

# Art Howe takes new job with Mets

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Mets officially introduced Art Howe as their new manager Monday, confirming the worst-kept secret in baseball.

Howe agreed to a four-year contract worth \$9.4 million after being released from the last year of his deal with the Oakland Athletics.

"I see the Mets as a tremendous opportunity," Howe said. "The ownership is committed to winning, and the nucleus of players is there to turn things around from last season."

News of Howe's signing leaked last Wednesday night, although the Mets refused any confirmation or announcement until the World Series was over.

Howe succeeds Bobby Valentine, who was fired Oct. 1 with one year remaining on his contract. The Mets owe him \$2.7 million for that final year.

Howe took Oakland to 103 victories and the American

League West championship this season, but his team was eliminated from the playoffs in the first round for the third straight year. In 12 years as a manager with Houston and Oakland, he has a record of 992-951.

"Art has a presence that's going to be great for our team," Mets general manager Steve Phillips said. "He's a tremendous motivator who put together an outstanding record at Oakland. Art is the man who can take us back to the playoffs."

The Mets fired Valentine after finishing last in the NL East despite a \$95 million payroll. The team interviewed several candidates for the vacancy including Buck Showalter, who took the job in Texas, batting coach Chris Chambliss, New York Yankees coach Willie Randolph, ex-Philadelphia manager Terry Francona and Oakland bench coach Ken Macha, who now is expected to succeed Howe

## Howe heads east

The New York Mets named Art Howe as their new manager Monday. The former Oakland A's skipper is coming off two-straight 100-win seasons and three-straight division titles.



SOURCE: Major League Baseball

with the Athletics.

Owner Fred Wilpon said from the start he wanted a high-profile name with a winning background as the team's next manager. Early in their search, the Mets settled on Seattle manager Lou Piniella as their prime candidate.

Piniella, who took the Mariners to a record 116 victo-

Year	Team	Record	Finish
'89	Astros	86-76	3rd
'90	Astros	75-87	5th
'91	Astros	65-97	6th
'92	Astros	81-81	4th
'93	Astros	85-77	3rd
'96	A's	78-84	3rd
'97	A's	65-97	4th
'98	A's	74-88	4th
'99	A's	87-75	2nd
'00	A's	91-70	1st
'01	A's	102-60	1st
'02	A's	103-59	1st

Career record: 992-951

# World Series ratings set a new record low

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — San Francisco wasn't the only World Series loser. Television ratings for the all-California matchup against Anaheim set record lows.

The Angels' seven-game victory over the Giants averaged an 11.9 rating and 20 share, Nielsen Media Research said Monday.

That rating is 24 percent below Arizona's seven-game victory over the New York Yankees last year, which got a 15.7/25, and is 4 percent below the previous record, the Yankees' five-game win over the Mets in the 2000 Subway Series (12.4/21).

In the past 11 years, the rating for the Series has gone down by 50 percent. Minnesota's seven-game victory over Atlanta in 1991 got a 24.0 rating and 39 share. The top Series rating was a 32.8/56 for Philadelphia's six-game victory over Kansas City in 1980.

"While the viewership was not as high as we had hoped, the fact is that Fox won six of the seven nights World Series games were played, won the week in households and adults 18-49, and will finish ahead of our business forecast," Fox Sports president Ed Goren said in a statement.

Anaheim's 4-1 victory Sunday night got a 17.9 preliminary rating and 28 share, down 24 percent from Arizona's 3-2 win in Game 7 last year, which received a 23.5/34.

With the Yankees not in the World Series

for the first time since 1997, the all-California matchup set record lows for an opener (9.4), Game 2 (11.9), Game 3 (10.8), Game 4 (11.8), Game 5 (10.0), Game 6 (11.8) and Game 7.

Still, Fox estimated the seventh game was seen by 57.9 million viewers, the most-watched program of the television season.

*"Baseball's got to be concerned about its future. I would imagine they'll read the writing on the wall at the very highest levels and get their house in order."*

— David Hill

Fox Sports chairman

The World Series averaged only one-third the rating of the most recent Super Bowl (40.4/61) and was less than this year's NCAA basketball championship game between Maryland and Indiana (15.0/24) and Miami's national football championship-winning Rose Bowl victory over Nebraska (13.8).

Still, it was higher than this year's Daytona 500 (10.9/26), the NBA Finals

(10.2) and the NHL's Stanley Cup finals (3.6/7).

Baseball commissioner Bud Selig did not utter a telephone call seeking comment. His spokesman, Rich Levin, called the ratings drop part of a cycle that included an increase last season.

"While there were a lot of unknown faces and that hurt in the short term, we put a lot of new faces on the national stage, and that bodes well for the future," Levin said.

On Saturday, Fox Sports chairman David Hill said baseball's labor strife this year was partly responsible for the decrease.

"Once again, baseball managed to turn off its loyal fans," he said. "I hoped it would pick up when we got to the postseason. It certainly hasn't been what I hoped it would be."

"Our ratings had been terrific all year. They went in the bucket when all the bristling and saber rattling started."

News Corp., Fox's parent, took a \$909 million charge against earnings in February, saying it had overpaid for its sports deals: \$4.5 billion for the NFL, \$2.4 billion for baseball and \$1.9 billion for NASCAR.

Fox is in the second year of its six-year baseball contract.

"Baseball's got to be concerned about its future," Hill said. "I would imagine they'll read the writing on the wall at the very highest levels and get their house in order."

# Column: America misses excellent series

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Troy Percival fantasized a thousand times about throwing the final pitch in Game 7 of the World Series.

Strikeout, groundout or pop fly, he always won.

Scott Spiezio was only 3 when he started imagining himself at bat in a Game 7. He fell asleep at night listening to subliminal messages on tapes his father played to build his confidence.

Darin Erstad envisioned flying through the air, snaring the ball. He had already made a diving catch in the game and three in the Series. So when the time came for the final out, he simply waved his arms in center field, settled under the ball with his legs pumping in place, then caught it and leapt in one exhilarating motion.

The Anaheim Angels, the team that Disney bought but never loved, took a short trip to their own Fantasyland in a World Series that showed how good baseball can be and how little the rest of the country cared.

This was a team that deserved more acclaim and a lot more attention than it got in beating the San Francisco Giants. The record-low TV ratings really mattered only to Fox and shareholders in their parent company, but they reflected the apathy for this

World Series outside California.

Which is too bad. The Angels were the kind of team that is everything good about sports. A team that emphasized clubhouse camaraderie over star power. A team that believed in itself when nobody did. A team that produced more surprise endings than Hollywood comes up with in 10 years.

Baseball is a notoriously parochial game. Root for the home team, if they don't win it's a shame, and to heck with everyone else. Californians were riveted by the Series, ardent baseball fans nationwide stayed with it, but a lot of others watched "The Sopranos" or football or went bowling.

Maybe that's what baseball gets for turning people off with all the strike talk this summer. Or maybe that's what happens when the biggest star, Barry Bonds, is walked 13 times.

But true baseball fans know that the game, especially in the compressed span of a World Series, is more than the sum of its stars. It's about clutch hitting by unexpected players, pitchers who step up and do the job.

In Game 7, it was struggling Bengie Molina and Garret Anderson lunging out of their socks on doubles that scored all the Angels' runs, and it was three

rookie pitchers who handed off the ball to each other as smoothly as a relay team passing a baton.

John Lackey, five days after turning 24, had been a major leaguer for all of 125 days. Brendan Donnelly, 31, was pitching in Puerto Rico a year ago. Francisco Rodriguez, 20, started the season in Double A.

Together, they combined for eight innings of one-run, five-hit ball and watched the bullpen ace, Percival, finish it up the way he had always dreamed.

In truth, there was far less drama in Game 7 than there had been the night before. How could it be otherwise?

The Giants led 5-0 in the seventh inning of Game 6 and seemed to be closing in on their first World Series championship since 1954.

Then amid the tumult of clattering Thunderstix by fans in a sea of red, the Angels mounted the biggest comeback by any team facing elimination in the Series. Three runs in the seventh, three more in the eighth, a close-out in the ninth. Right there, the Angels cut the heart out of the Giants and set up the finish.

Percival saved that game, too, which was the best save of the Series after J.T. Snow's rescue of Dusty Baker's 3-year-old batboy son at home plate

in San Francisco.

This was a Series that had the precious little moments and the big ones. It had Bonds erasing any doubts that he could perform on the grand stage.

He batted .417, the highest in a seven-game Series by anyone in 23 years. He homered four times, one shy of Reggie Jackson's record but in the company of Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Duke Snider. He had a .700 on-base percentage, the highest in a World Series that went more than four games, and he broke Jackson's 1977 slugging percentage record by going 1.294.

Bonds probably would have been the Series MVP if the Giants had finished it off in Game 6 or come back in Game 7. As it turned out, the Angels succeeded in minimizing his impact, which is about all they could do.

Troy Glaus, who hit .385 with three homers and eight RBIs, won the MVP, though he didn't think he deserved it. The real winner, he believed, was the team as a whole.

That's all Glaus talked about when the cameras were on him and the microphones were in his face. The team. The shared victory.

In the end, that's what this World Series was all about and what so many people missed.

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