



BUSINESS SPEAK Sports talk is outta here!

As baseball season kicks into gear, so does another rite of spring: the urge to use baseball-business metaphors. For you, that means a lot of funny talk around the office. ("That presentation sure was a home run, Brad. By the way, we need someone to pinch-hit this weekend.") For us at FORTUNE, it means a fresh wave of consultant's reports like "Playing to Win: Lessons From the Best Businesses and Baseball Teams," from Marakon Associates.

But there are signs, thank God, that this year could be different. The excellent 2003 bestseller *Moneyball*, by Michael Lewis, suggested that baseball should be talked about more like a business, rather than the other way around. (He argued that GMs like the Oakland A's Billy Beane were changing the game by exploiting market inefficiencies.)

Three cheers for that! In hopes that sports talk in the office is out and that biz-speak on the baseball diamond is in, we offer a metaphoric alternative: Next time your team picks up an overvalued asset whose value depreciates after the acquisition, speak up! Let the GM know that you're onto his faulty decision tree. Sure, it won't score you a sweaty slap on the back at first, but it could be a big win for both business and baseball—in other words, a real home run. —Grainger David

GETTY IMAGES

HIGH CULTURE

THIS DETECTIVE HAS REDISCOVERED A LOST ART

BY SOME ESTIMATES, AS much as \$5 billion of artwork a year is pilfered, and much of that is impossible to trace. Unless a piece is stupendously valuable, there is little coordination among authorities.

Into this breach steps James Mintz, who has run a corporate investigation firm for ten years. Mintz, along with TRACE, a British database outfit, recently set up a joint venture called Art Recovery. Art Recovery compares TRACE's two databases: a listing of stolen art and another itemizing some 4.5 million lots annually at 1,000 auction houses across the globe. When a match comes up—bingo! Art Recovery employs two former Scotland Yard detectives who recover the work. There's a small fee to list a stolen item, and retrieval can run into the tens of thousands.

One of Art Recovery's biggest scores to date involves Sir



JESSE CHEW

Supersleuth Jim Mintz sought—and found—a goddess.

Tatton Sykes of Sledmere House in Yorkshire. In December 2002, he noticed that a life-sized, 1,000-pound statue known as "Goddess of the Harvest," worth some \$30,000, was missing from his garden. Gone. He called Mintz, Mintz put the statue on the cover of company

magazine *TRACE*, and within days a caller in a nearby village reported having seen it being packed for shipment. Art Recovery traced the goddess to Illinois and sent her back to Sir Tatton. Says Mintz: "This gives you a fighting chance of recovering your property." —Andy Serwer

While Boeing struggles to pull out of a death spiral, Airbus today is flying straight and true. But as veteran financial journalist Stephen Aris explains in *Close to the Sun* (Agate Publishing, \$25.95), it has been a bumpy ride—and an expensive one.

Close to the Sun chronicles Airbus's conception in 1967 through its rise to become the world's preeminent maker of commercial airplanes, and has been updated to

include the dramatic resignation of Boeing CEO Phil Condit at the end of 2003.

What makes it a rollicking read is the skulduggery and intrigue that Aris uncovered among Airbus's three founders: the British, French, and German governments.

From this account it's clear that the three have rarely agreed on anything since deciding to start the company, and seem to take pleasure in undercutting one another. Particularly amusing:

In the 1990s, when Airbus was removed from government control and set up as an independent corporation, the British, French, and Germans each attempted to form secret alliances to advance their own agendas. It is little

short of amazing that this agglomeration of self-interested national parties has been able to humiliate mighty Boeing.

While aviation buffs will find this well-told tale fascinating, there's reason for every taxpayer to take note as well: Aris calculates that Airbus has sucked up as much as \$25 billion in taxpayer subsidies and asserts

that Boeing has received an equal amount of indirect support in the form of "Pentagon largesse." —Alex Taylor III

book review

