

Jon “Yosh” Yoshiwara
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deputy sheriff, for years on the television hit series, “Bonanza.”

No pun intended, but Russell was a “big picture” guy whose passion for baseball eclipsed even his love of acting, and he’d seen the youngest Yoshiwara brother play ball. So our future PE teacher traveled north toward unforgettable athletic adventure.
If you were a Portlander and baseball buff in the 1970s, you may remember Russell as the energy, mind, mouth and money behind our colorful, independent minor league baseball team, the Portland Mavericks.

The Portland Beavers’ organized team moved to Spokane for the lack of audience in 1972, so Russell purchased their territory for a walloping \$500. From 1973 to 1977 Russell lived out a dream.
His “gall-darned” independent “A” level team played great baseball from the heart, capturing local fans’ sentiments and sense of humor.

Dressed in their eye catching street-walker red, dig black and snow white uniforms, the “Mavs” turned local baseball attendance on its ear, ranking highest nationally in minor league fan attendance, with that attendance growing year after year.
Their excellence as well as their edgy outrageousness even garnered the attention of national sports commentator Joe Garagiola.

The quirky Mavericks gained acclaim for at least one additional reason. They made Yoshiwara general manager in 1977. In other words, our 22-year-old Maverick infielder was the country’s first Asian American to hold that professional post.

“I didn’t think anything about it at the time. I was a third generation Japanese American. But now I guess being first at anything is noteworthy.”

What Yoshiwara didn’t say is that he might downplay his accomplishments because of his father, Ted, who was socio-politically a hard act to follow.

During World War II the elder Yoshiwara fought for the United States of America in the much honored 442nd Regiment, 100th Battalion.

At a time when Japanese Americans entered concentration camps stateside, these crack infantry men [wanting to prove their loyalty] were earning the largest number of decorations of all

soldiers during that war.
The men of the 100th Battalion earned eight Presidential Unit Citations and 21 Medals of Honor. Ted Yoshiwara himself received a Purple Heart.
Whichever role he played, general manager or infielder, third son Jon “Yosh” Yoshiwara simply had fun. That’s what Russell wanted. “We weren’t hooligans,” says Yoshiwara with a calm smile.
“But we had to play second fiddle to the Blazers and Timbers.” So the Mavs with a chip on their collective shoulders made their mark.

“You know, we did things like rubbing it in when we beat other teams,” Yoshiwara continued. “Or if the other team’s pitcher got replaced, we sang the old Roy Rogers theme song, ‘Happy Trails.’”

Then, of course, there was that wacky sweep. If the Mavs won a series, out came the broom, used first to sweep bases and then to be set afire. But that single broom was not the only thing to be lit.

The fans’ imagination came next. Soon they toted their own brooms to games and waved them in support of a sweep. Then they watched as the entire club ran the perimeter of the field like soccer players, Russell in the lead.

Off-field high spirits also flourished. “We traveled in an old Laidlaw school bus that someone tore the back seats out of. That space was supposed to be the place where the next day’s pitcher slept. But we played cards back there, had a good time. We didn’t hate traveling like other ball players did,” he recalled.

Still, he remembers that a few Mavs had some problems. “We all made \$300 a month in 1976, but we were also each given a check that amounted to \$7.50 a day for all travel meals. Some card players got into a little trouble food-wise, but we worked it out.”

“If we played for fun, we also played for Bing,” said Yoshiwara. “He gave so many players rejected by the big leagues a second chance. He was a salesman from the get go, but never an insincere one.”

“His passion alone fueled everything. With his two degrees from Dartmouth, he was brilliant and could relate to everyone from the highest politician to players to sports writers to ticket sellers to the ground crew.”

“You had this loyalty to Bing. He was a nice man, but a tough one who had



Actor Kurt Russell, filmmakers Chapman Way and and Maclain Way, and composer Bocker Way pose for a portrait during the 2014 Sundance Film Festival screening of “Battered Bastards of Baseball” on January 20 in Park City, Utah. (Photo by Larry Busacca, Getty Images)

a hard job. Yet I’ve spoken with team members he had to release back then. Even they have nothing but respect for the man.”

In July, Netflix released a compelling, high quality documentary, entitled “The Battered Bastards of Baseball.”

Written and directed by Bing Russell’s grandchildren Chapman and Maclain Way, it uses original footage and recounts how the Mavericks played superior heart-felt baseball with a zany irreverence, sealing themselves into annals of Portland’s sports and cultural history.

Yoshiwara provides commentary as do others like former *Oregon Journal* sports writer Ken Wheeler; *Oregonian* sports writer Nick Bertram; 1974-75 team manager Frank Peters; and Russell’s son, actor /baseball-player Kurt Russell.

Highly informative, entertaining and nostalgic, “The Battered Bastards” is a must see, not just for baseball fans, not just for Portlanders.

Anyone with a heart for the underdog will enjoy seeing this raggle-taggle team prevail over the controlling, monolithic institution of organized baseball.

Today, Yoshiwara won’t say the “bad boy” Mavericks were cult figures. But he could change his mind. The film is going viral. And however surprisingly, Adidas now manufactures Maverick clothing.

Get ready to see the iconic retro red, black and white duds recoup their heyday in the 21st Century. Who knows, some wearers may even carry brooms!

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Tuesday, November 4 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.	The 1900 Building 1900 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 2500A

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability is committed to providing equal access to information and hearings. If you need special accommodation, translation or interpretation, please call 503-823-7700, the City’s TTY at 503-823-6868, or the Oregon Relay Service at 711.



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