



***Press Clips***

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**FROM THE OC REGISTER****Billy Eppler ponders a key stretch for the Angels leading up to the trading deadline**

By Jeff Fletcher

SEATTLE — The standings and the schedule both make an unmistakable point.

If the Angels are going to reach their goal of making the playoffs, they need to get going.

Now.

“We have three really important weeks in front us right now,” general manager Billy Eppler said Monday. “An opportunity is put in front of us because the team we’re chasing is within our division. We’re going to play them a good amount of times this month. We’ll see how everything unfolds.”

The Angels trail the Seattle Mariners by 11 games in the race for the second wild card, which is a daunting deficit even with 77 games to go. They are 11-1/2 games behind the Houston Astros for the division lead.

Just about all that makes it seem somewhat manageable is the fact that they still play the Mariners 13 times, including nine in the next three weeks. After three this week in Seattle, starting on Tuesday, the remaining 10 games are in Anaheim. The Angels also play the Astros 13 more times, including three in July.

The Oakland A’s are also in front of the Angels, adding to the difficulty of their pursuit.

At 43-42, though, the Angels hardly look like a playoff team at the moment. Since starting 13-3, the Angels have been nine games under .500.

A little of everything has gone wrong.

“When you are looking at a club, you look at three units within that club: the starting pitching, the relief pitching and the offense,” Eppler said. “Each of those units has dealt with some adversity this year, whether that’s injuries or inconsistencies.”

One of the most visible issues has been the bullpen, which has perhaps unfairly been singled out as the team’s primary issue. It’s also an area that Eppler barely addressed over the winter.

In retrospect, Eppler said it was a decision based on prioritizing the team’s needs.

“With the resources we had at our disposal we took the opportunity to shore up left field, second base and third base,” Eppler said, referring to the deals for Justin Upton, Ian Kinsler and Zack Cozart. “We looked into a lot of relievers this winter time. They seemed to be the area of the marketplace that was

moving off the board pretty quickly. I will recognize the fact that there aren't sure things on any side of the game, starting, relief or position player.

"When we were assessing our club and what we need to do, it was clear we needed some guys who could stand the dirt and play second and third and also play left field. Those opportunities presented themselves with more clarity than the relief market. That's the direction we chose."

Now, Eppler has a chance again to upgrade the roster, with four weeks before the July 31 trading deadline.

Eppler said he and his staff have been talking to other clubs to see who is available. He wasn't willing to predict whether they'll be able to make a deal, because "you're trying to forecast the behavior of other clubs."

Eppler did say, however, that relief help is usually the most readily available: "Generally the highest volume of player moved at the deadline are relievers, and relievers on short-term deals."

Whether the Angels would be interested in rental players remains to be seen. Eppler conceded that part of the calculation is how far out they are, and the fact that they may be aiming at a one-game wild card spot. Certainly, the Angels wouldn't want to give up much for someone who would only help for the next three months.

"Ideally, when you can bring in players that have future control, it makes it more palatable vs. what you have to yield in prospect capital for that player," Eppler said.

That's why players like Padres reliever Brad Hand or Reds reliever Raisel Iglesias would likely be better fits for the Angels than, say, Orioles closer Zach Britton. Hand and Iglesias are under control beyond 2018, while Britton is not.

The same is true for offensive help. Third basemen Mike Moustakas and Adrian Beltre are both free agents at the end of the season, so their value to the Angels is limited unless the team makes a strong enough run to get closer to a playoff spot.

Eppler also could try to supplement the big league club by calling up prospects. Pitchers José Suarez and Griffin Canning and infielders Matt Thaiss and Taylor Ward are all having good seasons, and all are at Triple-A.

"As far as prospects go, the mindful thing I've been taught along my development is to let those guys figuratively tap you on the shoulder and tell you when they're ready," Eppler said. "If you put them in a position where you're reaching down and grabbing those guys and pulling them up to the big leagues, I don't think that's best for their professional and personal development."

If nothing helps and the Angels still seem to be a long-shot for the playoffs as the deadline approaches, the Angels also could sell.

Garrett Richards, who is expected to come off the disabled list on Wednesday, could be the most attractive trade piece if he's healthy and pitching well at the deadline. Richards is a free agent at the end of the season.

That, however, would essentially be waving the white flag on this season, which the Angels have been reluctant to do.

"We will always look to improve our major league product," Eppler said.

### **SIGNING PERIOD OPENS**

The international amateur signing period opened on Monday. The Angels were expected to reach agreements with several players, although the most prominent of them will not sign until August. Dominican outfielder Alexander Ramírez, considered one of the top 25 international amateurs, can't sign until next month, because that's when he turns 16.

The Angels have \$2.55 million to spend on international amateurs, because they already used about half their allotment on last year's deals for Kevin Maitan and Livan Soto, former Atlanta Braves prospects who were declared free agents because of Braves violations of international signing rules.

### **UP NEXT**

Angels (Andrew Heaney, 5-6, 3.95) at Mariners (Wade LeBlanc, 3-0, 3.38), Tuesday, 7 p.m., Fox Sports West, KLAA (830 AM)

## **Angels GM Billy Eppler says Shohei Ohtani 'looked good' in 2 simulated games over the weekend**

By Jeff Fletcher

Angels general manager Billy Eppler said Monday he was impressed with Shohei Ohtani's two days of workouts in simulated games over the weekend, as the club decides when to activate him.

"He looked good," Eppler said of the two simulated games. "He was making good decisions in the batter's box, impacting the baseball. You could tell that he had really kept himself in elite physical condition during the time on the disabled list. All in all, we were pleased with how he looks physically and how he was running and the shape he kept himself in."

Ohtani had 20 at-bats against Angels minor league pitchers in two simulated games on Saturday and Sunday, with another workout to go. Monday's workout will not include seeing any live pitching, Eppler said.

The Angels have made no decisions about when Ohtani will return to the lineup, but considering the volume of work he's gotten in the past few days and the reviews, it would not be a surprise for the Angels to activate him on Tuesday.

Ohtani is just over three weeks removed from undergoing stem-cell therapy and a platelet-rich plasma injection to help heal his damaged ulnar collateral ligament. Although he can't pitch, he was cleared to take batting practice on Thursday. Monday would be his fifth consecutive day of workouts that included hitting.

Epler also said Garrett Richards was scheduled for a bullpen session on Monday. Richards, who is on the disabled list because of a hamstring injury, is expected to start on Wednesday in Seattle, if all goes well with his bullpen.

## **FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES**

### **Angels have been maddening with their consistent inconsistency**

By Jeff Miller

He was 11 for 19 over four games in early May, a ridiculous run that spiked his batting average 44 points.

Then he went 21 at-bats without a hit, the longest such drought of his career.

He homered twice in back-to-back games the last time the Angels were here at Safeco Field, flexing for some 1,600 feet of raw power.

Then he went 13 games without an extra-base hit, his weakest stretch ever.

For two brief but undeniable spans, Mike Trout never has been worse as a baseball player while putting together what might be by some measures the greatest season of all time.

This isn't absurdity, folks. This is the 2018 Angels, a team that in the era of true outcomes continues to produce outcomes so pocked with inconsistency that they seem almost unreal.

"That's what we're dealing with right now," manager Mike Scioscia said. "Some guys have not gotten into their consistent game and some guys are playing extraordinarily well."

Often times, it's the same guys doing both, one right after the other, sending the Angels headlong through a progression of peaks and valleys in a sport that preaches the importance of everyday steadiness.

Already this season, they've had winning streaks of seven, six and four games and five losing streaks of at least four games.

They opened June with a win and a loss and then won six in a row before losing four straight. After a victory, they dropped three consecutive, won back-to-back-to-back and then fell six times in succession at the end of the month

“We’ve had a hard time putting everything together,” pitcher Andrew Heaney said. “We really have.”

Part of the problem has been the inability of several Angels to maintain any sort of momentum at the plate. Kole Calhoun, Ian Kinsler, Luis Valbuena and Zack Cozart (before he was hurt) in particular have sputtered.

Scioscia’s exhaustive search for something reliable is perhaps best exhibited by the fact that, over the weekend in Baltimore, Calhoun became the fifth Angel to hit in the leadoff spot.

For a team that too frequently has failed to keep things going, the Angels have had an even harder time getting things started. From the No. 1 position in the lineup, they have a batting average of .213, the worst in baseball. Their .280 on-base percentage also ranks last.

Yet, the Angels are 12th overall in runs scored and still have a differential of plus-17, compared to plus-8 for Oakland, a team they trail by three games.

The Mariners aren’t much better than the Angels at plus-22. But the difference between the teams in the standings, at the moment, is monumental: 11 games.

“If you look at runs scored, we’re not too far off from what we anticipated, even with some of the streakiness,” Scioscia said. “For us to get consistent, though, we do have to do some things on an everyday basis better.”

Every Angel asked is quick to note that baseball players don’t make excuses. The theme is rich enough to be a genuine clubhouse chorus.

But 14 players on the disabled list isn’t an excuse as much as an explanation. Twenty-eight pitchers used isn’t a cop-out as much as a fact.

The pursuit of consistency can’t be made any easier when the players doing the pursuing keep changing. Very little about the 2018 Angels has proved to be dependable, and that includes the identity of the 2018 Angels themselves.

Only Texas has made more DL moves, and the Rangers started looking toward next season shortly after opening day.

And only the Angels have had one news release announcing that four players were being disabled and another announcing that three players had undergone season-ending surgery.

Sure, a team might have to issue such an outrageous announcement once every other decade or so. The Angels did both within two weeks.

“As far as continuity, it makes it tough,” Kinsler said. “But you still need to perform as an individual. You never want to ask ‘what if’ or have a built-in excuse.”

They’ve suffered injuries from A (Andrew Heaney) to Z (Zack Cozart), with several of them serious. The Angels have seven players on the 60-day DL. The Astros have none.

“It happens so much that you honestly become numb to it,” Kinsler said. “You don’t really even think about it. If you’re healthy and available, you can’t let that weigh on your mind.”

So, here the Angels are, considered preseason playoff contenders but solidly fourth in their division, once 10 games above .500 but now only one, just like Tampa Bay entering Monday.

They have 77 games remaining to find some consistency and then hang on to it this time. The task won’t be easy, not based on what the Angels have shown so far, not given their best player’s historic season to date.

After all, in baseball, how hard must something be to do when even Mike Trout struggles to do it?

**FROM MLB.COM**

## **Angels to sign No. 24 int’l prospect Ramirez**

By Jesse Sanchez

The Angels' biggest transaction on the international scene was the signing of Japanese star Shohei Ohtani last year, but the club's overall commitment to the global market should not be overlooked.

In addition to Ohtani, the club also signed 20 prospects from the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Panama and Venezuela during the 2017-2018 international signing period. Their dedication to the market continues this period.

According to industry sources, the Angels are the front-runners to land outfielder Alexander Ramirez of the Dominican Republic. Ramirez, who ranks No. 24 on MLB.com's Top 30 International Prospects list, is from San Cristobal and is trained by his father, Cadri Ramirez, and Amaurys Nina.

Ramirez, who is not eligible to sign until his 16th birthday on Aug. 29, is expected to command a bonus in the \$1 million range.

The club has not yet confirmed the deal.

Ramirez is a solid defender overall. He has the size and the tools that could land him in one of the corner outfield spots as his body matures. At the plate, Ramirez has shown good footwork, an advanced approach at the plate, and the ability to make hard contact to all fields. He's been praised for his raw power and has made strides on all parts of his game in recent months.

According to the rules established by the Collective Bargaining Agreement, clubs that received a Competitive Balance Pick in Round B of the MLB Draft received a pool of \$6,025,400, while clubs that received a Competitive Balance Pick in Round A received \$5,504,500. All other clubs, including the Angels, received \$4,983,500.



Teams are allowed to trade as much of their international pool money as they would like, but can only acquire 75 percent of a team's initial pool amount. Additionally, signing bonuses of \$10,000 or less do not count toward a club's bonus pool, and foreign professional players who are at least 25 and have played in a foreign league for at least six seasons are also exempt.

## **FROM FANRAG SPORTS**

### **Our expectations for Shohei Ohtani (The Batter)**

By Ziad Dahdul

We thought we had seen the last of Shohei Ohtani this season; however, it seems like he's nearing a return to the Los Angeles Angels...as a designated hitter.

Ohtani has not pitched since June 4th after it had been determined that his previously reported grade 1 ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) sprain had progressed to a grade 2. In most instances, this requires season-ending Tommy John UCL reconstruction; however, due to the timing of this discovery, Ohtani and the team decided to treat it conservatively via a stem cell and platelet-rich plasma (PRP) injections and rehabilitation.

It now appears that he is progressing well as Angels manager Mike Scioscia recently stated that Ohtani could have resumed hitting immediately had it not been determined by the medical staff that a 3-week time period of the above-stated injections and rest were indicated. This past weekend, Ohtani participated as a hitter in two simulated games and reportedly "looked good" according to Angels General Manager Billy Eppler.

Ohtani is currently on a hitting program with an eye on returning to the Angels' lineup as soon as this week to serve as their designated hitter. The Angels have not ruled out the possibility of Ohtani returning as a pitcher either, although that remains to be seen.

The track record of managing UCL tears conservatively has not been great historically, although it has been done to varying levels of success (fellow Japanese import Masahiro Tanaka of the New York Yankees rehabbed a partial UCL tear in 2014 and 2015 and has been able to pitch at a high level ever since).

Ohtani's case is interesting in that regardless of whether he had the surgery last month or waits until later this year, he would ultimately still miss the entire 2019 season if conservative management fails. So the Angels are taking a cautious approach with little downside in hopes that he can come back in some capacity and contribute to the club. However, consider the Angels currently sit in 4th place and Ohtani's young age, the team won't do anything to jeopardize his long term health.

Look for Ohtani to be activated from the disabled list sometime this week and serve as the Angels' designated hitter. While it remains a possibility that he returns to the mound sometime in 2018, history tells us that the odds of it working out long term are not great.

**FROM STATS/TSX****Mariners distance themselves from Angels**

The Los Angeles Angels were 4 1/2 games behind the Seattle Mariners when they opened a three-game series three weeks ago. When the Angels return to Seattle on Tuesday to begin another three-game set, they'll be 11 games behind the Mariners for the second wild card from the American League.

The Mariners (54-31) swept the Angels the last time they were in town, and Seattle expanded that cushion by going 7-0 last week for their longest winning streak of the season.

The Angels (43-42) are 6-14 since pulling within 3 1/2 games of the Mariners on June 9. They lost to the Minnesota Twins the following day before getting swept June 11-13 in Seattle. Los Angeles has already played six games at Safeco Field this season but has yet to host the Mariners in Anaheim.

If the Angels drop the series opener, they'll own a .500 record for the first time since the second game of the season.

The scheduled starting pitchers for Tuesday were also matched up on June 11.

Los Angeles left-hander Andrew Heaney (4-5, 3.95 ERA) gave up five runs and seven hits in three innings of the 5-3 loss.

Seattle left-hander Wade LeBlanc (3-0, 3.38) gave up two runs and four hits in five innings in his only career appearance against Seattle.

LeBlanc, who made 10 appearances for the Angels in 2014, including three starts, hasn't experienced a defeat in 11 starts this season, and the Mariners are 8-3 in those games.

The Mariners have also found something special in closer Edwin Diaz, who became the second pitcher in major league history with at least 30 saves and 70 strikeouts before the All-Star break. The other is former Los Angeles Dodgers closer Eric Gagne.

"We've had a lot of valuable players on our team," Seattle manager Scott Servais told reporters after a 1-0 win over the Kansas City Royals on Sunday. "But winning the close games, it creates the type of atmosphere that's going on at Safeco Field right now and the city and getting our fan base psyched again."

Heaney also struggled in his most recent outing, allowing six runs and eight hits in 3 1/3 innings of a 9-6 loss on Wednesday at the Boston Red Sox, but he did not absorb the loss.

He's 1-2 in four career starts against the Mariners with a 4.42 ERA.

The Angels lost two more pitchers to injury on their current road trip.

Jake Jewell sustained a broken right fibula against the Red Sox on Wednesday. The rookie right-hander was making his third major-league appearance when he fell awkwardly while trying to cover home plate on a wild pitch. He had surgery on Friday in Los Angeles.

On Saturday, the Angels announced left-hander John Lamb would undergo Tommy John surgery, the fourth pitcher for Los Angeles to have the season-ending surgery this year.

Los Angeles could soon be adding some offensive punch, however.

Shohei Ohtani, the rookie two-way player who is also out with an elbow injury, has been taking live batting practice and running the bases recently, putting him on pace to resume designated hitter duties this week.

"He's starting to do get through that progression," Angels manager Mike Scioscia told FOX Sports West on Sunday.

Angels first baseman/designated hitter Jefry Marte is also close to returning from a left wrist injury.

**FROM FORBES.COM**

## **Los Angeles Angels Will Have LGBT Pride Event In 2019; Yankees Last To Join Rest of MLB**

By Maury Brown

It was a statistic that caught many by surprise: in a league that has worked diligently around inclusion, not all of the clubs had yet to host Pride Night events.

*Outsports* reported that two clubs in Major League Baseball had not yet hosted any form of Pride night in support of the LBGT community. This season, 23 teams will host such events, with the Cincinnati Reds hosting their first.

But for the 2018 season, the Los Angeles Angels and New York Yankees remain as the two clubs that have yet to join the 28 others in hosting Pride events.

That will change in 2019.

The Angels will host a Pride night in June of next season. This is not something being discussed, a date has been selected, and the only reason not yet announced is that this far out, scheduling can shift. No matter what, the date will fall within the month of June. Sources with the Angels indicate that there has never been some underlying reason why they have not yet done so; there's no hidden anti-LBGT sentiment within the front office.

With the Angels now joining the other 28, it places the New York Yankees as the last to have any word about plans for a Pride Night next season, and I will be reaching out to see if, like the Angels, plans are in the works.

In January of 2017, Major League Baseball promoted three to executive positions around matters of diversity, inclusion and social responsibility. Of those, Billy Bean was promoted to Vice President and Special Assistant to the Commissioner. In the role he is a senior adviser to Commissioner Manfred on human rights issues, with a particular focus on LGBT and anti-bullying efforts.

Bean joined MLB in 2014 as its first Ambassador for Inclusion and has made well over 100 appearances across the league's 30 clubs and addressed players and stakeholders at Baseball's Winter Meetings, the joint Rookie Career Development Program and other League-supported events. At the time of his appointment in 2014 as the first Ambassador of Inclusion, then commissioner Bud Selig said, "As a social institution, our game has important social responsibilities. To this day, the vibrant legacy of Jackie Robinson revolves around inclusion, respect and equal opportunity."