



# OAKLAND ATHLETICS

## Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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

**OAKLAND, Calif.** – Catcher Kurt Suzuki has been named the recipient of the 2009 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 and coaches.

Suzuki, completing his second full season with Oakland, is batting .270 with 14 home runs and leads the team in doubles (35) and runs batted in (81) this year. Regarded as one of the American League's top backstops, the 25-year-old Cal State Fullerton product leads all AL catchers in games played (127) and games started (124), innings caught (1107.1), putouts (864) and total chances (931), ranks second in assists (62) and fourth in fielding percentage (.995). If he continues on his current pace, he will become the first catcher in Oakland A's history to lead his team in RBI and only the second catcher to accomplish that feat in franchise history (Frankie Hayes drove in a team-best 78 runs for the Philadelphia Athletics in 1944).

Beyond his productivity at the plate, the 5-11, 200-pound Suzuki has also gained a defensive reputation as one of the game's most sure-handed receivers and adept handler of pitchers. This season, he has played a vital role in developing one of the youngest pitching staffs in the majors—including a starting rotation that *averaged* 23 years of age for most of the season, including two 21-year-olds in Brett Anderson and Trevor Cahill, and a closer, Andrew Bailey, who is considered a leading candidate for AL Rookie of the Year honors. Under Suzuki's leadership, this young staff currently ranks third in the American League in earned run average (4.25) and has allowed the fewest home runs (145) in the league.

A native of Hertford, N.C., Jim "Catfish" Hunter posted a 224-166 record to go along with a 3.26 ERA in his 15-year major league career 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 to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1987, Hunter is one of four Oakland players to have had his number retired, along with Rollie Fingers, Reggie Jackson and Dennis Eckersley.

"Catfish" was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease) in September of 1998 and died of complications from the disease on September 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) and Mike Sweeney (2008).

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