



0. BILLY BEANE and PAUL DePODESTA - Story Preface

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Paul DePodesta, when he was the 31-year-old general manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers. Photo by Jon Soohoo, Associated Press. Copyright, Jon Soohoo, all rights reserved. Image used here as fair use for educational purposes.

Still in high school, Billy Beane was shocking all the baseball scouts. Possessing all five of the "five tools" a scout looks for in a promising young player, he was destined for greatness in Major League Baseball. He was willing to forgo a scholarship to Stanford (for the football program) to jump-start his dream.

But ... Billy wasn't able to play professional ball. At bat, he couldn't stay loose. In the field, he couldn't stay focused. Finally, after six years - including a stint with the Twins - he asked for a different job. In 1990, at the age of 27, he became an advance-scout for the Oakland A's.

Paul DePodesta - "DePo" for short (and "Peter Brand" in the film Moneyball) - had a different start. Although he played college football and baseball at Harvard, he wasn't MLB-player material. Despite his *cum-laude* degree in economics, he signed a contract with the Oakland A's in 1999 - to be a scout - after working with the Cleveland Indians (for three seasons).

By 2001, Beane had been the A's general manager four years. When three of his key players - outfielder Johnny Damon, first-baseman Jason Giambi and relief-pitcher Jason Isringhausen - left the organization (because the A's couldn't meet their free-agent salary demands), Billy needed to update his team.

Needing a new approach, because the A's owners would not give him enough money to fill his wish list, Billy talked with Paul. Was there a way to find undervalued players who could become baseball stars?

Both men were students of Bill James - the man from Lawrence, Kansas who produced a yearly abstract of Major-League Baseball statistics. Could all those lists of numbers somehow give Beane and his colleagues the help they needed to build a winning team for 2002?

With Paul loading and crunching numbers on his laptop, Billy took a different path than he had the year before. As the 2002 draft-day approached, Beane and his scouts evaluated their affordable prospects. Their evaluations differed - sometimes markedly - for most players.

When the roster was finalized - including new prospects who would first go to the "farm club," then work their way up to the main team - many of the A's scouts had serious doubts about their team. Whoever heard of picking stars-in-the-making by consulting numbers on a computer?

It wouldn't be the last time DePodesta was criticized for using stats to chose a team. Later, when he became general manager of the LA Dodgers, local sports writers derisively called him "Google Boy."

What was the method Beane used to pick his 2002 team? And ... who is Bill James, the baseball fanatic who developed a system which challenged an entire industry?

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BILLY-BEANE-and-PAUL-DePODESTA-Moneyball)

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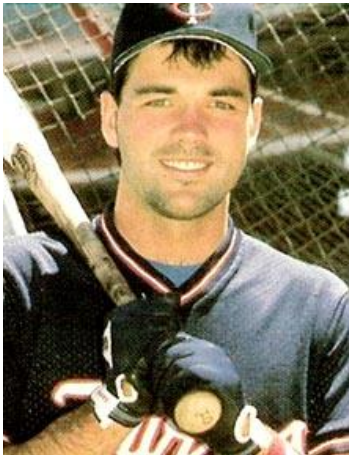
Why Get Educated before Playing Professional Sports?

When he was a high-school baseball star, other people - in this situation, baseball scouts - encouraged Billy Beane to give-up attending college because they thought his physical abilities would overcome his lack of schooling. How tempting is it to listen to such people?

Can we rely on a belief that maybe our physical talents will carry us forward as we plan our futures? Why, or why not?

Paul DePodesta had a college education - with a degree in economics from Harvard - yet wanted to work inside the high-profile sport of professional baseball. How easy would it be for such a person to "fit into" that world?

Media Stream



Billy Beane - Five-Tool Baseball Player

Photo of young Billy Beane, in 1987, when he was playing for the Minnesota Twins. Photo online, courtesy Twins.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Billy-Beane-Five-Tool-Baseball-Player>

Paul DePodesta - "Peter Brand" - Harvard Wide Receiver

Photo of Paul DePodesta - on stage at the Strata Summit 2011, in New York City - by O'Reilly Conferences' photostream, online courtesy Flickr.



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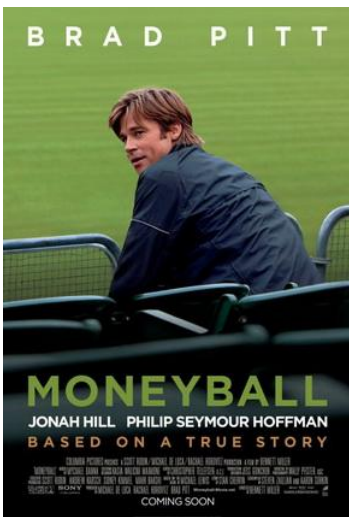
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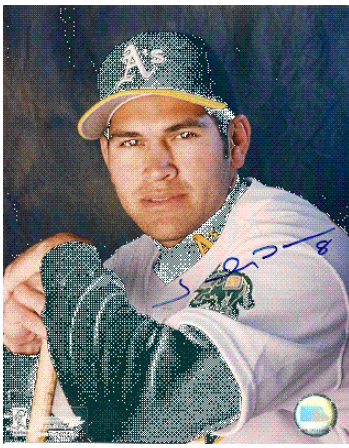
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Moneyball - Poster

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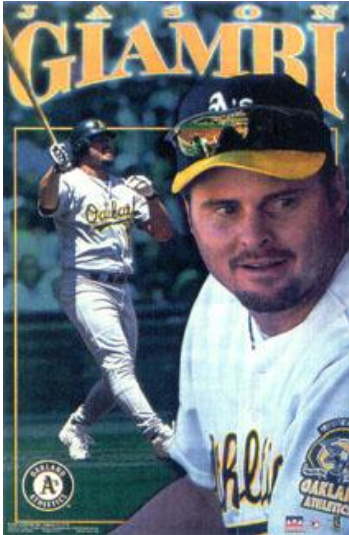
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Johnny Damon - 2001 Oakland A's

Photo of Johnny Damon by the Oakland A's, online courtesy Hall of Fame Memorabilia.

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Jason Giambi - 2001 Oakland A's

Image from a May 2001 Starline poster, for the Oakland A's.

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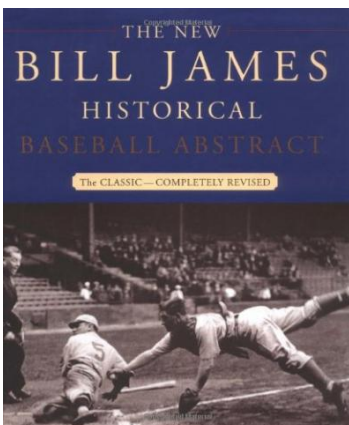


Jason Isringhausen - 2001 Oakland A's

Jason Isringhausen, with the A's in 2001, Card Number 147 of the Topps Series 1 Baseball Trading Cards. Image online, courtesy Topps Cards.

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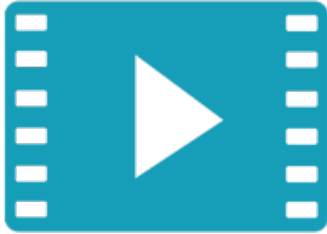
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Bill James - Baseball Statistics

Cover of Historical Baseball Abstract, by Bill James, online courtesy Amazon.com

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Moneyball - Behind the Scenes

Clip about the making of *Moneyball*, online at [MakingOf's](#) Channel at YouTube.

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