

**Hard work pays off for Andrew Carignan**

**Former Wildcats star made big league debut in September for A's**

By JOE PEREZ, [The Norwich Bulletin](#)

Andrew Carignan was the envy of most baseball players. He's a former All-American, has the polish that comes from pitching in a big-time college program and has a right arm that can unload a fastball into the mid-to-upper 90s.

Carignan, taken in the fifth round out of North Carolina in the 2007 draft by the Oakland Athletics, was on the fast track to the majors.

But injuries knocked the Norwich Free Academy graduate off track. At times, Carignan wasn't sure if he would ever live out his dream. But his hard work, resilience and talent paid off. Oakland promoted Carignan in September, giving him a taste of the big leagues.

"I wasn't expecting it," Carignan said. "I've been around a couple years and kind of familiar with the whole game, so I knew there was definitely a possibility. I knew I had had put myself in that position, but by no means was I expecting it."

Carignan was one of those "when," not "if" guys. His first two pro seasons produced ERAs of 2.01 and 2.02, with many talent evaluators pegging him as Oakland's future closer.

But a right elbow injury wiped out all but two games of his 2009 season, and surgery on the elbow, along with a stress fracture in his foot, cost him the start of the 2010 season. Throw in a pair of oblique injuries and Carignan began to wonder if he had taken baseball as far as he could.

"It's always been tough," he said. "There were times when I was looking at classes at Carolina in case I couldn't come back from this last injury, to go back to school. I always thought in the back of my head that it could always happen."

Former NFA coach John Iovino said he's never coached someone with as much mental toughness as Carignan. But the battle back from injuries is more difficult when the athlete remained healthy through high school and college, as Carignan did.

"Any time you face injuries or adversity like that, you go through your rehab and there's always that self-doubt. ... When you get to the level that he got to, you begin to face injuries," Iovino said. "That's a very big mountain to climb back because of the level that he's at, and the first time facing injuries."

When he was on the mound, Carignan wasn't always the same pitcher. His stuff — slider, curveball, changeup and, of course, fastball — weren't as good as they had been. After coming back from the stress fracture in 2009, Carignan had a 4.50 ERA; 2010 was worse — 6.27. His strikeouts per nine innings dipped slightly and his walks per nine innings nearly doubled from 2008 to 2009.

As a friend and a coach, Iovino encouraged Carignan to "remember who you are, remember where you came from and don't forget that." That hard work and determination helped Carignan lead NFA to a state championship and North Carolina to a pair of College World Series appearances.

Throughout, Carignan saw glimpses of his old self. He was getting healthy and with it came control over his pitches. His walks per nine innings went from 9.3 to 2.8.

The new “old” Carignan spent the summer with three different minor league teams, posting a 1.85 ERA and allowing less than a hit per inning.

“There have always been flashes that I’m back to my old self,” Carignan said. “Then a couple more injuries or tweaks and then it would go away. I guess those little flashes just kept me going because I thought if I could put it all together it would be there.”

Oakland’s pitching coach this season, Ron Romanick, spent 13 seasons in the A’s organization. He said the long road to the majors has made Carignan appreciate things more.

“He’s much tougher mentally, he’s gone through it, he’s a better person for it,” Romanick said. “He’s one of the stories right now who’s made it back and is competing for a job in the major leagues.”

On Sept. 2, Carignan made his debut for Oakland, pitching a scoreless inning against Seattle.

He made six appearances — 6 1/3 innings — without earning a decision. He had one rough outing — giving up three runs to American League-champion Texas.

“Nothing in the minor leagues prepares you for the learning curve when you get here,” Romanick said, noting that Carignan “earned” his September innings. “It’s a very different transition because the best players on the planet are here and you really have to have your game down.”

Carignan is currently pitching in the Arizona Fall League for the Phoenix Desert Dogs, a team comprised of prospects from Oakland, Toronto, Cleveland, Cincinnati and the New York Yankees. Among his teammates is Reds hurler Aroldis Chapman.

Just as his numbers in Oakland are misleading, so are Carignan’s in Phoenix.

He has an ERA of 6.00 in six games, but with the exception of one game, he hasn’t allowed a hit.

As for next season, Carignan is confident that when the A’s end spring training, he’ll be on their opening day roster. He’s considering his one-month stint in Oakland, as well as the fall league and the upcoming spring training, as one big tryout for the team.

“Now that you get to see what you are fighting for, it justifies everything that you were doing,” he said. “You know when you do those workouts and you try to find a place to throw inside in Connecticut in December and January, it’s all definitely worth it.”

### **Drumbeat: Five questions for new BBWAA exec Susan Slusser**

Vlae Kershner, San Francisco Chronicle, 10/24/2011, 11:26am

In case you missed it over the weekend, our own Susan Slusser, the Chronicle’s Oakland A’s beat writer, was named vice president of the Baseball Writers Association of America, putting her in line to become the first woman president of the organization that selects the league MVP’s and Cy Young winners, among other responsibilities. I asked Susan to answer five questions about BBWAA issues, women beat writers and the A’s stadium situation. — *Vlae Kershner*.

**Q: The first women who were MLB beat writers had problems with players not wanting them in the clubhouses. Do you think your election signifies that women are now fully accepted as beat writers?**

A: Those first women were in the 1970s and I think things have changed completely since then. I think almost every professional athlete has had women covering them somewhere before they even get to the pro level — in high school, college, the minor leagues. I've never had any trouble with any players or coaches for gender reasons — the players I've had trouble with have been the same ones the male writers have trouble with. I did have a pitching coach ask me my first day on the job if I knew anything about baseball, and I assured him that a major metropolitan newspaper seldom hires baseball writers who don't actually follow baseball, and he turned out to be one of the best people I've ever dealt with. I hazard a guess that Dick Bosman hadn't had a woman cover him in high school or the minors.

**Q: There's a big argument over whether the MVP award should go to the player who has the best year or the one who gives his team the biggest boost toward the playoffs. Is BBWAA ever going to clarify that?**

A: No, and I kind of like the ballot the way it is, leaving it up to the individual writers to determine how to quantify a player's importance to his team. I strongly feel it should be the player who gives his team the biggest boost to the postseason, and I rarely vote for an MVP candidate whose team does not go to the postseason, unless it's a really weak crop of candidates from the playoff teams. But the other interpretation — best single season — is a valid one, too. Going through the winners over the years, the voting is usually very sound.

**Q: What about pitchers? Since they have the Cy Young award, shouldn't the MVP be reserved for everyday players?**

A: I don't like restricting things. I would rarely vote for a pitcher for precisely the reason you state — and also because starters pitch once every five days — but there are seasons in which pitchers ARE their teams' MVPs. Dennis Eckersley is a prime example. You could argue there were more valuable players for the A's that year, but for my money, it was Eck. It's hardly ever going to happen, but it's always fun to talk about.

**Q: Internet baseball writers and bloggers don't like that BBWAA membership is required to vote on the major awards and for media access to clubhouses, but the organization mostly only allows employees of traditional media to become members. Is broadening the membership something you're going to look at?**

A: Actually, most clubs will credential Internet outlets and bloggers on an occasional to even regular basis. A BBWAA credential is not the only credential, it is really meant to ensure ease of access on the road so writers don't have to apply for and pick up credentials at every city. The BBWAA also has expanded membership to ESPN.com, Yahoo Sports, CBS Sportsline and FoxSports.com, among others. The membership requirements are reasonable: a full-time commitment to covering baseball and a certain minimum number of full-time and paid employees.

**Q: I can never remember a more depressing time to be an A's fan, with the Rangers stronger at just about every position and no apparent progress on the stadium situation. Is this the winter they finally get approval to go ahead with San Jose?**

A: The A's seem to think an answer is coming soon, but I don't get that impression at all in repeated talks with MLB folks. It's pretty clear they're just stalling at this point. Why? They don't want to tick off one of the Bay Area clubs? Well, someone is going to be ticked either way, and what's happening right now isn't fair to the A's. With no answer, they don't know what to do next. Their spending is on hold, some personnel decisions will be delayed. It seems like MLB has made them wait more than long enough. Dragging it out isn't going to make one team less mad.

If MLB is waiting for assurances that San Jose will work for certain — that the funding is there, the vote will go through, the venue is adequate —well, I'm not sure how they're going to get those assurances. A vote can't happen, for instance, unless there's already an OK for a stadium. It's becoming a snake eating itself: They can't give the A's an answer because they can't get answers to questions that can't be answered unless an OK is given. Sure, that makes sense.

### **Chapman hurls scoreless frame in AFL debut**

### **Reds left-hander strikes out one working out of bullpen for Dogs**

By Danny Wild / MLB.com

Aroldis Chapman was sent to Arizona to work on returning to the starting rotation, but it looks like it will be a slow, methodical process.

Chapman made his brief Arizona Fall League debut -- out of the bullpen -- striking out one in a scoreless third inning in Phoenix's 4-1 win over Salt Lake on Monday.

The hard-throwing Cincinnati southpaw easily worked around a leadoff walk to Tim Wheeler (Rockies), popping up Colorado's Nolan Arenado and striking out Ryan Wheeler (D-backs) to end the inning after Tim Wheeler was thrown out at second. He threw eight of his 16 pitches for strikes and reportedly hit 101 mph with his fastball.

Chapman was slated to potentially start for Phoenix on Monday and again Thursday and Oct. 31 as the Reds aim to transition him back to a starter. Either way, he's expected to see very limited action before getting additional work with a Caribbean League club this winter.

"It's preparation before he goes to Winter ball," Reds general manager Walt Jocketty told MLB.com last week. "He's just getting into pitching shape again, throwing bullpens and things like that."

The 23-year-old went 4-1 with a 3.60 ERA in 54 games out of the Cincinnati bullpen in 2011. He struck out 71, but continued to struggle with command at times, walking 41 batters in 50 innings.

Arenado was thrown out trying to stretch an RBI double in the first that plated Adam Eaton (D-backs) for a 1-0 lead. Phoenix responded with two runs in the third when Anthony Gose (Blue Jays) and Corban Joseph (Yankees) scored on fielder's choice grounders. Joseph's two-run double in the sixth off Parker Frazier (Rockies) put the Dogs up by three.

Oakland's Tyson Ross (1-0) picked up the win after allowing one run on three hits over two innings. Evan Crawford (Blue Jays) earned his first save with 1 2/3 perfect frames.

Salt River starter Andrew Oliver (Tigers) walked a pair and allowed one hit over two scoreless frames.

### **Bobblebelly propels the '209' to No. 1**

By Benjamin Hill / MLB.com

Dallas Braden loves Stockton, and Stockton loves Dallas Braden. Those mutually reciprocated feelings are a big reason why the Stockton Ports' "Dallas Braden Bobblebelly" has won the 2011 MiLB Award as Promotion of the Year.

After winning the "Best Giveaway" category in the semifinals, the Bobblebelly trounced the competition in the finals. The year's only undulating abdomen giveaway item garnered a whopping 59 percent of the vote, nearly thrice that of its closest competitor -- the Eugene Emeralds' Domingo Ayala celebrity appearance. Rounding out the voting with 9 percent each were the Memphis Redbirds' "Organ Donor" theme night and the Fresno Grizzlies' "Taco Truck Throwdown."

For those needing a bit of explanation, Dallas Braden is a native of Stockton and "209" is the city's area code. Shortly after the Oakland A's left-hander tossed a perfect game on Mother's Day 2010, he visited the Ports' Banner Island Ballpark to receive the key to the city in a pregame ceremony. During that triumphant moment, Braden lifted up his shirt and revealed a "209" tattoo emblazoned across his abdomen.

The rest is history.

"We knew we were going to do something Dallas Braden-related [in 2011]," explained Ports director of marketing Jeremy Neisser. "The other option was a double-bobble featuring Dallas hugging his grandmother, Peggy [after pitching the perfect game.] She's just as popular around here as Dallas is."

That option would have required using the uniform of the A's, who declined approval. So the Bobblebelly, it would be -- as long Braden was on board with the idea.

"[Braden] was all for it," Neisser said. "The only thing he asked for was, 'Make sure you give me a six-pack.'"

Keeping that abdominal specification in mind, the Ports turned to Coyote Promotions to create the Bobblebelly. The New York City-based company has established a strong reputation for innovative giveaway items in recent years, the Brooklyn Cyclones' "Angel Pagan Bobblewing" and the Inland Empire 66ers' "Ken Griffey Jr. Bobblearm" among them.

The Bobblebelly was delivered to the team in May. After a significant number of anticipatory Tweets and Facebook updates, the Ports first posted images of the item in early July (about two weeks in advance of the promotion).

"We knew that this was going to be a social media-driven promotion for us, so the philosophy was, 'Let's start where the finish line is going to end up being,'" Neisser said.

In other words, the Ports knew they had a likely "Promotion of the Year" candidate on their hands, and by debuting the item through social media they were preparing fans for the voting campaign that was to follow. In conjunction with this strategy, the team introduced a #promooftheyear Twitter hashtag on its videoboard during the July 17 game.

Such maneuverings are a moot point if the promotion itself fails to excite. And, fortunately for all involved, "Dallas Braden Bobblebelly Night" turned out to be one of the most memorable evenings of the season. Fans started lining up outside Banner Island Ballpark four hours before game time, eager to get their hands on the coveted item. And Braden himself was in attendance, spending nearly the entire game autographing the Bobblebelly for his fellow Stocktonians.

"The line to get him to sign never stopped, but he was really cool and gracious about it," Neisser said.

The goodwill generated during the evening, combined with the Ports' concerted social media campaign, has culminated with the Promotion of the Year honor.

"This recognition is very exciting. It tells us that all of our hard work has paid off," said Neisser. "Stockton has maybe gotten the reputation in recent years that it's not a major creative player in the world of Minor League baseball, but we're letting folks know that we'll be bringing it every year."

So what's in store for 2012?

"We've started to brainstorm; there is some internal pressure," Neisser said. "We've got the crown, so now what?"

### **Oakland A's Q&A: Gil Patterson**

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Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Oct 20, 2011

PHOENIX - The Oakland A's recently completed their 2011 fall Instructional League camp. We caught-up with the A's minor league pitching coordinator Gil Patterson to find out who stood out in camp and more...

*OaklandClubhouse: Cecil Tanner was named the Most Improved Pitcher for the Instructional League camp. He struggled a little today [Saturday], but what did you see from him in camp?*

**Gil Patterson:** He did. He struggled some today, but in general he pitched much better during the Instructional League. I think he's gained a little confidence. I talked to him [after the Saturday outing] that if he gets into a game like that where he's 'ball one, ball two,' instead of saying 'here I go,' he's saying 'oh, here we go again.' So we still have to work on the confidence a little bit more, but there is a very bright light for him at the end of the tunnel.

*OC: Do you have to have him dial down his fastball [which has been clocked as high as 98 MPH in the past] to get him to pitch more under control?*

**GP:** This is what I said to him: 'I will take 94. I won't take 88, but I'll take 94.' That's what I was a little bit disappointed in today. He started to aim it and the velo went down. But from where he was when he first got here until now, there have been big, big steps.

*OC: The Doolittle brothers both looked like they were throwing really well and both seemed healthy.*

**GP:** Yeah. They both had good camps. Sean, in one game about 10 days ago – he had a little bit of a bicep thing – but he was 95 average. Today, he was 91-94 and his brother Ryan was at 91-92. Ryan threw only nine pitches in one inning. Sean had the 17 pitches, but I think one guy had something like a nine-pitch at-bat. I'm very happy with both of their progress.

Sean still needs some more arm speed on his change-up. He slows his arm down a little bit on his slider, but it comes out awfully good.

*OC: Pitch efficiency has always been a strength of Ryan's right?*

**GP:** Always. The biggest obstacles for Ryan the past couple of years is that he has had a couple of break downs [physically]. I think to have him leave camp now and feel so good is going to be a big step in the right direction come next season.

*OC: For Ryan, it was a forearm strain issue this season, right?*

**GP:** It was.

*OC: Speaking of forearm strains, Ian Krol got back on the mound during Instructs. Is he back to where he was before he got hurt?*

**GP:** Not quite. He had a tough year, but like we were talking about with Ryan, Ian is leaving here with no issues with the arm and that's really the main issue. That being said, I think when he gets home and has a regular spring training and then pitches in a regular game, I don't think there will be many bumps in the road for him.

*OC: How is Sonny Gray's change-up coming along?*

**GP:** Very good. He had numerous swings and misses. He used to spin off a lot and have his front knee buckle, but he went a couple of games where he stuck that landing and kept his head right on line. As a matter of fact, we had a bullpen session and said 'stick the landing.' He said, 'but I'm not throwing hard,' so we brought out the gun and it was reading 91. So he's throwing harder than he thinks he is [with those mechanics].

*OC: Is he coming into next season with the weapons you'd like him to have?*

**GP:** You know as well as I do that fastball command is the key. He is getting better and is going to continue to get better. It's not major league command yet. If there is one pitch that you can say might be, it's the breaking ball. He can pretty much throw that in any count. But with the little bit improved delivery, the fastball command is going to get better as well as the change-up. Then the curveball will even get better, believe it or not.

*OC: He wasn't here but James Simmons got a chance to throw a lot out of the bullpen with Stockton this season. It seemed like he'd be humming along and then all of a sudden, there'd be a blow-up inning. What is his next step, do you think?*

**GP:** I'm hoping that with this off-season and then all this time to rest and recover, he'll be improved next season. It was nice to see him pitch without any [physical] set-backs. He can always locate and I'm hoping that maybe he gains a little bit of arm strength when he comes into camp next year. The breaking ball was better. His fastball was 88 and when he first signed with us, it was 90-92. I'm hoping that he can maybe get back to that after having pitched this summer.

*OC: A.J. Griffin had an outstanding first full pro season. What is he working on improving for next year?*

**GP:** In a sense, almost nothing. We talked about locating your fastball and your change-up, and he's tremendous at both. If you had to pick anything, I'd say some improvement on his breaking ball. It's kind of a slow curveball but it has worked for him. And who knows? Maybe a little cutter or slider is in his future.

But right now, the year he had in Iowa and Stockton was extremely good. It's not that he pitched poorly in Midland, but we had to make a move and we brought him back to Stockton. We've liked everything that A.J. has done for us.

*OC: Has anyone stood out in camp that has surprised you?*

**GP:** Blake Treinen has had a good summer and fall. We've been very fortunate with our draft class. Treinen, T.J. Walz and Tanner Peters, who isn't here but he had a tremendous run with Vermont. They also call a kid 'Peanut', Nathan Kilcrease. What a heart. He's got the heart of a lion. Those guys have been great.

Blake Hassebrock was here and so was Robert Gilliam. They are working on their change-ups. It's a credit to them after they both had great seasons to know that maybe this is the next step for them to pitch in Double-A, Triple-A and eventually the big leagues, of course. If they can throw a change-up with the stuff that they have – the fastball and slider – look out.

*OC: Daniel Straily had a really great year as well.*

**GP:** He did. We had numerous guys pitch over 150 innings. Answering the bell is important for us, especially with the starting guys. Straily had a tremendous year.

*OC: Tyson Ross and Anthony Capra are pitching in the Arizona Fall League. I know you've working with both of them a lot on their mechanics. What are you looking for them to do this fall?*

**GP:** Tyson and I just threw about 30 minutes ago here. Ron [Romanick] did a nice job calming down Tyson's hands. Really for him, it's all about getting back on the mound and getting a little more extension out front. And just making sure that he

knows that he's a power pitcher who can sink the ball and can pitch. A power pitcher, not a power thrower. We saw him pitch a few days ago and he had two good innings and today's side session was good, so I'm very encouraged with his progress.

Cap struggled in his first outing. Cap had his bit down here [during the season] when Garvin [Alston, A's minor league rehab pitching coordinator] was an asset to him. When he struggled a little bit in his first game, we said, 'let's not overreact. It's one game.' But we brought him here and had a couple of bullpens. We put up our batting dummy – and I'm not talking about a position player, I'm talking about an actual batting dummy – and Keith [Lieppman, A's farm director] had him throw some pitches with his eyes closed. He threw two strikes over the middle of the plate with his eyes closed. So we told the catcher that with the next pitch, the catcher had to catch it with his eyes closed.

Cap pitched the other day and threw nine pitches in one inning. I'm just encouraged about him. Once he gets that confidence back, he has a tremendous change-up, as we all know. That's why he almost led all of minor league baseball two years ago in strike-outs. Hopefully he'll continue to stay in this upward direction.

*OC: Murphy Smith must have taken a big leap forward to be chosen to start in the AFL.*

**GP:** With the trade of Ethan Hollingsworth, it opened up a spot there. You've already mentioned three or four guys who easily could have gone there. Straily could have gone there, Gilliam and even Hassebrock for that matter. But Murphy had the allotted innings. I believe when this is all said and done, he'll have about 160 innings this year.

*OC: Are Pedro Figueroa and Arnold Leon back on schedule to be pitching at a normal pace next spring?*

**GP:** Yeah, they should be fine. Figgy might have been a little bit ahead of Arnold. When I say that, he let the ball go a little bit more than Arnold did. Both of them were still good. But the most important part is health and both of them finished up in a good spot there.

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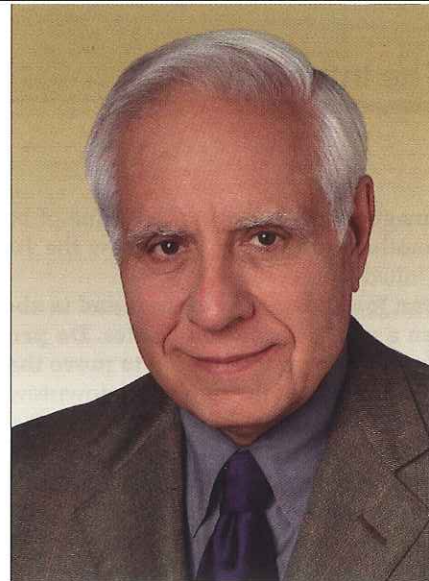
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# Q&A

## Lew Wolff

*The hotel-industry veteran and owner of the Oakland A's awaits word from the league on whether he can build a proposed new stadium in downtown San Jose*

**W**hen real estate developer and hotel magnate Lew Wolff bought the Oakland A's in 2005, he knew that the team needed a new stadium to stay competitive. The Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, built in 1966, is now one of the oldest in the game. But it's been a long road to a new venue. For Wolff, who was a college fraternity brother of MLB Commissioner Bud Selig, the future lies on a downtown site in San Jose, assuming a special committee formed by Selig years ago will recommend the plan. In the meantime, the 76-year-old Wolff has also occupied his time with other sports interests, including ownership of the MLS San Jose Earthquakes.

*In this interview with Jason Gewirtz of SportsTravel, Wolff discusses his stadium plan, the ups and downs of team ownership and challenges facing the travel industry.*

**It's been two years since Commissioner Bud Selig appointed a committee to study the issue of a new stadium for the A's. What has taken so long?**

[Laughs.] I think you're interviewing the wrong person. I don't know. This committee was originally appointed to make sure that we didn't miss any opportunity within the territory we're assigned. It gets a little complicated. There are four two-team markets in baseball—New York, Chicago, L.A./Anaheim, and San Francisco and us. The territory—the term they use is “district”—for the first three I mentioned is one boundary. They share the same exact territory, which is very proper for two-team markets. In our case, through a fluke, in my opinion, the Giants have over twice the population that we do in the district. We only have two counties, Alameda and Contra Costa, and basically the Giants have the rest, which is probably five or six or seven counties. How that happened was very strange, but all we're asking for is to share the district and that decision first has to come through the commissioner, who then would make a recommendation to the other ownership, who would vote whether we could either share the district or move to a specific site that we'd like in San Jose.

**Why is San Jose considered the Giants' territory?**

It's in there because they were assigned Santa Clara County, where San Jose is. That particular county was neither the Giants nor the A's. But the Giants were planning to move to San Jose, so they were going to do it by some type of vote. In order to get the vote, they had to have Santa Clara included in their district. Baseball went to the then-owners of the A's, the Haas family, who agreed, specifi-

cally for the purpose of moving to San Jose. This is going to sound silly to you, but they lost the vote and no one thought to either put the territory back where it was or give it to the A's. So the Giants have been claiming and stamping their feet that the territory they were given for the purpose of moving to San Jose is still their territory no matter what. It's 40 to 50 miles further away from the Giants than we are today. So that's the impasse. We don't have any ruling, so we're waiting for it.

**You and Selig go way back. How hard have you been pressing him?**

There's no way to press the commissioner hard for a decision unless you want to be obnoxious, and that's just not our style. He knows what we want and he's a very contemplative person. But he hasn't made a decision yet and I don't know if our 50-plus year friendship is a factor. The only way this decision should be made is based on one criteria: Is this in the best interest of baseball? And the commissioner is the person who makes that decision. We think it is and, probably, the Giants think it isn't. [Laughs.]

**Would you consider selling the team if you can't get a new stadium?**

I don't have a Plan B. We never threatened to move out of the state or anything. We think that our case is so overwhelmingly to the benefit of the best interest of baseball that we can't

imagine not improving the value of baseball by moving to another community that's now the 10th largest city in the United States.

**San Jose has a new airport and is about to break ground on a new convention center. Do projects like that also factor into your decision to move there?**

I built most of the buildings downtown so I'm prejudiced. I like that area. They have 200 or 300 public and private technology corporations alone. Unfortunately, the demographics over time in Oakland have reduced the number of companies of that nature that help support everything, the arts, baseball, to a very low number. We have nothing against Oakland at all. We just need a new ballpark where we can get revenues that will allow us to compete. Right now we receive over \$30 million in revenue sharing. And frankly we're not interested in receiving that. We'd like to be on our own.

**What's your philosophy on the use of public money for sports facilities?**

The reality in California is forget it. [Laughs.] So this is 100 percent private money, which is another challenge for us. To my knowledge, the only other two baseball ballparks that have been done pretty much privately are San Francisco's beautiful stadium and originally Dodger Stadium, although they had a big land-value benefit there. As for my philosophy, I do a lot of urban redevelopment. I can tell you, and I said this before the world fell apart, the more cookies you take out of the public jar, the sicker you get. So if you could do it with the least amount of public help you're better off, and so is the public.

**When Miami opens its own ballpark next year, Oakland will be the only MLB team that shares a stadium with an NFL team. How much does that hinder your team?**

It's horrible. This will never happen again—that they'll put a baseball and football team in the same venue. It's terrible, and it was a mistake. It even gets a little dangerous for us when the NFL pre-season starts. The Raiders need to have their facility the way they want it. They're good people. But it's a mess.

**The Coliseum has the widest foul area in baseball. If you get the chance to start over from scratch, how close do you want the fans to be to the action?**

I told our baseball staff that I intend to reduce that to about a foot and a half when we get a new ballpark. Our desired stadium is designed to be the closest to the field from any seat of any ballpark in the history of baseball.

**You also own a Major League Soccer team. How familiar were you with the game before you bought in?**

Not very familiar, even though I'm from St. Louis, which I guess is a hotbed of soccer. I didn't notice it. But now I love the game. My business partner John Fisher really enjoys it.

**What caused you to pursue the San Jose Earthquakes?**

I have a philosophy of ready, fire, aim. [Laughs.] The night before, I get a call because the team was abandoning San Jose for Houston. [AEG President and CEO] Tim Leiweke called

and asked if John and I would be interested in a new franchise in San Jose because they were moving out the next day. I said, "Yes." Then Commissioner Don Garber called and we made a transaction there.

**You've been looking to build a soccer-specific stadium in San Jose as well. What hurdles still remain?**

The same hurdles. We have the land tied up near the airport. There was a huge Food Machinery Corporation building on it. We've paid to tear that down. We're sort of taking baby steps toward this thing. We have a design. Again, there's no public money involved, so it makes it more of a challenge. But we're getting closer to it. It's the same story.

**How much time do you spend on your sports teams compared to your other ventures?**

I never comment on timing because I'm in a project kind of business. I'm fairly efficient. I don't like to divide time. When something needs my

time I give it. When it doesn't, I move on to something else.

**You've been selling your luxury hotels recently. You once had 50, now you have less than 10. Why?**

We were never in the hotel business to build a whole huge company. But we were in the business of not to sell unless it was the opportune time to sell.

**Is this an opportune time to be selling?**

For us it is. Other people hope it's an opportune time to buy. [Laughs.] It's hard to be a seller with no buyers. My partner Flip Maritz and myself just completed a sale of the Rosewood Management Company and five hotels. In that particular area with our partners, we've probably returned four times the equity. That's more than enough. We still have a few hotels left.

**How do you determine whether something is a good investment, whether it's sports, real estate or hotels?**

I'm at somewhat of an advanced age so if I'm going to have partners, I want to know who they are, and I want to have some fun with the stuff. As far as having a tight criteria on investment, even though I have an MBA degree, I don't think that way a lot, even though I have people around me, thank goodness, that do. I think in every transaction, especially sports, there's a deal within a deal within a deal. It opens up a lot of doors that you wouldn't normally have if you owned a meat-packing plant.

**Were you a sports fan before you started owning teams?**

I'm a sports fan, but I'm not an encyclopedia. Some of the baseball owners like [the White Sox's] Jerry Reinsdorf and Bud Selig can tell you who was pitching or warming up in 1947 on a certain date. I like actually playing the sport more than I like watching it.

**What's the most challenging part of team ownership?**

The most challenging part is really just getting this stadium decision. The rest of it's fairly, I won't say simple, but it's fun. Bud always said to me, and I think to the vast majority of owners, that we're in a partnership. I like to believe we're a partnership—very competitive partners—but I think he likes to see that owners put baseball first and their team a very close second. And I hope we're trying to do that. ■

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