



# OAKLAND ATHLETICS

## Media Release

Oakland Athletics Baseball Company • 7000 Coliseum Way • Oakland, CA 94621  
510-638-4900 • Public Relations Facsimile 510-562-1633 • [www.oaklandathletics.com](http://www.oaklandathletics.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### Josh Willingham Recipient of Jim "Catfish" Hunter Award Award is Given Annually to A's Player in Memory of Hall of Fame Pitcher

**OAKLAND, Calif.** –Josh Willingham has been named the recipient of the 2011 Jim "Catfish" Hunter Award, which honors an A's player whose play on the field and conduct in the clubhouse best exemplifies the courageous, competitive and inspirational spirit demonstrated by the late Hall of Fame pitcher. The award is voted upon by Oakland A's players, coaches and staff.

Willingham, acquired in an off-season trade with the Washington Nationals, has enjoyed arguably the most productive season of his eight-year Major League career. The 32-year-old slugger leads the A's in home runs (27) and RBI (92)—both personal career bests—and has lashed out a team-leading 52 extra-base hits and .486 slugging percentage while hitting .254 (116-for-457) in 127 games. His 92 RBI are the most by an A's team leader since Frank Thomas had 114 in 2006.

The 6-2, 215-pound Alabama native has been one of the American League's hitting stars in the second half of the 2011 season. Since the All-Star Break, he is tied for third in home runs (16) and ranks sixth in RBI (48), and is batting .382 (13-for-34) with four homers and 10 RBI during his last 10 games. Oakland's left fielder has been particularly good in the clutch this season, hitting .320 (41-for-128) with runners in scoring position.

Willingham has now been recognized with three team honors this season, having previously been named the recipient of the 2011 Dave Stewart Community Service Award and the A's nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award.

The annual award, which was established in 2004, is named after Jim "Catfish" Hunter, a native of Hertford, N.C who posted a 224-166 record and 3.26 ERA during 15 Major League seasons with the Kansas City/Oakland Athletics and New York Yankees. He holds Oakland's all-time career mark for wins (131) and won 20 or more games in five consecutive seasons (1971-75). In 1974, he won the American League's Cy Young Award after winning a career-high 25 games.

"Catfish" earned five World Series rings during his career and was 4-0 with one save in seven World Series appearances with the A's. An eight-time All-Star, he made his Major League debut in 1965 with the Kansas City Athletics and did not miss a start until the 1977 season. Inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1987, Hunter is one of five Oakland players to have had his number retired, along with Rollie Fingers, Reggie Jackson, Dennis Eckersley and Rickey Henderson.

Hunter was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease) in September of 1998 and died of complications from the disease on Sept. 9, 1999 at the age of 53. Previous winners of the Jim "Catfish" Hunter Award include Tim Hudson (2004), Mark Ellis (2005, 2007), Jason Kendall (2006), Mike Sweeney (2008), Kurt Suzuki (2009) and Ben Sheets (2010).

Willingham will receive the Catfish Hunter Award in an on-field presentation prior to tomorrow night's game against the Rangers.

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**Contact:** Bob Rose, Director of Public Relations  
(510) 563-2380; [brose@oaklandathletics.com](mailto:brose@oaklandathletics.com)

