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By John Hickey, Oakland Tribune

http://www.insidebayarea.com/athletics/ci_25386926/oakland-incorporate-yoga-into-their-daily-routine

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by John Hickey, Oakland Tribune

<http://www.ibabuzz.com/athletics/>

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

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Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

<http://www.sfgate.com/athletics/article/A-s-Tommy-Milone-pitches-6-innings-in-5336468.php>

A's pitching still could be best in West

Bruce Jenkins, San Francisco Chronicle

<http://www.sfgate.com/athletics/jenkins/article/A-s-pitching-still-could-be-best-in-West-5336369.php>

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By Cash Kruth / MLB.com

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By Jane Lee / MLB.com

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By Richard Justice / MLB.com

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Around the AL West: Rangers rotation still in question

By Joe Stiglich, csnbayarea.com

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JWEEKLY.COM

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by Andy Altman-Ohr, J Weekly

<http://www.jweekly.com/article/full/71157/one-two-three-jewish-players-with-oakland-as-this-spring/>

SPORTS ON EARTH

All Figured Out

BY Howard Megdal

<http://www.sportsonearth.com/article/69662122/oakland-as-josh-donaldson-explains-breakout-season>

SI.COM

MLB 2014: West teams chase low-budget Athletics

<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2014/baseball/mlb/wires/03/20/2010.ap.bba.al.preview.2208/>

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MAGAZINE

A Happy Homecoming
for Oakland A's Manager

Bob Melvin





A Happy Homecoming for Oakland A's Manager

Bob Melvin

His phone rang. "Hello Bob, this is Billy Beane." That's how it all started ... which leads us to this article and the conversation I would have with Bob Melvin, the Manager of the Oakland A's. Two and a half years later, the same phone rang again; however, this time it went like this: "Hello Bob, this is Ken Packer." Billy Beane knew and so did I. As interesting as that conversation was between the two of them, it certainly was between the two of us, as well. I wish you could have been with me. Yes, it was that great.

Bob Melvin is 52 years old. He is a Silicon Valley / Bay Area native, born in Palo Alto, who went to Menlo Atherton High School, and then on to UC Berkeley. I believe in excellence in leadership ... performing at a higher level than expected with what you have. He is someone who is definitely a player's coach, a positive role model, and totally authentic. He is someone who is always so well-prepared, such a great communicator and quietly inspiring. He knows it's about the team, where everyone knows their role, what's expected of them and how they are doing. And perhaps above all else, they are all having fun playing together as one. Yes, sounds like Bob Melvin and a Bob Melvin managed team.

The Oakland A's is not your typical team; nor, I might add, is Bob Melvin your typical

manager. When I interviewed Lew Wolff, the owner of the Oakland A's, following the 2012 Season, as the 2013 Season was about to begin, there was rightfully a real sense of excitement coming off the A's being crowned the Western Division Champions. Lew was telling me that they were indeed very happy with their "new" manager, who they then had for just a little more than a year. Bob Melvin, he was the most organized person he said he had ever seen, and that he knew Bob was the guy they wanted to run their team.

At that time, Bob had just completed his first full season as manager of the A's, leading the team from a 74-88 record the year before in 2011, to an exciting turnaround season and record of 94-68 in 2012. In just his first full season as Manager of the A's, Bob won the

American League very prestigious Manager of the Year Award. The Manager of the Year Award is an honor given annually since 1983 to “The Best Managers” in each the American League and the National League. The selected winners are voted on by 28 members of the Baseball Writers Association of America.

It is not easy to win this coveted award. Only one other Oakland A’s Manager has been so honored and that was Tony LaRussa, who had won it twice while wearing an A’s uniform, once in 1998 and again in 1992.

What’s more, this was the second time Bob has won the coveted Manager of the Year Award, as he also had won once before, in 2007, being selected the National League Manager of the Year while managing the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Bob, therefore, became only the sixth manager to have won this coveted award in both the National and the American Leagues ... The others are legendary: Bobby Cox, Tony La Russa, Jim Leyland, Lou Piniella and Davey Johnson. (In addition to the two he won while with the A’s, Tony La Russa had also won one with the Chicago White Sox in 1983 in the AL and also with the St. Louis Cardinals in 2002 in the NL). Tony LaRussa and Bobby Cox have won the most, having won four times. Dusty Baker, Jim Leyland and Lou Pinella have won three. Bob Melvin twice.

Last year, 2013, the A’s again won their second consecutive AL Western Division Crown, this time with a record of 96-66, two games better than the amazing year before. The previous five years before Bob’s first full

season with the A’s, they had won 76-75-75-81-74 games.

Now, they are not looking back, but looking forward. They are excited and optimistic about keeping the wonderful success and winning ways of these past two seasons continuing. It’s a hard thing to do to maintain back-to-back winning years, let alone division championship teams. In 2012: 94 wins and then in 2013: 96 wins. This year, in 2014? Many experts think that maybe the Amazing A’s can top an awesome 100 wins, despite ...

The thing that makes this success truly amazing, comparatively-speaking, is that



Bob Melvin meets with Oakland A’s General Manager Billy Beane

the A’s have one of the lowest team salaries in baseball (due in great part for their need for a new stadium which would bring in more revenue, and that there also are many other teams with large, much larger TV revenue-generating markets). To give an example, in 2013, with the team competitive salaries ... No. 1 was the New York Yankees at \$228,835,490 ... No. 2 The Los Angeles Dodgers at \$216,597,577 ... No. 6 The San Francisco Giants \$140,264,334 and No.

27 The Oakland A’s at \$60,664,500. That’s quite a difference, and yet, the A’s have the best record these past two years and one of the lowest payrolls in all of baseball. How is that possible? An important part of this, a big reason for this, has been the guidance on the field under the A’s Manager, Bob Melvin, and the great strategy of working well together in unison behind the scenes with the A’s Owner Lew Wolff, General Manager Billy Beane and President Mike Crowley. It’s been and is a very exciting and winning formula.

I wanted to start this article by saying that Bob is one of the nicest, most humble and unassuming people you will ever meet. Talking with him, he would much prefer and truly take delight if talking about the team and players. His answers to my questions were so well thought out and articulate. He is a great student of the game, his knowledge is sharp and he genuinely cares about everyone. Beyond a doubt, he is a player’s manager. As he said, his players all know his door is always open, plus they have time on the field before every game when they can talk. The relationships are good and caring and supportive of one another. The pie in the face, which has become an A’s tradition, is “fun” and shows how the team is relaxed playing as a Team and enjoying playing on all cylinders. Bob used the word “comfortable” a lot. Especially with Lew Wolff, who Bob said, “has a special ability of making people feel comfortable”. It seems like no matter who you ask, everyone is a good fit. They work together and get along together really well.

Bob’s career started young. He enjoyed playing all sports depending on the season. He would enjoy playing catch in the backyard growing up and then at nine years old, he began playing Little League. It wasn’t until his junior year at Menlo Atherton, and then especially his senior year, did he realize he was good and had an opportunity of playing professional baseball. In his senior year, he was drafted by the Baltimore Orioles. His choice, he opted instead to go to college. He

felt it would be smart to mature more as a player and as a person (being just 18 and most likely being far from home), he would not be THAT good, he thought, and would be away totally on his own. Looking back, Bob added, “it turned out to be a great choice”.

He chose Cal Berkeley. They had a good baseball program and it was close to home. He was the only freshman on the team that year. The catcher was a senior and played most of the time. Bob didn’t play that much that year; he said, however, that he learned so much, just the experience of being there, playing with the team and learning from everyone, it was a great year. That year, in fact, was a special year ... the team went to the NCAA World Series and finished 3rd out of the eight best teams in the country. I asked: Any great players on the team? His reply: “We were a great team that played very well together.” Sounded familiar. Bob would say later on that a team cannot win with two or three players, but “it’s a team game”. Everyone has their role and everyone is doing their part ... you will see this and hear this more than often from Bob.

That year, Bob got drafted by the Detroit Tigers. At the ripe young age of 19, Bob went for a year to play professional baseball in Macon, GA. Bob clarified for me: “It was professional baseball, not yet the major leagues”. When did you feel like you really made it then, I asked? “My entire career, actually, you can’t be complacent, there were many great ball players always after your job. Even when winning, you can’t allow yourselves to let down or get complacent. After two Division Championships in a row ... that principle still applies as ever.”

I asked Bob about great, memorable experiences. “There were many”, he said, with a smile in his voice. I got a kick out of when he said, when he came up to play in the Major Leagues, this feeling came over him that “he made it!” So I asked, what was like, then, being behind the plate? “There is still the fan in you”, he said, “having grown up loving the

game and the players. As a young catcher, up steps the likes of a Reggie Jackson, and part of you wants to ask for his autograph". He had grown up a fan of the game, and being young and new to the scene, it was what he called an 'awe' factor like a movie coming to life ... to which, he quickly added, he feels players today have a better control of.

What do you love most about the game and what you do, I asked Bob. He responded by saying how he loves the competition. He loves the strategy that's involved, the going over strategy every morning before the next game.

What is important to Bob? Clearly, it's Family. He said how he would spend so much time being away at the ballpark, usually until nearly midnight for a night game when at home, and half the season on the road ... for eight months. So, undeniably, he loves to spend time with his family as much as possible. Exercise is important to Bob, as well. Every day, he said. Something different every day. He was emphatic about it. He didn't say it, but I think it also sends a message to his players. It's a long season ... it shows in performance and it seems to also pay dividends. He is fit, in great condition, both physically and mentally. I think 'Focused' would be a fitting word, too. So would 'Passionate' ... about the game ... and also about his players ... and the whole picture as a Team, like his Family.

We talked some more about the working arrangement and how it is such a great fit. It's a play on words, but it's true. It's funny (not in a funny sense), all four members are truly into their daily workout which they enjoy - Bob, Billy, Mike and Lew, himself, too. 5AM, even after a night game, Lew will be on the elliptical. During the game, Billy would often be in the clubhouse riding the bike while following the game. They are fit and they are focused.

Bob has a meeting with Billy every day, on the road sometimes more. Billy also has a group of confidants. Bob said: it's not about

agreeing, that they all agree to disagree. Billy hears it all and then makes the ultimate decisions. Again, Lew Wolff makes Bob feel comfortable. He has a knack of being there, being present, and knows what to say at the right times. Mike Crowley, too, the President, complements the work of all of them, where they all get along extremely well ... and the moves made these past two years have been very good ones. And they are all excited and optimistic and looking forward to what will now be Bob's third season with the A's.

I asked Bob, as I have wondered, why is it so many great managers have been catchers? "There's a good reason for that. The catcher is the one who has the ongoing connection throughout the game with the manager. It's as if the catcher is managing on the field." Bob Melvin, Bruce Bochy, Tony La Russa, Mike Metheny, Bob Brenly, Joe Torre, Yogi Berra, Mike Scioscia, the great A's announcer, Ray Fosse, too, all being so knowledgeable, to name just a few.

Ballparks, what are your favorite ballparks? Bob joked: All the road ballparks. (OK, maybe not). He did say the correct, or more PC, answer would be the older ballparks, there's a great feel to them: Fenway, old Yankee Stadium, Wrigley Field.

Baseball relationships? It's been and is a big part of Bob's love of the game. Bob Brenly is a very close friend. They were together those years with the Giants, Bob Melvin being the back-up catcher to Bob Brenly. BB managed the Diamondbacks and brought in his friend BM to be the bench coach. Joyfully, they won the World Series. They are best of friends to this very day and always will be.

When Bob Brenly retired to become a very successful TV commentator, Bob Melvin became the Diamondback's manager. They won the NL West and Bob won his first Manager of the Year Award. That Diamondback team that won the World Series he said was truly special ... a number of players were near the end of their careers



Bob Melvin meets with Oakland A's Owner Lew Wolff

and this would be their last chance: people like Randy Johnson, Curt Schilling and Mark Grace.

As fans, we don't readily realize how in baseball, W-L records often swing as players come and go ... and circumstances change. Each year may be a new and different roster, or players get older (or replacements younger) and pitching, well, you'll never know for sure one year to the next. That is why constant winning is an art form.

Which leads to the next question: What special moments in particular? Bob used the word 'surreal' a number of times. For example, when he took the field for his first Major League game ... as a Detroit Tiger ... in a Major League uniform. Also, when he returned home to play for his San Francisco Giants (the team he grew up with) ... When in Arizona and they won the World Series in Game 7 beating the New York Yankees ... and he also emphasized how in 2012 "when our Oakland A's fans stood and cheered so loud and so long after we had just been defeated in the playoffs by Detroit. The Tigers wanted to celebrate on our field ... and our fans wouldn't let them. That ovation was so memorable, it

meant so much to me (and to all of us), it is something that I (and we) will never forget!"

Who inspired him, to this very day? It was Vince Lombardi. He would come visit Bob's grandfather - who was the team ballboy and mascot for the Acme Packers and they were lifelong friends. Bob remembers playing catch with him when he was a young child and learning so much from him.

Goals? How do you figure goals? "There are long term goals, that is to win the World Series. But there are mid-range goals and immediate goals. We discuss what the expectations are and series-by-series, game-by-game, even batter by batter, pitch by pitch. This is part of

the strategy and the platooning." This is how Bob got his nickname: "The Mad Scientist". It was given to him by his friend Mark Grace in 2007, in Arizona, the year Bob won NL Manager of the Year. "It would be because of his mental approach to the game ... and also the inevitable mix of line ups."

What's it like after a game, I asked. "It's harder after a loss," Bob would say. "It's nicer after a win ... but every day, it's a fresh new day at the park, one where we believe we can and will win."

There are indeed many who would say Bob Melvin is a perfect fit for the A's. There are many GOOD reasons why. I hung up my phone after our talk. I shook my head, joyfully. That was a great experience. I hope through this article you could enjoy it, as I have. Thank you, Bob Melvin, Team and Organization. These past two years have been great. Bob Melvin's 3rd Season is now here. All eyes are upon Oakland and to see what they will do. The A's are prepared. They are excited ... and exciting.