

How one man changed baseball.

MONEYBALL

MONEYBALL IS A 2012 DRAMA STARRING BRAD PITT AS BILLY BEANE - THE MANAGER OF THE AMERICAN BASEBALL TEAM, THE OAKLAND A'S. BEANE IS IN TROUBLE AS HIS TEAM ISN'T DOING WELL.

When the film opens, the Oakland A's have just lost a game to the New York Yankees. And they're about to lose three of their best players to richer teams. Beane is **despondent**. He doesn't have the **budget** to compete with the big teams. But then he meets Peter Brand, a young **Yale graduate** and statistics expert.

Brand introduces Beane to **sabermetrics***. This is a controversial system for



measuring how good a baseball player is. It applies computer-generated statistical

analysis to **work out** a player's ability. It's completely different to the more traditional methods of **talent spotting** that all the other teams are using. With sabermetrics, Beane begins buying players other teams aren't interested in. And he manages to build a winning team **on a shoestring**.

Moneyball is based a true story, although there's a certain degree of **artistic licence**. Characters have been combined, dates changed



and some events have been invented all **for dramatic effect**. For example,

Peter Brand, Beane's assistant, never existed. However, he is largely based on Beane's former assistant Paul DePodesta. But despite these changes, critics think that Brad Pitt's **portrayal** of Beane is **right on the money**. One journalist wrote, "Pitt **nails** Beane's **gestures**,



mannerisms and **speech patterns**."

Beane's use of sabermetrics changed baseball. Now many teams rely on the method. But this form of complex computer-generated statistical analysis is used in business too. And these days, many entrepreneurs and businesses use sabermetrics to help plan their business strategies.

But *Moneyball* isn't just about facts and figures. It's also about a personal **struggle**. Billy Beane

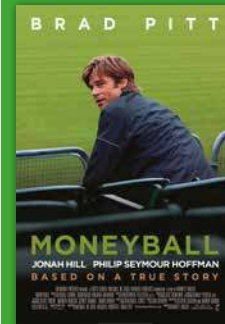
himself was once a major-league baseball player. At the start of his career people expected big things from him. But he never **lived up to the hype** and in 1990 he **retired** with an average record. This past failure **haunts** him, and the film is also about whether Beane will finally achieve success in his life.

The critics love *Moneyball*. One called it "the most **soulful** of baseball movies"; another described it as a "**home run**". And most agree it's **on track** for some major awards. ★



SABERMETRICS

Bill James, a well-known baseball writer and statistician, invented the phrase **sabermetrics** and created the technique in the 1980s. James defined **sabermetrics** as, "the search for objective knowledge about baseball". **Sabermetrics** is an acronym for "**Society for American Baseball Research**" plus the word "metrics".



Moneyball stars Brad Pitt and Jonas Hill and is directed by Bennett Miller. It's based on the 2003 book *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game* by Michael Lewis. The film tells the story of Billy Beane (Brad Pitt), who is the manager of the Oakland A's baseball team.

You Tube

Moneyball trailer:
<http://youtu.be/AiAHIZVgXjk>

GLOSSARY

- despondent** *adj*
sad and depressed
- a budget** *n*
the money that is used for one particular activity
- Yale** *n*
a prestigious, famous university in the USA
- a graduate** *n*
someone who has been to university / school
- to work out** *phr vb*
to evaluate / assess
- talent spotting** *n*
finding people with a lot of talent / ability
- on a shoestring** *exp*
with very little money
- artistic licence** *n*
if a writer/director has used "artistic licence", they have changed the facts in order to create a story
- for dramatic effect** *exp*
so the story is exciting / interesting
- a portrayal** *n*
the way an actor shows how a character is
- right on the money** *exp*
very good
- to nail** *vb*
if you "nail" something, you do it perfectly
- a gesture** *n*
an involuntary movement of a part of the body (the hands, arms, etc.) that transmits a message or is typical of a person
- a mannerism** *n*
something that someone often does with their body that is typical of them
- a speech pattern** *n*
the way someone speaks
- a struggle** *n*
an attempt to do something
- to live up to the hype** *exp*
to be as good as everyone expects you to be
- to retire** *vb*
to stop working (often at the age of 65)
- to haunt** *vb*
if a bad thought or memory "haunts" you, you can't forget about it
- soulful** *adj*
expressing deep feeling
- a home run** *n*
something very successful. Literally, if someone in a baseball game hits a "home run", they hit the ball very far and can go around the four bases and achieve a "run" for their team
- on track** *for exp*
if something is "on track for" an award (for example), it is going to win an award





Lou Gehrig

Baseball

Baseball is one of America's most popular sports and an important part of US culture. But why?

Baseball is known as "the national pastime."

As Jacques Barzun said in his book *God's Country and Mine: A Declaration of Love Spiced with a Few Harsh Words*,



Jacques Barzun

"Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball."

And it seems to be true. As children, many Americans play baseball in **Little League** teams. Later, some go on to play in **Major League** baseball. Others become **avid** sports fans and follow their team or go to watch matches. Many consider the game a truly democratic game as it can be played by just about anyone, **regardless of** height, weight, **background** or ability.

The game itself is fairly easy to play. There are two teams of nine players each. They play on a field with four bases in the shape of a diamond. These

bases are about 30 metres apart and are known as first base, second base, third base and home.

The part of the field closest to the bases is called the infield.

The part further away is the outfield.

During the game, a "pitcher" from one team pitches (throws) a ball to a "batter"

(the person holding a baseball bat) from the opposing team. The batter (who is standing on the home plate) tries to hit the ball and run around the bases. If he/she goes around the four bases (touching them in the correct order), it's a run. The main objective is to score more runs than the opposing team.

The batter gets three "strikes" – three attempts to hit the ball. If he/she doesn't hit the ball, they're out. They're also out if someone catches the ball before it touches the ground, or if they're **tagged** with the ball before getting to a base. If a player hits the ball over the outfield fence, it's an automatic home run.

The first recorded game was played in 1846 in Hoboken, New Jersey. And since then baseball has grown in popularity. In 1992, the sport was introduced as an Olympic game. Some of the most famous players from the

past include Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Hank Greenberg, and Jackie Robinson (the first African-American man to play in Major League baseball).

Famous modern players include Alex Rodriguez (**aka** A-Rod) and Derek Jeter who play for the New York Yankees, Manny Ramirez who played for the Tampa Bay Rays, Joe Mauer who plays for the Minnesota Twins, and Albert Pujols who plays for the St Louis Cardinals. A player doesn't have to be from the state he/she plays for, so baseball teams are very diverse. For example, Alex Pujols plays for a team in Missouri but is from the Dominican Republic. Every year, the teams **trade** players.



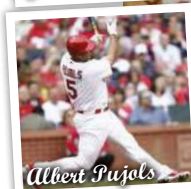
Hank Greenberg



Jackie Robinson



Joe Mauer



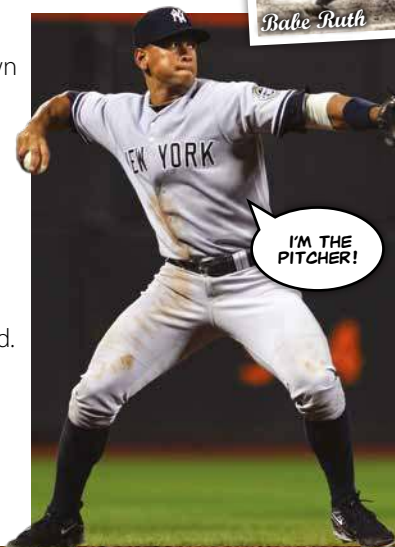
Albert Pujols



Babe Ruth

AND I'M A BATTER!

I'M THE PITCHER!



The official baseball **season runs** from April to late September. Teams play year-round but only the games played during the official season count toward the World Series (a series of baseball games played between the winning teams of the American League and the National League). These games are as important to baseball as the World Cup is to football, or the Superbowl is to American football.

Game of baseball, anyone? 🍀

GLOSSARY

Little League (baseball) *n*
baseball league for players between 8 and 12 years of age

Major League (baseball) *n*
the highest level of professional baseball in the world

avid *adj*
an "avid" fan or sportsperson takes the sport very seriously

regardless of *exp*
if A happens "regardless of" B, A is not affected by B

a background *n*
your "background" refers to who you are and where you're from

to tag *vb*
to touch (with the ball, in this case)

aka *abbr*

also known as

to trade *vb*
if you "trade" A for B, you give someone A and they give you B

a season *n*
a period of time during which an activity takes place – in this case, the baseball season which goes from April to September

to run *vb*
if something "runs" from April to September, it happens between April and September