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Moraga Native is MLB Network Host

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"It was the center of my social world, not Campo," he said. "I made good friends there, whom I still see."

Vasgersian returns to Moraga at least twice a year; his parents live in the same house where he was raised. "When I come back, it's hard to see how run-down the Rheem Shopping Center is," Vasgersian said. "And the Moraga Tennis Club. It was a vibrant, alive place, now closed, abandoned, in disrepair." He contemplated purchasing the club, but he moved on further along than kicking the tires.

Vasgersian's broadcasting career began shortly after he graduated with a communications degree from USC in 1989. "I was a volunteer at an Armenian summer camp," he said. "A fellow volunteer mentioned that he needed a play-by-play announcer for a baseball team he owned in Huntington, West Virginia. It became my first gig."

He ascended through every level of professional baseball, starting with his first major play-by-play job for a minor league team in the California desert, then to El Paso, to Syracuse, to Tucson. "The hotels were uninhabitable, the bus rides were torture, but what a perfect training ground," Vasgersian

said. He named Ken Brett, owner of the High Desert franchise, as his mentor and top influence. "He was always encouraging, always telling me to just be myself," he said.

After five years doing television for the Milwaukee Brewers and seven years with the San Diego Padres, Vasgersian switched in January 2009 to the MLB Network start-up. "Play-by-play is such a debilitating lifestyle, especially with a family," he said. "When I do games on the network and see the local team announcers, I am amazed I was able to do that for so many years."

Vasgersian co-hosts the network morning show MLB Central, and he does play-by-play for many of the network showcase games. He has broadcast the Olympics for NBC, baseball and NFL football for Fox and college football's FedEx Orange Bowl and the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl. His announcing style features a smooth, straight delivery, without the gimmickry and hysterical home run calls that define many of his peers.

Well, at least most of the time. While in San Diego, Vasgersian impersonated lead singer Geddy Lee of Rush and sang the lyrics to "Fly by Night" as he described a Padres' home run to the TV au-

dience. (It's worth checking out on YouTube.) Several years later Lee — a huge Toronto Blue Jays fan — appeared on MLB Central, listened to the home run call and told Vasgersian that he nailed it. "Awesome!" Lee said. Vasgersian pointed to that endorsement as the highlight of his seven years with the network — probably not surprising coming from the kid who crashed Eddie Money's wedding.

Vasgersian lives in New Jersey but still harbors a soft spot for the A's. "The product is more important than people think," he said. "I'm tired of hearing about money. The A's were a top-drawer team in the 80s and they can be again. And I resent the tinkering with the roster. I just wish they could sustain it."

There is little doubt that Moraga is firmly embedded in Vasgersian's art, even more so now that he is married with three children. "I'd love to find a community for my family just like Moraga, if not Moraga," Vasgersian said.

With the new owners promising improvements and upgrades to the Rheem Shopping Center, it may be just the thing to lure Vasgersian back home.

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