Baseball Analytics Rhetorically

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In the world of sports, data and technology are currently making a bigger impact than anyone may have previously imagined. Advanced analytics has had an enormous effect on the way that teams, players, and even fans view modern day sports. As technology continues to advance and the amount of data grows, the ceiling for how much knowledge people are able to have about sports will keep rising. In baseball, analytics have arguably been more prevalent than in any other sport. The use of statistics in baseball has not only been used to determine the contractual value of a player, but by knowing the value, teams can more effectively build their rosters. In fact, the success and impact of analytics in baseball can even be seen rhetorically. Using ethos, pathos, and logos, the movie Moneyball and the Marygrove College article demonstrate the usefulness and success of baseball analytics when analyzed in a rhetorical manner.

The movie Moneyball is a very popular movie watched by many fans of the game of baseball. The movie tells the true story of the 2002 Oakland Athletics (Oakland A's or A's) and

how they utilized sports analytics to build a winning baseball team. The movie stars Billy Beane, the General Manager for the Oakland A's, who held such position from 1997-2015. The A's have always been in one of the smaller markets in baseball and consistently rank in the bottom five of the league in team payroll. This makes it harder to compete with teams like the New York Yankees and Los Angeles Dodgers who have much more financial resources. Due to this limitation, in 2002, Beane decided to build up the A's roster in a way deemed at the time to be incorrect by staying away from the traditional method of picking the biggest and strongest players with the highest batting averages, and instead opting for the "nerdier" approach. Beane and the A's began using advanced metrics to select players that would best fit the team.

In the film, there is a scene which displays Beane's new method and use of rhetoric where Beane, his assistant Peter Brand, and many other staff members are in a meeting room discussing which players they want to contract to replace their former star player Jason Giambi, who joined the New York Yankees. In trying to find replacement players, many of the staff members tell Beane about some of the statistics, such as how many homeruns and RBI's (Runs Batted In) some of the prospective players recorded. In response, Beane claims that he wants none of them and begins using the logos appeal to cite the statistics of some the players that he and Peter Brand believe should replace Giambi. Beane wanted to replace Giambi with three new players. He focused on the On Base Percentage ("OBP") of the three players and cites that the average OBP of the three players he wanted to replace Giambi with was cumulatively higher than Giambi's OBP. Beane receives heavy questioning for his decision to replace one of the best players in baseball with these three players who were perceived to be below average, especially when mentioning Scott Hatteberg as one of such players, as his recent elbow injuries indicated

him to be a defensive liability. Eventually, Beane got his way, due to the use of repetition, as he kept on repeating how important OBP was. This use of repetition was also a use of amplification, as Beane and Brand were able to create a sense of urgency in their pitch that showed the staff that they had thought out their plan for constructing the roster. In fact, Beane was very successful in 2002 as he and the A's experienced much success, winning 100 games, which included a 20-game win streak in the middle of August thus giving the A's the final push they needed to solidify their spot in that years Divisional Round of the Major League Baseball ("MLB") playoffs. This section of the movie can evoke a strong sense of pathos in viewers, allowing them to root for an underdog team who defied the expectations. Despite losing in that same round to the Minnesota Twins, this success showed teams of that era what analytics can do and the impact has carried over.

Today, the 2002 A's shown in the movie serve as a source of ethos for teams looking to try the same method. The 2002 A's are proof of the success that the analytical approach of roster construction can have especially for teams who are financially limited. This has persuaded teams of today to try what the A's are trying, including the Tampa Bay Rays, who have adopted a similar method of roster construction and have had two World Series appearances in the past twenty years establishing themselves as a perennial playoff contender despite having lower funds to build a roster than other teams.

However, while the A's have had some good years since 2002, they have faced tremendous struggles over the past five years. Under owner John Fisher, the A's haven't made the playoffs since 2020. Prior to that 2020 season, the A's had also struggled in the playoffs and

hadn't won a postseason series since 2006. While the movie Moneyball is clearly able to show the pathway for teams with less money to succeed, it fails to show the difficulty into maintaining said success. The lack of spending by the A's has allowed for them to fall behind many top teams. However, while the A's don't have much money to spend, Fisher refuses to spend much of the money they have available and continues to put a team of spare parts on the field. This lack of finances and refusal to use them ultimately raises concerns on the issue of whether a salary cap, or salary floor should be put in place to promote competitive balance in baseball, and to negate the impacts on teams by stingy owners like Fisher.

While the movie Moneyball mainly serves as a source of ethos and proof of the success of analytics, pathos and logos also play great roles in the movie. In the film, while Beane is trying to push his new method of roster construction and scouting, many of the other A's executives are skeptical and caught up in their traditional methods. They refused to change the way they evaluated players as they already had an emotional attachment to the traditional and antiquated system of roster construction. This is the present case with many MLB teams who now have adapted, and in most cases combined, both methods of roster construction. On top of pathos and ethos, the movie also uses logos to persuade people that Beane's method of roster construction would be the one best suited for the A's. They started off by stating the obvious, that the A's didn't have the money do what teams like the Yankees are able to do in generally being the highest bidder. Instead, they had to focus on cheaper players, who specialized in little things. They cited OBP as a statistic they valued highly. This importance of using logos by citing statistics in player evaluation to persuade other team executives to go and get certain players has

only increased due to sports analytics. New and more precise statistics like Wins Above Replacement ("WAR") and On Base Plus Slugging percentage ("OPS") continue to be created, thus allowing for more and more precision in determining player value and talent. Lastly, the movie again uses pathos in connecting viewers with the story of the team. By showing at the start of the movie that the team has been financially handcuffed and is about to lose many of its key players, it allows the audience to form more of an emotional connection with the team. This enables the audience to in a way feel bad for the A's, allowing viewers to cheer for the team's success the rest of the movie.

The use of new technology, data, and analytics in the game of baseball and MLB are constantly growing together. The following article from Marygrove College is targeted towards older and newer fans unfamiliar with the effects of baseball analytics and shows some of the effects of analytics in baseball. The article also caters to fans who see things better visually with some charts that display what the text is describing. The article shows many of the ways in which new technology is shaping the game of baseball, specifically when mentioning rule changes to the game as one of the ways that analytics has shaped the modern game. In the article, the main rule change mentioned is the shift. In baseball, the shift is when three or more players are on one side of the field and was often used when the batter had strong tendencies to hit the ball to either side of the field. In 2023, the shift was banned, only allowing for a maximum of two players on either side of the infield. While some people were happy to see the shift gone because it created easier outs and less excitement when a batter hit a ball, pathos could be seen in many baseball traditionalists who felt that taking away the shift would be removing an element of strategy from the game. However, with the emotional connection being taken away from some MLB fans, a

new emotional, pathos-like connection, has been made with many other fans who now feel that MLB listens to and cares about the fans and proving that analytics have been successful on the field, as well as off the field by keeping the fans involved and engaged.

However, the Marygrove College article does not only display the pathos in sports analytics, but also the ethos and logos. In the article there are many subsections which provide ways that analytics have affected the game of baseball. One of these subsections titled "Examples of Analytics Driven Success," mentions previously proven successes of analytics in baseball. It indicates the 2002 A's from the movie Moneyball, but specifically mentions Danny Valencia, a former MLB third baseman. Valencia is the exact type of player that the previously mentioned 2002 A's would be looking for. Someone with mediocre traditional statistics, but with advanced statistics that showed he had much more potential. In Valencia's case, the potential for much more power can be seen in his batted ball data. The third and final proven success of analytics the article mentions is Mike Trout. Deemed by many to be one of the best players of the modern era, Trout has always had excellent traditional statistics. However, using the WAR statistic further proved that to be true, with Trout consistently being in the top of the league in this category and even being the only currently active player in the Top 50 for WAR all time.

Using credible sources and real-life examples, the Marygrove College article demonstrates ethos in sports analytics. In the Article, logos can also be seen inside a different subsection titled "The Draft, Free Agency, and Trades." In this small but important section of the article, logos is used mentioning the methods of player acquisition, which include picking a player in the annual MLB draft, signing a player in free agency, and trading with other teams.

This section of the article again uses logos, specifically citing the Houston Astros as a team known for their analytics based approach to drafting players, but also uses a bit of ethos, as it in turn uses the Astros as a credible source to show the success of analytics in baseball and the validity of the article as a strong source of rhetoric in proving the impact of analytics in baseball. Lastly, the article uses ethos again, as it has been published by Marygrove College. Because the article has been published by an institution of higher learning, it is deemed as being credible because colleges and universities are typically seen as trustworthy sources of information. This sense of trust will lead more people to view the article and see the true impact of analytics in baseball.

In conclusion, the movie Moneyball and the Marygrove College article rhetorically show the importance of using analytics in baseball. These sources both serve as effective displays of the impact that sports analytics has had in shaping the game, with Moneyball also secretly showing the need for salary controls in the sport. Using ethos, pathos, and logos, each artifact is able to clearly display the effectiveness of new data and technology in creating analytics, as well as the use of analytics to transition the game of baseball to the way MLB rosters are created nowadays. The continued advance of analytics and use of rhetoric to allow people to understand and seamlessly adjust to a future method of roster construction will continue to thrive and form MLB and the game of baseball.

SOURCES

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