fall League's week one co-Players of the Week.

**Choice:** The 6-0, 215-pound Choice homered in three of his four games. For the week, he hit .471 (8-for-17) with 1 double, 3 home runs, 4 RBIs, 7 runs, 1 walk, .526 on-base percentage and 1.077 slugging percentage.

The 21-year-old Fort Worth, Texas native, who played collegiate baseball at Texas-Arlington, led the Class A Advanced California League with 30 home runs in 2011 while hitting .285 with 82 RBIs in 118 games, his first full Minor League season.

Choice was Oakland's first-round (10th overall) Draft pick in 2010.

**Wheeler:** The 6-4, 220-pound Wheeler, who hails from Torrance, Calif, leads the Fall League in hits (10) and doubles (5) after the first week of play. His .556 (10-for-18) batting average ranks second. He also registered 4 RBIs, 2 runs, a .556 on-base percentage and a .857 slugging percentage.

The Diamondbacks' fifth-round (156th) selection in the 2009 Draft, Wheeler, 23, who played college baseball at Loyola Marymount, was a key member of the Southern League champion Mobile BayBears in 2011 when he hit .294 with 16 home runs and 89 RBIs.

**Other nominees:** Other players receiving Player of the Week consideration were Phoenix first baseman Jesus Aguilar (CLE), Peoria Javelinas infielder Scooter Gennett (MIL) and Surprise Rafters outfielder Kevin Mattison (FLA).

**Arizona Fall League:** Known throughout professional baseball as a finishing school for Major League Baseball's elite prospects, the Arizona Fall League is a six-team league owned and operated by MLB. It plays six days per week (Monday-Saturday) at six Spring Training stadiums in the Phoenix metropolitan area. Salt River Fields at Talking Stick (Salt River Rafters) is the league's newest venue, joining five returning sites: Mesa HoHoKam Stadium (Mesa Solar Sox), Peoria Sports Complex (Peoria Javelinas), Phoenix Municipal Stadium (Phoenix Desert Dogs), Scottsdale Stadium (Scottsdale Scorpions) and Surprise Stadium (Surprise Saguaros).

This year's schedule features the sixth annual Rising Stars Game on Saturday, Nov. 5 at Surprise Stadium and the annual championship game on Saturday, Nov. 19 at Scottsdale Stadium. The Scottsdale Scorpions are the defending champions.

### **Gyorko's three-run blast powers Peoria**

### **Padres prospect highlights go-ahead five-run third for Javelinas**

By Robert Emrich and Danny Wild / MLB.com

In his first trip to the plate Monday, Jedd Gyorko was a little anxious. His second trip was an entirely different story.

Gyorko's three-run homer in the second inning sparked a five-run go-ahead rally as Peoria held on to beat Phoenix, 7-6, in the Arizona Fall League.

The Padres' second-round pick last year went 2-for-4 in his second AFL start. **San Diego's No. 4 prospect** also singled in the eighth and walked in the fourth after collecting three hits Oct. 4 in his debut last week.

"I was a little jumpy in my first at-bat and I wanted to stay back," Gyorko said. "I was able to get a cutter over the plate and put a good swing on it and get it out."

The West Virginia product had a big season this summer at two levels, batting .333 with 25 homers, 114 RBIs and 12 steals between Class A Advanced Lake Elsinore and Double-A San Antonio.

"I think it's always a little difficult to go to the next league," the former second-rounder said of his promotion to the Texas League. "The pitchers are really good up there, you just have to continue to make the adjustments and keep getting better."

Gyorko batted third Monday, ahead of another slugger in Cardinals first baseman Matt Adams, who pumped out 32 homers and 101 RBIs while hitting .300 for Double-A Springfield this year. Adams, who had four hits over his first four games, first put the Javelinas up in the second with a solo homer off Phoenix starter Murphy Smith (Athletics).

"I'd love to hit behind him (Adams) every single at-bat of my career, I'd get good pitches to hit," Gyorko said of the Javelinas' cleanup hitter.

Peoria tacked on a pair of runs to cap the five-run third on RBI hits by San Diego's Jaff Decker and St. Louis' Ryan Jackson. The Javs added another run in the ninth when Decker ripped a leadoff triple and scored on Jackson's single to center.

The Desert Dogs score the bulk of their runs in the second when Rob Segedin hit an RBI double and Segedin scored on Adams' fielding error. Former A's first-round pick Grant Green came home on a sacrifice fly by fellow Oakland prospect Ryan Ortiz for the inning's second run.

Smith was charged with six runs on eight hits over three innings.

San Diego's Nick Schmidt allowed three runs -- two earned -- on two hits and a pair of walks over three frames in the start for Peoria. Seattle's Forrest Snow was sharp in relief, striking out four over two perfect frames.