

THE SWEET SHEEN OF SUCCESS

He's standing on the mound. Ninth inning. Bases loaded. Full count. Everything in life comes down to this last second. This last pitch. He winds up, throws. The ball breaks sharply. "Cut," yells the director. "Let's try it again."

How many times have you watched a movie and said to yourself, "That guy's not a quarterback. He can't throw. It's so obvious he's an actor." How many sports films have suffered because an actor just didn't know what to do?

Charlie Sheen, Santa Monica High's own baseball alumni, was about to get paid a lot of money to play a pitcher in *Major League II*. He wanted to look right and to throw right, so he hired pitching coach and trainer Kenny Medlock.

Medlock, an All-L.A. City athlete in both baseball and football at Venice, played baseball at Santa Monica College before signing with the Dodgers. He played professionally for nine years, also playing for the Giants, Angels and Portland Mavericks.

The Dodgers were the first team Medlock saw play. He remembers walking into the stadium with a neighbor and saying, "That's what I want to do when I grow up." Roger Craig, the former Giants' manager and pitching guru, was on the mound that day and would become the scout who would sign Medlock years later. Medlock

also was fortunate to have Tommy Lasorda as his first manager. Lasorda gave Medlock the personal discipline he sorely lacked. And Lasorda taught Medlock the way the game is supposed to be played on a mental level.

"If it doesn't hurt when you lose," Lasorda told Medlock, "then you haven't put your heart into it. And if you don't put your heart into it, you'll never taste the fruits of victory. Anything worth having is worth going all out for."

An injury during spring training one year with the Angels was another obstacle Medlock had to hurdle. He stepped on a water sprinkler, partially tore his Achilles tendon and was told by doctors that he'd never play again.

"It was a real crude awakening," Medlock remembered. "It was like Cinderella having her carriage turn into a pumpkin. One moment I was on top of the world. The next minute I'm laying on the world and I can't get up." Medlock not only got up, but after months of rehabilitation and mental training he went on to play three more years on the pro level.

Medlock is still very much a 'player' on the baseball scene. He has been sought after as a

coach by many colleges, including UCLA, but decided to take on the challenge of being Sheen's personal coach. Medlock began training Sheen a few months before *Major League II* began shooting and went on location to Texas to continue the workouts while Sheen was filming *The Chase*, a movie that was released last month.

"I was really impressed with Charlie," Medlock said. "He would work 18 hours a day and then would want to go out and hit baseballs at one in the morning. The coach at Rice University gave me the keys to the stadium.

By Sioux-Z Jessup

We'd be out there hacking baseballs, working out, getting in shape for a movie. But in reality we were just a bunch of kids out there, reverting to being 12 years old. It was great."

Medlock had a definite workout routine set up for Sheen. His main emphasis was placed on warming up the entire body, getting the blood to the muscles and stretching them. Sheen would



At left, Charlie Sheen winds up in a scene from "Major League II." Above, Sheen's personal pitching coach, Kenny Medlock, winds up during his professional career.

run, go through a series of stretching exercises and warm up his arm. The idea in pitching, Medlock says, is to utilize the lower body to supply the power and the upper body to relax.

What bonded Medlock and Sheen was their mutual love of baseball. Medlock was shocked that Sheen is just as much a fanatic about the sport as he is. They would sit and quiz each other for hours on player records and reminisce about high school games. They both have the baseball fever. And Medlock admits it's a condition that lasts a lifetime.

"I think if Charlie had his choice, he'd be riding a bus in Dubuque playing minor league baseball rather than making \$6 million on a movie," Medlock said. "That's what happens when you're absolutely in love with something."