



## ***Rosales bleeds A's green and gold, but roots are a close Park Ridge family***

*By George Castle, CBM Historian  
Posted Friday, June 14, 2013*

Leafy Park Ridge was long a Cubs colony.

Hall of Famer Ron Santo lived there when he established his “Pros Pizza” business, then moved to nearby Glenview in 1969. The near northwest suburb was the longtime home of broadcaster Vince Lloyd and team business manager E. R. “Salty” Saltwell. More recently, former GM Jim Hendry and top aide Oneri Fleita had their cribs in town.

Now, Adam Rosales wants some representation on the Oakland Athletics for learning the game in Park Ridge.

The heady veteran now lives in Arizona and bases his work in O.co Coliseum, but his heart and soul is firmly back at the family home near Lutheran General Hospital. Rosales had a laser-focus on making the major leagues while gliding about the youth baseball fields in town, while learning his solid values from a close-knit, sports-minded family.

Now an Oakland man for all positions – working the middle infield and sometimes left field – Rosales has to continue working as hard as in his Little League days in Park Ridge, where the family moved after living in Chicago’s Northwest Side Kelvyn Park neighborhood. In his fourth Oakland season overall, he’s been up and down from Triple-A Sacramento the past two years. A lower-than-preferred on-base percentage doesn’t fit in perfectly with GM Billy Beane’s working-the-count style. But Rosales brings intangibles and character that complement a winning, all-25-men-on-deck club like the A’s.



**Adam Rosales said he was able to build off his defensive skills and strong arm. Photo credit [Keith Allison](#).**

“I call it a challenge,” Rosales said of his constant striving to be better. “You look at it as a struggle, it would be a negative experience. If you look at the game as a challenge to meet rather than a threat of defeat, that’s what I’ve got, it’s a lot more enjoyable.”

“It’s tough. You’ve got to recognize it. You’re playing with the best. Every time you succeed, you’ve got to celebrate it.”

The disciplined player learns to perform over a game full of percentages stacked against a hitter. Batting probably is the most difficult athletic skill to master, and even the best fail two of three times.

“It’s a different kind of game,” Rosales said. “It’s a unique game, and that’s why we all love it.”

### **Goal-oriented like Hillary**

Rosales could be the ultimate goal-oriented athlete. He knew where he wanted to go from almost the first time he picked up a bat. In that way, he’s a philosophical soulmate of a fellow alum of Maine South High School – Hillary Rodham Clinton. Mom Debbie Rosales always held up Clinton, whom she calls “a great woman,” as an example of a striver to all five of her children.

“I truly always believed I was going to play in the major leagues,” Rosales said. “I never doubted it. I was four years old. It’s what I always wanted to do. I was going to do everything I could to do it. Thank goodness for my parents. They always pushed me, but weren’t going to push me too hard. They always gave me the opportunities to do it, to take it at my pace.”

Dad William Rosales worked with his three sons and two daughters. The boys played baseball and the girls softball. Adam is very much his sports progeny. Pops still plays softball in a 50-and-over league. Debbie Rosales drove Adam all over to his games, but stressed education first.

Mature beyond his years, Adam attempted to not get ahead of himself, to play above his abilities at the time.

“The main thing was my attitude toward the game,” he said. “A lot of guys get caught up where they’re playing with, who they’re playing with, what team they’re on. As long as I was playing, and progressing, and enjoying the game, I always felt I was taking steps forward.”



**Hillary Rodham Clinton is the most famous alumnus of Maine South.**

“That’s what most players do not want to do. They don’t see it’s one step at a time. They want to jump to the top of the mountain. It takes a lot of diligence, one thing at a time.”

That included making the grade at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. Rosales chose to try to go the distance in school rather than opt out early for the amateur draft. Debbie Rosales recalls her son racking up a 4.00 grade point average as he earned All-MAC conference academic team honors. Adam is three credits short of a degree, which Debbie said he’ll earn on-line soon.

### **Defense first as a baseball foundation**

While starring at Western Michigan, Rosales knew which talents would be his base, and where he’d have to work hard.

“I’ve been blessed with a strong arm and solid defensive skills, which is a good foundation that I can build off of,” he said. “I believed hitting would always come.”



**Adam Rosales got a great academic foundation at Maine South, electing to stay at Western Michigan University for four years instead of going out early in the amateur draft. Photo credit [BubbaFan](#).**

In a college league in downstate Quincy, Ill., Rosales used a wood bat for the first time.

“I hit a buck-eighty in two months,” he said. “It was really discouraging. My dad helped me out. We practiced really hard. It takes a lot of shorter swings with a wooden bat. We really had to break through by working hard.”

Rosales’ draft position – 12<sup>th</sup> round by the Cincinnati Reds in 2005 – meant he’d continue to have to out-work most other players. Fortunately, manager Rick “Rooster” Burleson, the former hustling Red Sox shortstop, knew talent on Rosales’ rookie-league team in Billings, Mont., in 2005.

“He said look at the guys to the right and left,” Rosales said. “They’re not going to make it to the major leagues. I set my mind from that day from rookie ball that I was going to do it. I started playing well. There were times I was discouraged, but I found ways to push through it and persevere through it.”

Around the same time, Rosales read “Moneyball.” He believed in Beane’s philosophies. No one taught him to try to work the count to get a hitter’s pitch. The hitting style is

self-motivated. The philosophy is misunderstood as trying to draw walks. Instead, bases on balls are a by-product of a hitter who can identify the best pitches.

### **Plate patience began in college**

“I believe I started doing that in college,” Rosales said. “I really started developing a better discipline. One step at a time. You have to continue playing. It’s over time, experience, to play as many games as you can.

“That’s why I urge young kids to play as much as they can. Play travel ball. Your strike zone starts at 17 inches. They it narrows down to 10, then you narrow it down to five, you know your pitch.”

After playing in 105 games with the Reds in 2008-09, Rosales was traded to the A’s. He thus joined Maine South alums like Dave Bergman, Joe Zdeb, Jim Walewander and Jim Rushford as a big leaguer.

Rosales had a decent first Oakland season in 2010 with a .271 average and seven homers shifting around the diamond. Despite those “challenges” to which he refers, Rosales likes his home-away-from-home.



**Adam Rosales has long been a fan of Billy Beane, shown here at the 2011 Toronto Film Festival. Photo credit [Gabbot](#).**

“We have a lot of pride here in the A’s organization,” he said. “We bring a lot of young guys in the organization to grind it out, that really are focused, bring a lot of energy to the game.

“Being a part of it, it’s a great fit for me.”