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## Fifty Years of Bay Area Baseball: The Leftie from Lafayette is Still At Bat

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Rob Omo with his trophy collection. Photo Cathy Dausman

Calling someone modest and competitive may seem a contradiction in terms, until you meet Rob Omo. Omo, an Acalanes High School and St. Mary's College graduate, is an electrical contractor by day. But strip the wire cutters from his hands and hand him a baseball glove, and you learn something else about the man. Although he calls himself only "a moderate fan," Omo clearly loves baseball, and baseball has loved him back.

The former southpaw pitcher began playing in Lafayette Little League as a seven-year-old. He progressed through Babe Ruth, Colt, and American Legion leagues and played for Acalanes High School.

Omo lettered in both baseball and football during high school years, where he played running back, wide receiver and strong safety. He also ran track.

During home baseball games, if Omo wasn't starting pitcher, his baseball coach allowed him to run track, suit up again and return to the diamond. Omo was named Lafayette American Legion team's MVP in 1972.

Omo pitched for two years at Diablo Valley College, and continued playing football. But when he attended St. Mary's College he was only allowed to punt. "My coach

didn't let me carry the football because I was on a baseball scholarship," Omo explained.

After college Omo signed with the San Francisco Giants. He pitched in their minor league in 1978 and 1979, returning after a first season knee injury. Omo was told to report to spring training for his third season, but instead was let go. At 24 he was deemed "too old" to play the game.

It was the start of Omo's seventh inning stretch off the field. He began working as an electrician, married, and became a father. When life threw him a curve ball in the form of a divorce, a chance meeting with a buddy pulled him back to the diamond. His friend was playing Tri Valley Men's Senior Baseball League (MSBL) and encouraged Omo to join.

It was "a good distraction," said Omo. Although he no longer pitches (he stopped in 2001), he's still playing competitive hardball, mostly in the outfield, with the Tri Valley League, as he's done since 1995.

"It's a hoot," says Omo, who plays for the Martinez Indians and the Greenwood Ridge Dragons. He was the first inductee in the Tri Valley League Hall of Fame. He says his batting average is still over .400.

Omo has preserved his life in baseball with photos and memorabilia. He keeps his first professional game ball (he pitched a 1-0 shutout against the Burlington Brewers, April 30, 1978), owns a tournament jacket and five MSBL World Series Championship rings. The highlight of his baseball season is his chance to play in MSBL tournaments on professional spring training fields in Arizona. He knows life is sweet, but it also can be short; there are two Tri Valley team members who have died playing the game they so love.

"I was only in the minors, 'A' ball, for two years, but I am still playing," Omo said. "So, for a guy playing in his mid-50's [that's] not bad."

Men's Senior Baseball League (<http://www.msblnational.com/>) was founded in 1988. Their nearly 50,000 members field 3200 teams across the U.S.

Tri Valley MSBL (<http://www.tvmsbl.com/main.htm>) holds 13 national World Series Championship titles and is the Bay Area's only all wood bat MSBL league.

Tri Valley games play on college fields throughout the Bay Area.





Stealing second base. Photo provided

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