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Beban: Family time moved to ballpark

■ Continued from Page 5

time in 13 seasons.

"The whole key is to make sure you create an environment that is fun for the fans to come to," says a spectacled Beban, whose dark, thinning hair and gray beard are tightly cropped. "That's everything from the parking lot, to the entrance to the ballpark, to the condition of the field, professionalism of employees. And the final cog is the team and players. And all that has to work together."

"We don't have anything to sell as far as the players," Beban says. "All we have is our laundry, which is our logo, and our facility. That's all we have from year to year, so we have take those assets we have and make it fun for fans to come out."

While Beban, who has owns a portion of the team, admits there are other ways to gauge success than attendance, he maintains its importance.

"Everything is driven by attendance," Beban says. "Tickets are the single most important thing we have — without a doubt."

Beban says his own appreciation for Ems' tickets has increased the fans' respect.

"I think if you were to ask me the biggest difference between the Eugene Emeralds before I arrived and since I've arrived," Beban says, "it's the value we place on our tickets. We don't give away free tickets anymore like they did in the early '80s."

"If I don't have any respect and give them away, how can a fan have any respect for them?"

While Beban is making sure fans have respect for his tickets, his peers have been showing their respect for the Ems' general manager of 16 years.

In 1988, The Sporting News named Beban its Class A short season executive of the year. And Baseball America honored the Ems with the Bob Freitas Award as the outstanding Class A short-season club for the 1980's, eight years of which Beban was heading the club.

"It means a lot," Beban says of the awards, "because they're given by my peers, other general managers. It's always satisfying when you are recognized by your peers, it's very gratifying. I think when we were given the award for the outstanding minor league franchise in Class A in the 1980's, that was a pretty darn good accomplishment. Bob Freitas, who the award was named after, is from Eugene and was a mentor of mine in the early days, so I was very proud to receive that award."

Freitas was the president of the Northwest League in the late

1970's and early 1980's.

Beban's road to success in Eugene is full of baseball experiences. At the age of 11, Beban got his start in baseball working at Wrigley Field for the Los Angeles Angels of the Pacific Coast League.

He grew playing baseball, but contends that he was "never any good." He went to college at UCLA, and got his start in professional baseball selling statewide accounts during the off-season for teams in Phoenix and Tucson and umpiring in the Pacific Coast League for nine seasons from 1973-81.

From there, Beban became the assistant general manager in Salt Lake City, which was owned by the same man who owned the Eugene Emeralds at the time.

That link brought Beban to Eugene in 1982 where he hired Tom Leip as his No. 2 man in a two man organization, Leip says.

Following Beban and Leip's first season with the Ems in 1982, David Elmore, of the Elmore Sports Group Ltd., bought the Emeralds and has owned them since.

Beban's new wife, Eileen, joined Bob and Leip for the 1984 season, one of the worst in Ems' history, and is the director of business operations today.

"I was there to witness probably the worst professional baseball team to set foot on earth," Leip says of the Kansas City Royals affiliate that finished the season 19-55 in 1984.

Leip left Eugene in 1985 to become the general manager in Spokane, but says he learned from Beban.

"I wouldn't be where I am today without that experience," says Leip, who went on to become the Northwest League secretary and now works for Game Face Marketing. "Bob Beban is an interesting individual. If you believe all you need is a chance, he'll give it to you."

If Beban did dole out responsibility, Leip says it was best to take advantage of it.

"It's not real fun to be around him when you fail."

As bad as the Ems were in 1984, they were that good in 1985. They improved their record by 21 games and took first place in the Southern Division, drawing more than 100,000 fans for the first time since 1973.

During the early years of Beban's time with the Ems, it was, for the most part, a two-man show. First it was him and Leip, then him and Eileen, his wife.

The two of them handled everything from concessions to

press releases.

"It was a lot of fun," says Eileen, who grew up a Red Sox fan in New England. "During the off-season, Bob would go to winter meetings and I would go to trade shows and do the merchandising."

The Beban's heavy workload translated to 16-hour days at the ballpark. But when asked if his time spent at the ballpark was hard on his two boys, Beban responded:

"No, they spent all their time here."

Both of the couple's two sons worked the Ems' scoreboard and spent time at the ballpark doing other jobs.

"The boys were always here; we were always here," Eileen says.

Bob remembers the early days fondly, but says his current eight-person staff is better for the fans.

"It was very hectic," Beban says of the two-person show. "But as far as the fans are concerned, things are a lot better now because we have more people to take care of their needs. To a certain extent it's easier [for me] now, but sometimes it's harder stepping back and allowing someone else to do something."

How did he like running a minor league baseball club with two people?

"Great," Beban says with satisfaction. "It was a lot of work. You had a lot of responsibilities and a lot of things slipped through the cracks."

These days, Beban, who is also the vice president of the Elmore-owned, double AA San Antonio Missions, has scaled back his hours to about 14 a day. No longer does he have to write press releases after games, nor does he have to organize the gameday picnics. But he is continually working to improve his product.

Every year he improves Civic Stadium in some way. Next season it will be more box seats and a fresh coat of paint here and there. And every year he adds to his staff.

"We're bringing on more employees every year to help us attain our goals," Beban says.

With the success he has found in Eugene, does Beban — who declined to reveal how much he earns with the Ems, only saying, "I do all right." — plan on finishing his career with the Ems?

"Never say never," Beban says. "You always keep your eyes out for something to come along. But there's a lot of good things going on in Eugene."

Including the direction Beban has the Ems heading.

Moyer, Buhner drive Seattle to win

■ **MARINERS:** Jay Buhner drove in four runs and Jamie Moyer struck out six over seven innings for the win

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Jamie Moyer doesn't know why. All he knows is the Seattle Mariners are scoring runs in bunches for him.

To be exact, 7.05 runs per game, the most for any Mariners' starting pitcher.

"I've been very fortunate to be the receiver of a lot of run support," Moyer said after giving up three hits as the Mariners beat Milwaukee 11-1 to move into a first-place tie in the AL West Monday night.

"If you look at the guys who win year in and year out, they get a decent amount of run support," he added.

By breaking out of an offensive funk in a game when Jay Buhner drove in four runs, the Mariners gained one-half game on the idle Anaheim Angels. Seattle, which leads the majors in runs scored, reached double digits for the first time since Aug. 2.

The Mariners had scored a total of 11 runs and bat-

ted .195 as a team in splitting a weekend series with Chicago.

Moyer also has won by scores of 15-4, 13-4, 12-9 and 9-7 this season. His ERA is 4.12.

"I'll tell you what," Moyer said when asked about a pitcher who finds himself with a lot of runs. "If you can tell me, you can make a lot of money. I don't know, I really don't know. In my career, there have been times when I haven't."

A crowd of 51,016 watched Moyer (12-4) stymie the Brewers for seven innings. The left-hander, a changeup specialist, walked one and struck out six.

Moyer went to 2-1 against the Brewers this year.

"We couldn't do anything again with Moyer," Milwaukee manager Phil Garner said. "I don't know why everybody in the league ever throws anything but a changeup to us. He just keeps getting us out with the same stuff."

Mariners manager Lou Piniella watched Moyer improve his record to 18-6 since being acquired in a trade with Boston for outfielder Darren Bragg July 30, 1996.

"His style of pitching is to play with the hitters' timing," Piniella said. "He doesn't give you much to hit."