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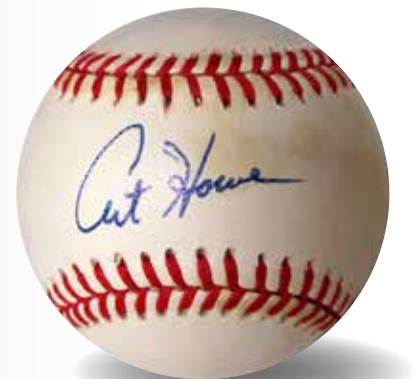
A Swing and a Hit

*Shaler native
Art Howe builds
legendary career.*

BY JENNIFER BROZAK

Howe signed his first playing contract with the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1971, at age 24.

Art Howe



Art Howe was 23 and playing baseball in the Pittsburgh Federation League when he got the chance to try out as a walk-on for the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Two days later, the 1965 Shaler Area High School graduate signed a professional contract with the team. Since then, he has built a career as one of the most respected players and managers in baseball.

The youngest of six children—with three brothers and two sisters—Howe's love of the game began when he was living with his family in the Shalercrest area of Pittsburgh.

"Like a lot of guys my age, I was outside playing ball, no matter what season it was," Howe says by phone from his home in Texas.

He credits his neighbor, Deb Rupert, as the one who encouraged him to start playing ball when he was a child.

"He was a real mentor for me," says Howe, 69. "He's the one who got me playing organized sports when I was very young."

At Shaler, Howe excelled in baseball and football. Unfortunately, he suffered a slipped disc while playing football as a sophomore. Forced to wear a brace for almost a year, he assumed that his playing days were over.

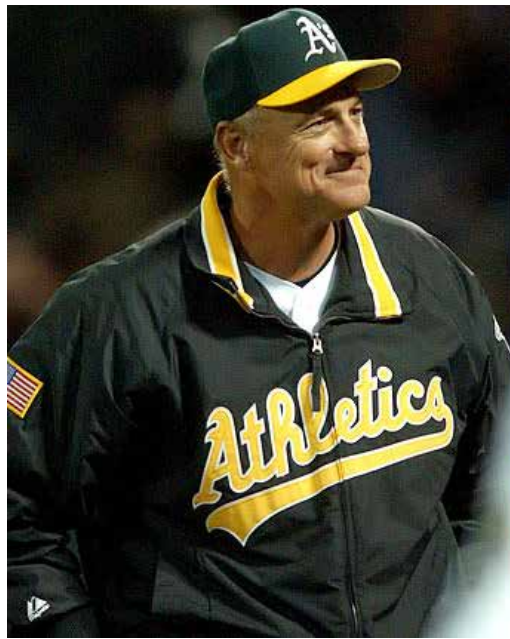
They weren't.

A year later, as a junior at Shaler, Howe was the winning pitcher in the 1965 WPIAL Championship game against Monongahela.

Despite his serious injury, Howe was offered scholarships to play quarterback for Nebraska and Miami, ultimately settling on the University of Wyoming to play as a quarterback, split end and defensive back. During his freshman year of college, however, he re-injured his back. He was told that if he continued to play football, his back might never recover. He turned his attention to baseball. Despite being a standout player, he graduated with no professional prospects.

After graduation, he returned home and found work as a systems analyst for Westinghouse. At the same time, he was playing with the Federation League's now-defunct North Side Mets when his friend, Bill Howser, convinced him to try out for the Pirates.

"It was a long shot, for sure. It was a little embarrassing, being so much older than the other kids," he says, pointing out that most



Art Howe (left) and actor Philip Seymour Hoffman portraying Howe in the 2011 movie "Moneyball."

athletes who try out for the big leagues are in their teens, but there he was, married with a baby on the way.

Howe says he spent six hours on the turf that day. Two days later, the Pirates called, offering him a contract as a free agent. The salary? Only \$500 a month, less than half of what he was making at Westinghouse.

"My wife, Betty, told me I had to give it a chance. She said I couldn't pass it up. I can't give her enough credit," he says.

He played in the minor leagues for a few years before getting to the Pirates for the 1974-1975 season. He was 27 when he played his first Major League game.

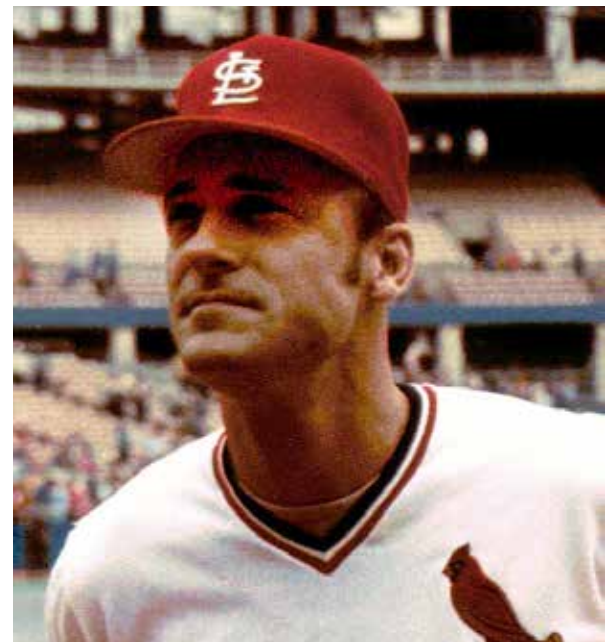
"To be playing for my hometown team...you can only imagine what it's like being in that clubhouse with players like Willie Stargell and Richie Hebner," he says. "It was a pinch-me moment. I was living my dream. I've been very fortunate."

After that first season playing in the big leagues, Howe was traded to the Houston Astros,

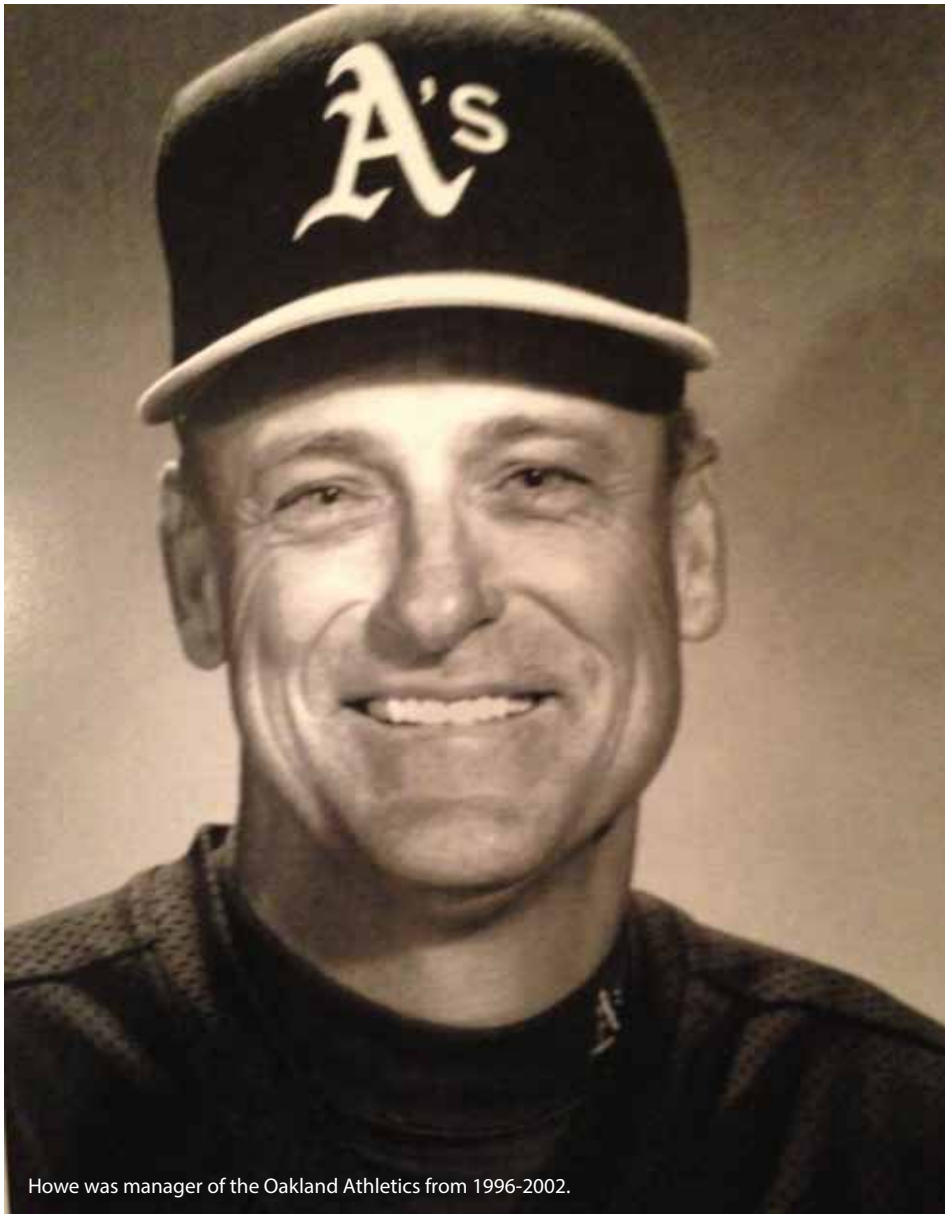
where he stayed until 1982. In 1984, he went to the St. Louis Cardinals. After 11 years, 891 games and 43 home runs, he finished his playing career with the Cardinals in 1985.

"I was 39 years old, and my playing days were numbered," he says. He decided to play out that last year, and let the organizations

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Howe finished his playing career with the St. Louis Cardinals in 1985.



Howe was manager of the Oakland Athletics from 1996-2002.

know that he planned to retire, hoping to get an opportunity to coach.

He ended up being released from his contract early and was quickly hired by Bobby Valentine of the Texas Rangers as a third base coach, where he stayed until 1988. In 1989, he rejoined the Astros, this time as manager. He had a winning first season with the team; however, the next two seasons were not so kind, as the team was being rebuilt with younger players. The Astros rebounded in 1992 and 1993, but Howe was let go at the end of the 1993 season. He spent the 1994-1995 winter season managing a team in the Dominican League, leading it to its first championship.

After spending a year as a scout for the Los Angeles Dodgers and serving as a bench

coach for the Colorado Rockies, he replaced Tony LaRussa as manager of the Oakland Athletics. His career and relationship with Athletics general manager Billy Beane was famously documented in the 2011 movie "Moneyball," with the late actor Philip Seymour Hoffman portraying Howe.

Despite his winning record, Howe was released from his Oakland contract after seven years. He was then selected as manager of the New York Mets for the 2003-2004 season. Unfortunately, the team suffered multiple losing seasons, and Howe was let go.

In 2006, he was hired as the third base coach for the Philadelphia Phillies but left shortly after to work as a bench coach for the Texas Rangers and manager Ron Washington, who had worked as a coach for Howe in



Coach Howe (with Ron Washington) while with the Texas Rangers in 2007-08. He also coached the Rangers from 1986-88.

Oakland. Howe stayed with the Rangers for the next two years, ending his career with the team in 2008.

Since then, he has been working with Root Sports as an analyst for the Astros, "much like Kent Tekulve," he says. (Tekulve, a former Pirates pitcher, currently works for Root Sports and appears as an analyst after Pirates games.)

Howe's contributions to the game have not gone unrecognized. He's the second-winningest manager in Oakland A's history and, in both 1999 and 2000, was the runner-up for the American League Manager of the Year award. In 2001, he was inducted into the Shaler High School Hall of Fame.

"Being inducted into the Hall of Fame was one of the biggest honors I've ever received," he says. "It was a thrill. It was very special."

Howe visits Pittsburgh often, as he and his wife still have family in the area.

"We always enjoy returning to Pittsburgh to see old family and friends. We look forward to reconnecting with our roots," he says.

As for young players who want to follow in Howe's footsteps and make it to the big leagues, he says the most important thing is passion.

"Above all, you have to love the game. You have to play it simply for the love of the game. When the Pirates signed me, I would have played for free I loved the game so much. You just have to enjoy it," he says. ■