

A's News Clips, Friday, October 7, 2011

Moraga's Dan Rodowicz, the new house organ for the A's

By Lou Fancher, Oakland Tribune

The Oakland A's have a new player -- Dan "Fingers" Rodowicz.

He makes the fans cheer, as they do for than Josh Willingham rounding third, or for a blazing "strike three!" call for Andrew Bailey. But they've never seen "Fingers" touch a bat or ball.

That's because he's the new/old-fashioned organist, jamming on a Yamaha Tyros4, high above the field.

"The A's have been interested in adding a "live" organ during games for three years but weren't able to squeeze the cost of the instrument and the organist in the budget," explained Troy Smith, Senior Director of in-stadium entertainment.

Dick Callahan, the A's public address announcer, knew his neighbor Rodowicz was the western regional manager for Yamaha Corp., and an excellent keyboardist. He suggested Smith approach Rodowicz about playing at the games. Soon, a matchup was created.

Rodowicz, a Philadelphia native, moved from Delaware to Moraga in 2004 to end three years of bicoastal romance by getting married. "We met at a conference: she thought I was a cable guy," he said. He is thrilled to be in the ballpark.

"When I moved here, to a city with two ball teams, well, seeing that the A's began in Philadelphia where I grew up, it was natural to be an A's fan," he explained.

With a career that includes 15 years at Yamaha, teaching stints, church music directorships and a gold record (he played on four songs on the 1987 LaVert album "The Big Throwdown"), Rodowicz loves the new gig.

For purists who may remember old pipe organs, there's satisfaction in how far electronics have progressed. The Tyros4 has a pure, authentic sound, but it's lightweight, less prone to breakdown and plays in real time.

Rodowicz opens every game with "It's a Beautiful Day for a Ball Game," then mixes it up with contemporary music and baseball standards. The list includes everything from Katy Perry and the Black Eyed Peas to chargers, and classic tunes like "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" and "Zorba."

"That's a little Greek ditty we do whenever the opposing catcher goes out to talk to the pitcher. I go faster and faster and faster," he said, a little competitive fire showing in his eyes.

It's spontaneous, and fun and live, which is the whole point.

"People (applaud) when Dan is introduced, clap along when he plays a tune, and yell "charge" at just the right time," Smith said. "I can't claim that we've sold more tickets or hot dogs, but I am certain that fans have a lot of fun when Dan is playing."

Rodowicz is serious about major league rules -- no music when that batter steps into the box -- but the atmosphere in the sound booth is light, even jovial, during a game.

"Want me to play a little 'Tarantella' when he gets on?" he asked the sound engineer, as Scott Sizemore stepped up to the plate.

A few minutes later, it was Bon Jovi's "Livin' on a Prayer" to get through a rough inning.

Rodowicz has free reign in selecting the music, but follows a carefully timed script laid out by Smith. But he's also in tune with the fans.

"They like 'Let's Go Oakland!' as much as I'll play it," he said.

Seeing himself up on the Diamond Vision screen is intimidating.

"It's a little like watching a Godzilla movie," he joked. "The other night, when the lights went out and we had a game delay, they had me on the big screen, playing for 15 minutes!"

Although he hasn't made headlines in the Bay Area, Rodowicz did land on the front page of a newspaper sports section long ago.

"I grew up as a Phillies fan. My dad used to get tickets right next to the Phillies' dugout. At one game, I was 8 years old and had a black eye. (Pitcher) Steve Carlton was new that year and he saw me with that black eye and threw a ball from the pitchers' mound. I caught it in my mitt," Rodowicz remembered, proudly.

The next day, he and his black eye appeared on the front page of the Philadelphia Bulletin. When Steve Carlton was later inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, Rodowicz had the four-time Cy Young winner sign both the newspaper and the ball.

Smith said the A's are pleased with fan response to the live music. They plan to add more features, like "Pick Three," where fans make noise to pick a favorite tune, and to expand theme nights, like the recent Star Wars fireworks extravaganza.

For the A's, it's marketing. But for the Rodowicz and the fans, it's a chance to return to baseball's golden years. It's a time to forget the stock market, call in sick, snarf down a dog, and root, root, root for the home team.

Holy Toledo: King again a finalist for Frick Award

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Legendary A's announcer Bill King has once again been named one of 10 finalists for the Ford C. Frick Award, marking the fifth time he has been included on the final ballot.

Fans of the Bay Area great are hoping it's the last time, too, as his selection would instead ensure a permanent place in Cooperstown. The winner will be announced on Dec. 6 at the Winter Meetings.

Final voting for the award, presented annually since 1978 for excellence in baseball broadcasting, will be conducted by a 20-member electorate, comprised of the 15 living recipients of the honor, as well as five broadcast historians.

Before King's passing at the age of 78 in 2005, the revered voice broadcast A's games for 25 seasons. He started during the "Billy Ball" era, continued through the "Bash Brothers" days -- which included three consecutive A's World Series appearances -- and concluded with the "Big Three" years, highlighted by the record 20-game win streak and four straight playoff runs in the early 2000s.

"The depth of knowledge, the passion, the crisp description, the attention to detail, the command of language -- Bill was a master, like Mozart or a Rembrandt behind a microphone," said Ken Korach, the current voice of A's baseball.

King, who would have been 84 on Thursday, is joined on the ballot by Skip Caray, Rene Cardenas, Tom Cheek, Ken Coleman, Jacques Doucet, Tim McCarver, Graham McNamee, Eric Nadel and Mike Shannon.

King's versatility a bonus, not a knock

Mychael Urban, csn.com, October 6, 2011, 10:31 am

The late, great Bill King is again a finalist for the Ford C. Frick Award, given annually by the National Baseball Hall of Fame to a standout broadcaster, and one of the knocks against him during his previous fruitless appearances on the 10-man ballot is that he wasn't a "baseball-only" voice.

Absolute garbage. If anything, the fact that King distinguished himself as one of baseball's all-time broadcasting greats during a career that included long stints as the radio voice of the NBA's Warriors and the NFL's Raiders should *bolster* his standing.

How so? Think about it. Any hall of fame's primary objective is to reward greatness, and if being a legend in not just baseball but in America's two other major sports doesn't make King a legend among legends, something's wrong with the system.

And by the way, even if King had not been such a rich and wondrous a part of so many lives while working for the Warriors and Raiders, he'd *still* be Cooperstown-worthy.

One of the highlights of "Moneyball" -- the movie version -- is being able to again hear some of King's great calls. They bring goosebumps.

Another knock, we hear, is that King eschewed television work. Again, garbage. That was a personal choice of King's; he could have done all the TV he wanted, but he loved radio too much. He didn't want to conform to the cookie-cutter look of TV men of his day. Are conviction and principles not qualities that should be rewarded at every turn?

Some say baseball was King's third-best sport, but that's a totally subjective argument. What's not subjective is this: King was phenomenal at calling baseball -- as he was at basketball and football -- and baseball should give him his due.

Versatility as a knock is a horrible notion. More horrible still is that King isn't in the basketball or football hall of fames, either.

Baseball has a chance to blaze a trail. If King gets in, perhaps the shrines in Canton (football) and Springfield (basketball) follow suit.

He belongs in all three.

King would have turned 84 years old on Thursday.

Aguilar's offense lifts Phoenix to win

Indians prospect homers for second straight game, plates four

By David Heck / Special to MLB.com

Jesus Aguilar hit a home run so hard Thursday that at first, he didn't even know where it went -- he just knew it was gone from the outfielders' reactions.

"I put a good swing on the ball and I didn't see it, so I just started running," Aguilar said through teammate Roberto Perez, who translated for him. "When I touched first base, I looked at the center fielder (Logan Schafer) and he was just standing there."

The Indians first base prospect finished the game 3-for-3, going deep for the second straight game, and knocking in four runs as the Phoenix Desert Dogs defeated the Peoria Javelinas, 10-4, in the Arizona Fall League.

Signed as a non-drafted free agent in 2007, Aguilar hit .284 with 23 homers and 82 RBIs in 126 games between Class A Lake County and Class A Advanced Kinston this season.

In addition to his homer, the 21-year-old first baseman doubled twice, walked twice and scored three runs. He is 5-for-7 in two Arizona Fall League games so far, with all of his hits going for extra bases.

"I feel good right now at the plate," Aguilar said. "I just came down [to Arizona] not trying to do too much at the plate. ... All my at-bats, I'm just trying to get a good pitch to hit."

Fellow Cleveland prospect Tim Fedroff also contributed offensively, going 3-for-4 with two doubles, two RBIs and two runs. [Top Athletics prospect](#) Grant Green and [No. 2 Blue Jays prospect](#) Anthony Gose each chipped in RBI doubles.

Starter T.J. McFarland, another Indians farmhand, earned the win by allowing just two hits over three shutout innings.

His opponent, Tyler Lyons (Cardinals), was saddled with the loss after surrendering one run on three hits in three frames.

Asked about how it feels to be back playing baseball, Aguilar kept his response like his approach -- simple.

"I'm glad to be here with the best prospects," he said. "I'm just glad to be here and every day is a chance to learn more."

Green's blast powers Desert Dogs' rout

Perez, Gose, Puckett also go deep in 10-4 romp over Sox

By David Heck / Special to MLB.com

Grant Green was hoping he wouldn't be back in the Arizona Fall League this year. Now that he is, he's making the most of it.

The Athletics' **No. 1 prospect** smacked a three-run homer and scored twice Wednesday, powering the Phoenix Desert Dogs to a 10-4 triumph over the Mesa Solar Sox.

"It feels good," Green said. "Workouts were a nice way to start out and now you're back doing something you love to do. We're getting back into that grind."

The 13th overall pick in the 2009 Draft is coming off a solid season in which he was a Texas League All-Star and earned a trip to the All-Star Futures Game in Arizona. Green batted .291 with nine homers, 33 doubles and 62 RBIs at Double-A Midland before the A's sent him to the AFL for the second year in a row.

Drafted as a shortstop, the 24-year-old University of Southern California product moved to center field midway through the season. That played a big role in his return to Arizona, where the Desert Dogs are managed by former big league outfielder Todd Steverson.

"That's pretty much the reason I'm playing," Green said. "It's kind of the reason I'm here, to get more reps and to work with [Steverson]."

Phoenix and Mesa traded leadoff homers in the first -- Anthony Gose (Blue Jays) and Robbie Grossman (Pirates) both went deep for the second straight day, knotting the game at 1-1. The Solar Sox took their only lead an inning later as Michael Blanke (White Sox) singled home Junior Lake (Cubs).

The Desert Dogs scored five times in the sixth and four in the seventh, aided by homers from Green, Roberto Perez (Indians) and Cody Puckett (Reds). Lake went deep in the eighth to cap the scoring for the Solar Sox.

"The past couple days, the wind has been blowing out a bit," Green said. "Some would have gone out even without the wind. Gose's first-inning, first-pitch homer -- that was gone either way."

Phoenix starter Tyson Ross (A's) yielded two runs on four hits over two innings before Yankees farmhand Dan Burawa allowed a run over 1 2/3 frames to record the win.

Reliever Nevin Griffith (White Sox) surrendered five runs and recorded only two outs in the sixth to take the loss. Solar Sox starter Terry Doyle (White Sox) left with the lead after giving up one run over 3 2/3 innings.

As for the rest of the Fall League season, Green said he is approaching his second stint with Phoenix as a learning opportunity.

"I hoped I wasn't going to be coming back, but now that I am, I'm going to learn as much as I can," he said. "Hopefully, everything goes well next year."

Oakland A's GM Billy Beane, Post-Moneyball, Visits Athletics Nation Part III

by [Tyler Bleszinski](#), Athletics Nation, 10/7/2011

Yesterday you had [part 2 of AN's exclusive interview with Billy Beane](#). Wednesday [you had part 1](#). Today the interview with Beane concludes. I want to thank Billy for sitting down and chatting with me for such a long period of time the Monday after Moneyball was released. I hope you really enjoyed it as much as I enjoyed conducting the interview.

Tyler Bleszinski: You have been a GM for 14 years now, how has your job changed since it first started?

Billy Beane: Well it's gotten more and more difficult. I don't think the job itself has gotten more difficult, but I just think our situation has gotten more difficult. I mean it was a challenge 10 years ago, it's more so of a challenge now. And the reasons are well-documented. And so, I think there are a lot of bright GMs in the game. I think the position itself has been filled by a great group of young intelligent, progressive GMs. And the guys who have been doing it a long time have lasted because they're very good. So you've got 30 teams that are by and large at some level pretty well-run and there aren't too many

soft spots, so to speak. It's really become a meritocracy and I think that's ultimately good for the game. So from that sense it's intellectually far more competitive than I think 15-20 years ago.

TB: You say how tough it is and obviously a lot of it has to do with the market that you're in. Basically, it seems to me like the A's almost need to reinvent themselves year in and year out, or even moment-to-moment to try and be competitive with some of the other teams and what they're spending out there. In thinking that way, how much would a job like the Chicago Cubs GM job appeal to you?

BB: Obviously I've been asked about that the last couple of weeks because someone writes it. To respond to it would be both presumptuous and arrogant. And, having been a GM a long time, I've had these questions and the best way that I can answer them is not to answer them because it's really coming from speculation from somebody else. I mean the fact of the matter is I love this franchise. I've always loved this franchise and I have a lot of emotion invested in it and I'd like to see this thing through. And this is the job I'm happy with despite its challenges, and I expect to continue to be so going forward. When someone writes something, I don't think that you have an obligation to answer it because when you start answering it, you start believing what a third party said, which is arrogant.

TB: You turned down the Red Sox years ago and I've actually had Cubs people ask me if I think you would leave now, because they think that I have some idea what your level of frustration is. Basically I tell them that obviously everyone is extremely frustrated with the stadium situation. If it was to ever drive Billy to leave the A's, because he didn't leave the team back in 2003, I don't really see it, unless the stadium situation seems that hopeless, then that would be the only way I would see you leaving.

BB: Nobody wants to be in a situation that you feel is hopeless. The hope we have right now is that we'll get an answer and get a new venue. If you lose that hope, at that point you've got to ask yourself the question again. But our hope right now is that we'll get a decision, and with the decision comes a new venue.

TB: I know you're a very meticulous person when it comes to planning, thinking about timelines and whatnot. Do you have a deadline in your own head by which you want an answer by so you can figure out your own future and where you want to go? I mean, you don't have to give me what the deadline is.

BB: As soon as that hope is gone, I think we all sort of probably at that point would start reassessing everything. But to say that I actually have or that there is a specific deadline, I don't have that. As long as there is some hope, then it's easy to continue to get excited. But as soon as that hope gets taken away, you would have to ask me then. But I don't think I have a specific date or anything like that. Because I don't think you can afford to do that in this job. I think the idea that you got one foot in and one foot out, that's not going to work and that's not the type of person I am anyway.

TB: One of the themes of the movie obviously is you feeling a sense of loyalty to the A's and wanting to see this thing through to the end. Is that something that motivates you on a day-to-day basis, and sort of seeing the A's get to the pinnacle of where you want them to be?

BB: Yeah, and it's not so much for my own personal glory, it's as much for the people around me. I think people talk about winning the world championship or achieving things, even achieving things such as the playoffs. The most satisfying part about that is not what it does for you personally, but what it does for the people around you, you know. And the people around me are people I have been very, very close to and think very highly of for the past two decades. And I think I get as much fulfillment out of seeing the esprit de corps that comes with those victories, whether it be making the playoffs or I'm sure some people would tell you, would mean winning the world championship or getting into the World Series. So, I've been very fortunate myself. I have had a lot of great things come my way. But it is really nice to see how it benefits everyone around you and not just the people in the organization, but the people who come and watch the games as well. There's a certain amount of civic pride that comes with your team winning, and that's always something I get a lot of fulfillment from.

TB: Obviously this is still speculation but would you feel like you were leaving a job left incomplete if you were to leave the team? That's something that factors big into a decision like that, right?

BB: I've heard that form of a question before. I've never viewed things that way. I think at that point it's a different way of saying validation, which I don't see that as being a part of any of my decision-making. I think what you want to do if you ever leave, like retirement or something, if I ever retired, my idea in retiring would be to leave something bigger and better than when I took over. Something that sustains itself for a long time so that the next generation of fans and people around us, are taking something that you built up over years, and either continued it or made it better. That sort of drives me. Not creating a year, but creating an era. But as far as any sort of lack of fulfilling certain things, I don't quite view it that way. I don't necessarily view it as validating, like hey, this validates you. It just sounds too simple for me and that's not something that drives me. That's why the beauty of having a young team, the beauty of having a business plan is to be building something that's around for a long time. Once again, an era is more important to me than a single year.

TB: Do you feel like, I mean, we've talked about the offense and 2012 depending on what happens with the stadium situation and whatnot, but you have made some additions this year of young guys who can be kind of longer-term solutions than some of the free agents, the Willingham's, Crisp, Matsui, but you've added somebody like Brandon Allen, and you've got Jemile Weeks, and Scott Sizemore, just to name a few guys on the infield. How do you feel about each one of them and their prospects being kind of longer-term solutions for those holes in your lineup?

BB: Well, I think you don't know until a couple of years play out. First of all, we needed to add those guys. I think specifically if you look at the potential free agents that are leaving, probably our biggest area of need is going to be the outfield. As it relates to the infield, I think the guys that are here have a chance to be good major league players for a long time. When you mention all those guys, Brandon, Weeks, Penny (Cliff Pennington) - I think Penny has had a great second half, and then Sizemore as well. I think catching, I feel very comfortable with our catching situation long term. And I do like our pitching, which really gets down to the outfield. And because of the possible losses of the guys that are free agents, it is an area of concern and something hopefully with guys like Michael Choice and Grant Green, hopefully those are a couple of guys to fill that. Jermaine Mitchell is a guy that we think very, very highly of. He's a great talent who really put it together this year at the level that we had always hoped he would. The Texas Rangers have done a tremendous job investing in their scouting and player development over the last six years, and to compete with them we're going to have to do the same.

TB: That's going to be a tough sell to the fans going forward though. I mean, the fans want to put on the proverbial green and gold glasses and believe that the team has got a chance to compete every year.

BB: I think what's more important is actually being realistic. I don't think we should be on a quest for mediocrity. Having a Groundhog's Day conversation every year and once again remember, when this franchise has been good that's the way it's been built. And there really is no short cut. There have been times when there certainly have been pieces here that if the right things fell into place, maybe it would work. But understand the challenge of attracting players here because of the compensation level they demand and also the fact that this right now is a challenging venue to get players to come to, makes it that much tougher.

TB: One thing that has always been very important to you and that you've always seemed to value is pitching and defense. And one thing that hasn't gone the way it might have been expected is the defense is weaker than we would have thought this year. Are you concerned about weakening the defense too much in a quest to kind of improve the offense?

BB: It's like holding sand, you know? It's not unexpected when you take a guy like Ellis out of the middle of the infield, he's arguably been the best second baseman of the last decade and in the game, I think. And Daric Barton was a Gold Glove-caliber first baseman. Those two guys were gone. So you're going to take a step back. I also think that even when everyone was here, I think we got out to a tough start defensively; I think that would have evened itself out. But that's the whole trick. It is like holding sand. Ultimately, what you're trying to do is get players like Chavez and Tejada who win Gold Gloves, those are star players that do it on both offense and defense. Once again, it goes back to what I was saying, that that's an investment and total commitment to your farm system, the draft, and the international players that are available to you. In our market, you probably need to do it in a much bigger way than we've done it - then, once again, balancing the major league payroll investment in the infrastructure.

TB: How do you feel about the first base position with Chris Carter kind of there, Daric Barton and now Brandon Allen? Is it just something that you wait and see how it shakes out in spring training in 2012 or is it something where Daric's opportunity might have slipped through the cracks by now? How do you feel?

BB: I think each one has shown flashes that they can be good major league players and it's going to be up to one of those guys to show that they're capable of keeping the job full time. I mean, Daric did the job last year and this year it all kind of fell apart on him. And at times Brandon has been very good for us. I think Chris is a little bit behind both those two defensively. But until one of them grabs it, it's probably going to be up in the air.

TB: You've talked about free agents a little bit and one of the things that seems to be appealing about Oakland as a free agent obviously, would be pitching in the ballpark for 81 games, because it's such a pitcher-friendly park. Do you find that maybe a good strategy is to spend what money you do have and try and sign a starting pitcher or two, and maybe use them as a commodity to trade for a hitter later on? Do you find that pitchers actually want to pitch in Oakland compared to the hitters?

BB: It's a good ballpark to pitch in. One thing too is getting back a free agent pitcher that we could compete for. If you're looking at the premium free agent starting pitchers, it's just not a market we can afford to get into and it's extremely risky when you combine the risk health-wise. For us, our pitching has to come through the draft and selective signings like Brandon McCarthy, who I think is a good example. But the idea that we're going to go out in the free agent market and bid for the premium guys, it's just not going to happen. And for us, we've done a good job of putting together a competitive pitching staff and I think we learned long ago that it has to come through your own system. We're much better off going that route than we are putting together a significant offer for a 30-plus year old free agent - we're probably not going to be in that game anyway. So, what you would like to do is hope that your ballpark can attract players like Brandon McCarthy. That they have talent and are looking for an opportunity and a good ballpark to pitch in and Brandon is probably the best

example. We're probably going to get more bang for our buck than going out and spending what we don't have on something that's very, very risky.

TB: Theo Epstein was quoted in Sports Illustrated talking about keeping your pitchers healthy as being sort of a new market inefficiency, so to speak, the thing that everybody is trying to figure out how to solve. Is that something that you see as being important - obviously you see it as being important considering how many guys went down for you - but is that something that you guys spend a lot of resources and time in trying to figure out? Or is it just, like, load up with as many starting pitchers as you possibly can and grit your teeth and hopefully they can bring you through a season? How do you approach that?

BB: I think you do both. First of all, you get as much pitching as you can and we all do that. But I do think in general the medical side of sports is actually one area we're trying to get our arms around because every GM when he's in spring training, or every GM when in the NFL, right before they start the season they usually end their team's prospects with the sentence, "if we can stay healthy." And it's a challenge and a dilemma for all sports and it's not necessarily just preventing them, it's minimizing the time down. They're going to have injuries, but if you can find a way to just narrow the timeframe a little bit, you'll have a huge advantage. The Red Sox are a great example this year. I mean, team health has such a big impact on where you finish, probably more so than people realize. It may be the most important thing. I truly don't believe that there was a better team put together than the Red Sox this year. I mean they had everything. And here we are and they're fighting for a playoff spot and I don't think it's necessarily through fault of their own. It's quite simply that the team that they've put together is not all there. And, here they are scrambling and it's all through injury. I don't know that Theo and his staff could have done a better job. And I would challenge anybody who thought going into the season that they weren't arguably the best team in the game. It's not really just preventing injuries but also limiting the time that the player is down and we're all trying to look for that magic formula by virtue of looking at conditioning, looking at how we give players days off, how we prepare for the season. Particularly a team like ours, a team like the Red Sox, I know now that have had significant injuries, you go through things at a much deeper level than you would if you stay healthy. We took these things for granted in the earlier part of the decade. Having been on both sides of it where we've been very, very healthy club and a healthy organization, and we've also been one that has been decimated with injuries that forces you to examine everything, which is also a good process.

TB: Obviously you guys had a whole lot of luck back in the day. I can't remember during those early 2000s how many...

BB: We were one of the healthiest teams.

TB: Yeah, you didn't have very many injuries. Were you doing anything different or was it just a matter of luck?

BB: I think you're foolish if you don't go back and see what you were doing and see what you're doing now. I think you have to examine the process as we did. I don't know if we were doing anything different. We changed what we were doing now from what we were doing the last few years, absolutely. We've made significant changes in our medical and I think those changes have been for the better. But you are going to go through periods where you have not just a year of injury, but a couple of years. And, I think the Red Sox face that. I mean, the Giants had a phenomenal year last year. They were very healthy. They've had their share of injuries, and as a result they're not going to make the playoffs. If you look at the two teams they had the biggest difference between them last year and this year, it's the fact that they weren't as healthy this year.

TB: Obviously Buster Posey is a big one.

BB: Yeah, no question. There was Brian Wilson for the time period. They lost Barry. So listen, it is, when I say the inefficiency, I do think it's an area that we're all looking at very hard right now - each organization, and trying to find a better way of treating injuries and hopefully preventing them and minimizing the down time.

TB: Sort of switching to your personal life really quick. You've been into soccer obviously, and punk rock for years now and they paid homage to that in the movie with a Clash poster.

BB: It was a Joe Strummer picture and a Clash picture back there. What they did is kind of look in my office and they took more things than I thought they would.

TB: What else outside of, because I know that you're a guy that has a lot of outside interests outside of baseball - what else outside of the sport gets your interest these days and gets your attention?

BB: Well, my kids obviously. I've always been somewhat intellectually curious and interested. It's always been that way and in some way, shape or form I'd like to think at times those interests lead you to things that can help you in other parts of this job. There are a lot of things in the world that are interesting. I think it would be foolish not to take advantage of them. One of the things I enjoy on my off time is fly-fishing. It's something that I have gotten into and enjoy. It's a great get away from this job when I can do it.

TB: Where do you do it?

BB: Most recently before my shoulder surgery, a couple of days before my shoulder surgery, just up north of Redding. In fact, it was a great day fly-fishing in the river on the lower Sac. It was also the day that we were down 7-0 and we got rained out in Texas. Very few times can your career be down that big in an away ballpark and actually get to have a mulligan. So that was the most recent one. I try to get up to my home - it's a little harder obviously during the season -and go up to Bend, Oregon, where we have a home, but it's something that I enjoy. And now that Hatteberg is back in the organization...

TB: You have someone to do it with?

BB: Yeah. We keep trying to plan a trip but our schedule, even though we work for the same employer, doesn't allow it and the tough thing is sometimes the best fly fishing time is during the summer when we're all very, very busy.

TB: What kind of fish do you usually catch up there?

BB: Rainbow trout.

TB: Is it sort of a "River Runs Through It" kind of thing, where they're in the waist-high boots?

BB: Yeah, that's probably a little dramatic with the rushing river up to your armpits. It's probably a little more tame than that. But it's something that I have really gotten into and really enjoy the last few years and it's something I'm hoping to pass on to my kids.

TB: Do you see yourself as a baseball lifer?

BB: Well, I already am. This is my 30-plus year, so I already am and certainly proud of it.

TB: But staying there until you retire, basically?

BB: It's probably a question that I'm going to have to answer later on. I don't really know. Are there things that I'm interested in? Sure. But right now, this is what I love doing. I think that as soon as you make absolutes about your life, you're probably destined to not live up to them. So no, I already am a lifer and will I continue? Certainly for the time being, that's for sure. I mean it doesn't necessarily preclude me from having a lot of interests, which is the way I've always been since I was a kid. How else do you get into punk rock?

TB: Well, you're a conservative guy who is into punk rock. I gotta say, I don't know too many of those.

BB: That means nobody can nail me down (laughs). I have a lot of friends and a lot of interests and I find it very stimulating to be interested by a lot of things. When you go on the road, one of our well-known players used to have trouble sleeping and I used to tell him, "What do you mean you have trouble sleeping? There are so many great books to read. Get yourself a great book." You know, there's not enough time in the world to read all the great books that are out there, and all the things that are out there to read and to be interested in and he wasn't quite buying that.

TB: Wasn't a big reader?

BB: Yeah, he immediately informed me that he had read two books and said that he really wasn't that into reading. So I realized I was going nowhere with that one. I think what I was doing was just...

TB: It was (Nick) Swisher, wasn't it?

BB: No, it wasn't Nick. Good guess, but it wasn't him.

TB: I actually had him tell me that in an interview once. He told me that he doesn't read.

BB: Then again, I don't play video games - actually, I do play Call of Duty. My wife gets mad at me.

TB: Are you kidding me? Do you play on the 360 or the PS3?

BB: You know, I don't get into it as much as I used to but my dad and me, we kind of get into it. It's fascinating the way they're put together. The graphics are unbelievable.

TB: You know who my brother is, right?

BB: No.

TB: He's the lead designer on Gears of War.

BB: I got Gears of War for my dad for Christmas. After he had gone through all the Call of Duty ones, I got him Gears of War. That one is tough, by the way.

TB: They just came out with a third one.

BB: Those are a lot of our Christmas Day exchanges. In fact, I can read an email he sent me. He sent me one saying there's a new one called Battlefield 3 and he sends the link and says, "Hey you gotta check this out. This will be great." Then he sends me an email this morning, "It won't work on a Mac." Yeah, I don't have a lot of time to do that.

TB: I don't have nearly as much time as I would like to do that either, but I've got to definitely play with you sometime on the 360.

BB: Well it's hard not to be fascinated by everything that goes into them and the artificial intelligence that goes into it is amazing.

TB: I will be asking for your gamer tag.

BB: No, no - I'm not that deep into it. My wife would never let me because any hour that I would possibly have in the day that I would do that I would have no chance of getting away with it. Yeah, I got no chance.

TB: And finally, just quickly out of curiosity, how much do you think Moneyball is going to change your life and how much do you think it has already changed your life?

BB: I don't quite think of it like that. One thing about being a GM of a major sports franchise is that you're in a public position anyway so I haven't really thought about how it's going to change my life. I've told this to people privately, what I really do still love is walking into this office on any given day and getting to do this job. As long as I still get to do that, whatever good comes out of it will just be an appendage to what I really like to do, which is this.

TB: Well that's good to hear as an A's fan. We definitely want you to keep walking into that office for years and years.

BB: Thank you. That's very much appreciated. And I can assure you the loyalty has always been returned from my end, I hope.

TB: Definitely. And I really appreciate it.