



Press Clips

(June 12, 2018)

CLIPS CONTENT

FROM THE OC REGISTER (PAGE 3)

- **Despite Mike Trout's 2 homers, Angels lose opener to Mariners**
- **No change in Shohei Ohtani's status with Angels; no plan for surgery at this point**

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES (PAGE 6)

- **Andrew Heaney takes a step backward in Angels' 5-3 loss to Mariners**
- **Angels remain 'hopeful' injured Shohei Ohtani won't be lost for the season**

FROM ANGELS.COM (PAGE 9)

- **Trout ties MLB lead (21) in 2-HR night vs. M's**
- **Halos' 3 HRs not enough to pick up Heaney**
- **Rookie righty Barria to rejoin Angels' rotation**

FROM THE ATHLETIC (PAGE 13)

- **Rosenthal: Much hinges on Ohtani recovery; a rookie's special gift; Hamels has trade leverage; more notes****
- **Losing Shohei Ohtani is a huge blow. But the rest of the Angels' rotation may be able to keep the team in contention**
- **Sarris: Did being a two-way player contribute to Shohei Ohtani's injury?**

FROM MLB.COM (PAGE 19)

- **GM pumps brakes on Ohtani surgery report**

FROM MiLB.COM (PAGE 20)

- **Bees' Thaiss ties career high with four hits**

FROM BLEACHER REPORT (PAGE 21)

- **Shohei Ohtani Tommy John Surgery Not Yet Recommended Despite Reports, Angels Say**

FROM CBS SPORTS (PAGE 22)

- **Angels manager Mike Scioscia on Reiter's Block: I have not heard Tommy John surgery is a possibility for Shohei Ohtani**

FROM YAHOO! SPORTS (PAGE 23)

- **Will Shohei Ohtani need Tommy John surgery?**

FROM NBC SPORTS (PAGE 24)

- **Mike Trout had X-rays after fouling a ball off his leg**

FROM SPORTING NEWS (PAGE 25)

- **Angels GM denies report Shohei Ohtani will need Tommy John surgery**

FROM THE WASHINGTON POST (PAGE 26)

- **Angels hope Shohei Ohtani doesn't need Tommy John surgery, but 'it's not good'**

FROM THE STAR TELEGRAM (PAGE 27)

- **Ohtani might need Tommy John surgery. Are Rangers breathing a sigh of relief?**

FROM THE OC REGISTER**Despite Mike Trout's 2 homers, Angels lose opener to Mariners**

By Jeff Fletcher

SEATTLE — On the Stuff Spectrum, the Angels seemed to have a decided advantage on the mound in the first game of this series against the AL West-leading Seattle Mariners.

But Andrew Heaney, coming off a dominant one-hitter, was outpitched by journeyman left-hander Wade LeBlanc in the Angels' 5-3 loss to the Mariners on Monday night.

Heaney, fresh off the best game of his career, cranked his fastball up to 95 mph, along with a sharp curve, but his location was lacking and he gave up three homers, failing to get an out in the fourth.

LeBlanc, meanwhile, befuddled the Angels with a collection of cutters, curves, changeups and fastballs that never cracked 88 mph.

In five innings, LeBlanc gave up just two solo homers, both in the first. Mike Trout hit his 20th homer of the season – he added his 21st, a 459-foot blast, in the eighth inning – and Albert Pujols hit his 10th, marking milestones for each.

For Trout, he became the third player in American League history with seven 20-homer seasons before his age 27 season, joining Mickey Mantle and Alex Rodriguez. Trout also became the first player in Angels history with seven consecutive 20-homer seasons. It was also Trout's 28th homer against the Mariners, his most against any team.

Pujols is the eighth player to ever at least 10 homers in his first 18 seasons. He joins Hank Aaron, Barry Bonds, Harold Baines, Eddie Murray, Frank Robinson, Carl Yastrzemski and Mantle.

After that, the Angels had a shot at a big inning in the fifth, when they had runners at second and third with one out. LeBlanc got Ian Kinsler on a shallow fly ball on a 79 mph changeup. After an intentional walk to Trout loaded the bases, LeBlanc struck out Justin Upton on an 84 mph cutter.

"He just kind of gives you a different look every pitch," Manager Mike Scioscia said. "He moves the fastball around. He reminds me of the way Jamie Moyer used to pitch when he was here. He just kind of takes enough off and keeps guys off balance. He pitched a good five innings for those guys. We had some opportunities but he made some pitches."

Heaney, by contrast, had his worst outing of the season.

He gave up two homers to Nelson Cruz, a two-run shot in the first and a solo homer in the fourth. Cruz, who has spent much of his career with the Mariners and Texas Rangers, has now hit 44 homers against the Angels. Heaney then gave up a two-run homer to Ryon Healy.

"Giving up homers never wins you games," Heaney said. "Not like that. Not that early. Not that often."

Heaney had allowed only one homer in his previous eight games, before three homers in three-plus innings ended his night early on Monday.

“Andrew just looked like he missed some spots with his fastball, yanked a changeup across the plate to Healy,” Scioscia said. “Those guys didn’t miss them. It didn’t seem like he got settled in to repeat pitches like he did in his last start.”

The Angels bullpen then shut out the Mariners over the next five innings, which gave the Angels a chance to come back.

All they could manage was Trout’s second homer of the night. It was the 11th multi-homer game of Trout’s career, his first this season. It was also the 222nd homer of his career, tying Brian Downing for third on the Angels all-time list.

After the game, Trout went for precautionary X-rays on his left shin, which he’d fouled a ball off in the third inning. He said the X-rays were negative, and he expects to play on Tuesday.

Jefry Marte also had X-rays after bruising his left wrist when Dee Gordon hit his glove hand as he was catching a throw. Scioscia said the X-rays were negative, but Marte will be re-evaluated on Tuesday.

No change in Shohei Ohtani’s status with Angels; no plan for surgery at this point

By Jeff Fletcher

SEATTLE — The Angels are still hoping they can get Shohei Ohtani back this year.

“We all feel the prognosis is good and hopefully in three or four weeks we can evaluate him and see where he can at least come back to hit, and what the prognosis is for when he can get back out there and pitch,” Manager Mike Scioscia said Monday.

After Monday’s widespread repeating of a Sunday night report that Ohtani would “probably” need Tommy John surgery, General Manager Billy Eppler said such news is premature.

Eppler said there has been no change in the diagnosis or the treatment plan for Ohtani since the team announced on Friday that he has a grade 2 sprain of his ulnar collateral ligament.

Ohtani underwent platelet-rich plasma and stem-cell injections, and the Angels are “hopeful,” Eppler said Friday, that those will be sufficient for Ohtani to avoid surgery. Scioscia said Ohtani has started undergoing therapy after a few days of rest.

Historically, many pitchers who have grade 2 sprains of their UCL do end up having Tommy John surgery, so it remains a possibility.

But they aren't there yet.

And, if Ohtani does avoid surgery, it's possible the Angels could get him back as a hitter sometime this season, even if he's not able to pitch.

In the meantime, the Angels will fill the immediate void in the rotation by bringing back Jaime Barria to start on Tuesday. Barria had been on a shuttle between Triple-A and the majors, posting a 5-1 record with a 2.48 ERA in seven starts. He had been going back to Triple-A whenever the schedule provided an off day so the Angels didn't need six starters. Now, it's likely he will remain in the big leagues indefinitely.

"I think Jaime definitely has pitched himself onto our depth chart, from spring and continuing to perform well here," Scioscia said. "We're encouraged at how much he's grown and where he is right now, and how much he'll help us this year. There is no doubt he's pitched his way into more looks for us now."

The Angels have off days each of the next two weeks, so they can still have five starters and have the pitchers mostly get an extra day of rest. Scioscia said they still might periodically add a sixth starter in order to provide the extra day of the rest when there isn't an off day.

"There are definitely going to be times we would consider adding a guy because the rest of the guys have pitched at a higher level with the added rest here or there," Scioscia said.

The Angels have Parker Bridwell at Triple-A, although he has struggled to an 8.68 ERA in six starts. The best starter at Triple-A has been left-hander John Lamb, a former top prospect who is working his way back from multiple years of back injuries. Lamb has a 3.44 ERA with 54 strikeouts in 49-2/3 innings.

ALSO

Jabari Blash was recalled from Triple-A and Michael Hermsillo was optioned. Blash was hitting .324 with 18 homers at Triple-A. "Jabari is swinging the bat very well down there," Scioscia said. "We're going to try to give him a look. We've got some left-handed pitchers coming up." He was in the lineup on Monday night against left-hander Wade LeBlanc. The Mariners are scheduled to start another lefty, Marco Gonzales, on Wednesday. ...

Andrelton Simmons (sprained right ankle) has begun playing catch and hitting off a tee, Scioscia said. He has done some cardio on an elliptical trainer, but he hasn't run yet. There is no timetable for Simmons' return, but Scioscia said "he's made a lot of improvement the last couple days." ...

Kole Calhoun (strained oblique) is hitting in Arizona, at the Angels spring training complex. Scioscia said they'll keep evaluating him to determine if he needs a rehab assignment. ...

The Angels signed second-round pick Jeremiah Jackson for a bonus of \$1,196,500, which is the exact slot value for his pick. They have also reached agreements with first-round pick Jordyn Adams and fifth-round pick William English, but they aren't finalized yet.

UP NEXT

Angels (Jaime Barría, 5-1, 2.48) at Mariners (Mike Leake, 6-3, 4.46), Tuesday, 7 p.m., Fox Sports West, KLAA (830 AM)

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

Andrew Heaney takes a step backward in Angels' 5-3 loss to Mariners

By Jeff Miller

On his 27th birthday, Andrew Heaney produced what his manager called "a masterpiece."

Six days later, Heaney churned out something that looked more like a knocked-over can of paint.

It was a mess.

The left-hander followed the first complete game of his career with something decidedly less complete Monday night in a 5-3 loss to the Seattle Mariners.

He retired only nine batters and none of the five he faced in the fourth inning. Heaney's three-inning start was his shortest since September.

"Just looked like he missed some spots with his fastball," manager Mike Scioscia said. "It didn't seem like he got settled in to repeat pitches like he did his last start."

The Angels arrived at Safeco Field after winning seven of their previous nine games, a successful stretch during which they gained nothing on the first-place Mariners, who had won eight of 10.

The hotter of the two teams showed itself at the expense of a pitcher who couldn't have started the game in a much more confident position.

In his previous start, last week in Anaheim, Heaney pitched a one-hit shutout against the Kansas City Royals. Afterward, he talked about the thrill of shaking hands with his teammates on the field after the final out, saying, "I'll try to do it again."

Then the Mariners stepped to the plate and, after only four batters, doubled the hit total Heaney had given up against the Royals.

He eventually surrendered two home runs to Nelson Cruz and one to Ryon Healy, the Mariners connecting for more than 1,200 collective feet of carnage.

“Giving up homers never wins you games,” Heaney said. “Not like that. Not that early. Not that often.”

In eight of his first 10 starts, Heaney gave up no home runs. He’d given up only one since April 20, a span of 511/3 innings.

So, on a night that started with Heaney throwing eight consecutive strikes, the Mariners were the ones who delivered the early knockout.

The game soured quickly for the Angels after starting with much promise. Mike Trout and Albert Pujols both homered in the first inning against former Angel Wade LeBlanc, a soft-serving left-hander who turned out to be more baffling than brilliant.

After the first, LeBlanc and his mid-80s arsenal shut out the Angels over the next four innings.

His defining moment ended the fifth, LeBlanc striking out Justin Upton after intentionally walking Trout to load the bases. The deciding pitch reached only 83.6 mph.

“He just kind of gives you a different look every pitch,” Scioscia said. “He reminds me of the way Jamie Moyer used to pitch here.”

LeBlanc was with the Angels twice during the 2014 season, his tenure in Anaheim interrupted when he was claimed off waivers by the New York Yankees, for whom he pitched a single inning and gave up two runs.

For the Angels, he appeared in 10 games (three starts), going 1-1 with a 3.45 ERA.

Following LeBlanc’s departure, the Angels had chances against the Seattle bullpen. But they failed to score after Luis Valbuena’s one-out double in the seventh and after putting two runners on with two outs in the eighth.

A day after stranding eight runners in a loss at Minnesota, Trout did his part, delivering a second home run to lead off the eighth.

This came after he fouled a ball off his shin in the third, a development that had him undergoing X-rays following the game. The test revealed no fractures.

“It’s a bruise,” Trout said. “It’s baseball.”

He said he expected to play Tuesday, not surprising since the homer he hit off his hurting leg traveled an estimated 459 feet.

“Missed a couple fastballs before that,” Trout explained. “Didn’t miss that one.”

Angels remain 'hopeful' injured Shohei Ohtani won't be lost for the season

By Jeff Miller

For a player who hasn't as much as picked up a baseball yet, Shohei Ohtani certainly has been making news.

Or, at least, has been in the news.

In the 24-hour period that preceded the Angels' game Monday, one report indicated Ohtani would "probably" have elbow ligament-replacement surgery and another said the team is "cautiously optimistic" he'll return this season.

If either of those developments were definitive that would be news, even to the Angels, who confirmed that nothing with Ohtani has changed since he was put on the disabled list last week.

They remain "hopeful" — that's general manager Billy Eppler's word — that Ohtani can avoid surgery through the platelet-rich plasma injection he received Thursday.

Manager Mike Scioscia reiterated any plans for Ohtani won't be determined for another "three or four weeks," the time necessary to gauge the effectiveness of the injection.

Scioscia did say Ohtani has begun therapy that will continue daily on the Grade 2 sprain of his right ulnar collateral ligament.

He also suggested there's a chance, given the proper medical clearance, that Ohtani could come back as a hitter sooner even if he is unable to pitch.

Eppler already has explained that the Angels won't do anything that could cause Ohtani further risk of injury.

"We haven't gotten that far, but I would think we'll wait for direction from our medical staff to see if that's a possibility," Scioscia said. "We hope to have that evaluation in the next three or four weeks."

Jabari Blash returns

The Angels' search for production from the right-field position brought them back to a familiar name when Jabari Blash was promoted from triple-A Salt Lake and started against Seattle.

Rookie Michael Hermosillo was optioned to Salt Lake.

Blash joined the Angels for the first time on their visit to Safeco Field in May. He appeared in three games and had two hits in nine at-bats.

"For me, it's just trying to not do too much," Blash said. "Just put up good at-bats and compete. I get in the box and I try to shut the world off and get to work."

The Angels have a .158 average from their right fielders.

Short hops

Rookie Jaime Barria, who is tied for the team lead with five victories, will be recalled from Salt Lake and start Tuesday. ... The Angels appear to be taking a slow approach to **Kole Calhoun's** return from an oblique strain. Scioscia indicated Calhoun's recovery likely will include a rehab assignment.

FROM ANGELS.COM

Trout ties MLB lead (21) in 2-HR night vs. M's

Statcast tracks Angels star's 2nd blast at 459 feet

By Maria Guardado

SEATTLE -- It didn't take long for Mike Trout to break out of his mini-slump.

Trout hammered his 20th home run of the season off left-hander Wade LeBlanc in the first inning of the Angels' 5-3 loss to the Mariners on Monday night at Safeco Field. He then added his 21st home run off reliever Ryan Cook to lead off the eighth, tying Red Sox slugger J.D. Martinez for the MLB lead. The second homer rifled off Trout's bat at 115 mph and traveled a projected 459 feet, making it his second-farthest and second-hardest-hit blast under Statcast™ tracking.

"I just missed a couple fastballs before that," Trout said. "I didn't miss that one."

Trout had entered Monday 2-for-19 (.105) with no extra-base hits, no RBIs and seven strikeouts over his last five games, but he helped put that skid in the rearview mirror by crushing a 2-2 changeup from LeBlanc to left field for a solo home run that put the Angels on the board.

With the first-inning blast, Trout became the first Angel in franchise history to hit at least 20 home runs in seven consecutive seasons. He also joined Alex Rodriguez and Mickey Mantle as the only American League players to record seven straight 20-homer campaigns before their age-27 seasons.

Trout gave the Angels a bit of a scare after fouling a ball off his left shin in the third inning, but he remained in the game and later secured the 11th multi-homer game of his career. X-rays were negative, and the 26-year-old center fielder said he expects to play Tuesday.

"It's all right," Trout said. "Sore. We got precautionary X-rays, but there wasn't a break or anything, so that's always good news. It just hit me in a good spot, missed the guard. It happens. Obviously, it's going to be sore once the adrenaline from the game stops. It just went numb for a little bit. Just got to monitor it, keep icing it and get the swelling out."

Halos' 3 HRs not enough to pick up Heaney

Trout goes deep twice to match MLB lead with 21

By Maria Guardado

SEATTLE -- Left-hander Andrew Heaney followed up his best start of the season with one of his worst, yielding five runs over three-plus innings in a 5-3 loss to the Mariners in Monday night's series opener at Safeco Field.

Heaney, who was coming off a one-hit shutout against the Royals on his 27th birthday last week, had allowed just four home runs through his first 10 starts of the season, but he surrendered three on Monday, including two to Nelson Cruz. Heaney was chased without recording an out in the fourth and departed after giving up seven hits, walking one and striking out two.

"Giving up homers never wins you games," Heaney said. "Not like that. Not that early, not that often."

Mike Trout crushed his 20th and 21st home runs of the season, and Albert Pujols added the 624th of his career, but it wasn't enough to prevent the Angels (37-30) from slipping 5 1/2 games behind the first-place Mariners in the American League West.

The Angels jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first after Trout and Pujols homered off Seattle left-hander Wade LeBlanc, but the Mariners tied it in the bottom half of the inning on Cruz's two-run shot off Heaney.

Heaney avoided damage over the next two innings, but he unraveled in the fourth, allowing all five batters he faced to reach base. Cruz led off the inning with his second home run of the night, a 415-foot bomb that hit the batter's eye in center field and put the Mariners ahead, 3-2. After Kyle Seager singled, Ryon Healy extended Seattle's lead to 5-2 with a two-run homer to left-center field.

Heaney then yielded a double to Guillermo Heredia and a walk to Denard Span, prompting manager Mike Scioscia to replace him with reliever Noe Ramirez. Heaney left runners on first and second with no outs, but Ramirez worked out of the jam by striking out Mike Zunino and coaxing an inning-ending double play from Dee Gordon.

"Andrew just looked like he missed some spots with his fastball," manager Mike Scioscia said. "Those guys tonight didn't miss him. Cruz got a hold of a couple fastballs. Just didn't seem like he got settled in to be able to repeat pitches like he did in his last start."

The Angels came back to threaten in the fifth after Jabari Blash walked and Martin Maldonado doubled, putting runners on second and third with one out for the top of the Angels' batting order. LeBlanc induced a flyout from Ian Kinsler before the Mariners intentionally walked Trout to load the bases with two outs. The gamble paid off, as Justin Upton subsequently struck out swinging on an 83.6-mph cutter from LeBlanc to quash the Angels' rally. Upton is now 3-for-25 against LeBlanc in his career.

"He just kind of gives you a different look every pitch," Scioscia said. "He moves his fastball around. He reminds me of the way Jamie Moyer used to pitch when he was here. He just kind of takes enough off and keeps guys off balance. He pitched a good five innings for those guys tonight. We had some opportunities, but he made some pitches."

Trout homered off reliever Ryan Cook to start the eighth, securing his 11th career multi-homer game and cutting the Mariners' lead to 5-3. The Angels also put runners on first and second with two outs after Pujols reached on an error and Jose Fernandez singled, but Cook struck out Blash to preserve the Mariners' lead.

Closer Edwin Diaz then worked a 1-2-3 ninth to shut the door for the Mariners.

MARTE DEPARTS

Jefry Marte exited the game after sustaining a left wrist contusion on a play at first base in the third inning. Luis Valbuena bared a bunt attempt by Gordon and fired to first in time for the out, but Gordon ran into Marte's glove, which caused his wrist to bend back awkwardly. Marte immediately dropped his glove and grimaced in pain, prompting trainer Adam Nevala to come out and check on him. Marte initially stayed in the game, but he was replaced by Fernandez in the fourth. Scioscia said X-rays were negative and Marte will be evaluated again on Tuesday.

SOUND SMART

Trout and Pujols each homered in the first inning for the ninth time with the Angels, the most of any teammates in Major League history.

UP NEXT

The Angels will recall rookie right-hander Jaime Barria (5-1, 2.48 ERA) from Triple-A Salt Lake and deploy him against the Mariners on Tuesday at 7:10 p.m. PT at Safeco Field. Seattle will counter with right-hander Mike Leake (6-3, 4.46 ERA). Barria last pitched in the Majors on June 1, when he tossed six shutout innings against the Rangers. He is set to make his first career start against the Mariners.

Rookie righty Barria to rejoin Angels' rotation

"We're encouraged by how much he's grown," Scioscia says of 21-year-old

By Maria Guardado

SEATTLE -- Angels rookie Jaime Barria has shuttled between the Majors and Triple-A Salt Lake all season, but he might finally be here to stay.

Barria, who has logged a 2.48 ERA over 36 1/3 innings in seven starts for the Angels this season, will be recalled from Salt Lake on Tuesday to face the Mariners at Safeco Field.

The 21-year-old right-hander is the logical candidate to fill the vacancy in the Angels' rotation left by the injured Shohei Ohtani, who was diagnosed with a Grade 2 sprain of the ulnar collateral ligament in his

right elbow and will be shut down for at least three weeks after receiving both platelet-rich plasma and stem-cell injections on Thursday in Los Angeles. Ohtani will be re-evaluated in three weeks, but Barria figures to get an extended look in the interim.

"I think Jaime has definitely pitched himself onto our depth chart from spring," manager Mike Scioscia said on Monday. "He did perform well here, so we're encouraged at how much he's grown, where he is right now and how much he'll help us this year. There's no doubt, he's pitched his way into more looks for us."

The Angels have often used a six-man rotation this season to accommodate Ohtani's once-a-week pitching schedule and give the rest of their starters extra rest, but Ohtani's injury has winnowed their pitching depth, making a return to a standard five-man rotation more likely. Still, Scioscia didn't rule out the possibility of occasionally carrying an extra starter to guard against fatigue in the rotation.

"I think there are definitely some things to look at," Scioscia said. "This week and next week we have two off-days, which helps to accomplish the same thing. But there are going to be times where we would consider adding a guy because I think the rest of the guys have pitched at a higher level with the added rest here or there."

Garrett Richards (3.26 ERA), Tyler Skaggs (3.08 ERA) and Andrew Heaney (3.12 ERA) are among the Angels' starters who have struggled with injuries in the past, but they've managed to stay healthy and flourish this year. Since May 1, the Angels' rotation has posted a 2.74 ERA, the best in the American League.

"I don't think it's anything that hasn't been contemplated before," Scioscia said of the six-man rotation. "It's just trying to do it and executing it is tougher than just putting in on paper and saying, 'This is what we're going to do.' Some organizations are going to have the depth to be able to do it, and sometimes you're not. We had a lot of guys, especially with Shohei coming into the rotation, where it made a lot of sense. It still makes a lot of sense."

Blash up, Hermosillo down

The Angels recalled outfielder Jabari Blash on Monday and optioned outfielder Michael Hermosillo to Triple-A Salt Lake. Blash started in right field against the Mariners in Monday night's series opener at Safeco Field.

Blash, 28, is batting .324 with a 1.166 OPS, 18 home runs and 44 RBIs in 47 games with Salt Lake this year.

"Jabari is swinging the bat very well down there and we wanted to give him a look with some left-handed pitchers coming up," Scioscia said.

Simmons progressing

Shortstop Andrelton Simmons (Grade 2 right ankle sprain) has resumed throwing and hitting off a tee, though he is not yet running. Simmons landed on the disabled list on June 6, but the Angels have not provided a timetable for his return.

"He's made a lot of improvement the last couple days," Scioscia said. "He's starting to get into some baseball activities, which is good. It's just the beginning stages, but he's moving in the right direction."

FROM THE ATHLETIC

Rosenthal: Much hinges on Ohtani recovery; a rookie's special gift; Hamels has trade leverage; more notes

By Ken Rosenthal

Everyone wants answers, an exact timeline on Shohei Ohtani's recovery, a forecast for what might happen a month from now, a year from now, forever more.

Sorry, those answers do not exist, not a mere five days after Ohtani received injections of platelet-rich plasma and stem cells to address a Grade 2 sprain in the ulnar collateral ligament of his right elbow.

Every pitcher is different. Every arm is different. Maybe, as manager Mike Scioscia suggested to reporters on Monday, Ohtani can return as a hitter this season even if he cannot pitch. Or maybe Ohtani will indeed require Tommy John surgery, forcing him to miss the entire 2019 season.

Either way, the decision on surgery need not come anytime soon. Assuming the Angels took their normal conservative approach to a pitcher recovering from Tommy John — which they would be insane not to do — Ohtani likely would miss all of 2019 whether he had the operation in July or October. So, the club has no choice but to follow the same process with Ohtani it has from the start of his two-way experiment, going day to day.

The problem, of course, is Ohtani's outsized importance to the club, both short- and long-term, at a time when the Angels are five games behind the Houston Astros and 5 1/2 behind the Seattle Mariners for the only two postseason berths likely in question in the American League.

The Angels rank sixth in the 15-team AL in runs per game, but their offense is inconsistent — they've scored three or fewer runs in 35 of their 67 games (52 percent). Their surprising 2.90 rotation ERA since May 1 ranks among the best in the AL, and their five starters besides Ohtani are healthy. But their bullpen already has lost three pitchers to Tommy John surgery (J.C. Ramirez, Blake Wood and Keynan Middleton), a blow lessened somewhat by the emergence of Justin Anderson.

Ohtani, who turns 24 on Dec. 5, has produced a 3.10 ERA in nine starts as a pitcher, a .907 OPS in 129 plate appearances as a hitter. Without him, the Angels still might catch the Mariners, who are a gloriously unsustainable 21-9 in one-run games and about to play 10 straight games against the Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees (yes, it's probably safe to concede the Astros a playoff berth). But Angels general manager Billy Eppler almost certainly will need to fortify his bullpen and perhaps add another bat, knowing his Seattle counterpart, Jerry Dipoto, will remain in his usual frenzied state trying to get his

club to the postseason for the first time since 2001. The Angels' .420 OPS out of right field, largely due to the struggles of Kole Calhoun, who went on the DL with a right oblique strain on June 2, is by far the lowest of any club at any position in the majors.

The good news: The Angels' farm system is improving, thanks to the additions of several athletic outfielders in recent drafts as well as the emergence of some starting pitchers at the upper levels. Ideally, the Angels would prefer to keep the group together and even add to it to maximize their chances of long-term contention, especially if they are playing only for a wild card. But with center fielder Mike Trout signed only through 2020 and enjoying the best all-around season of his spectacular career, they cannot afford to wait — even if the more logical move, if the gaps in the standings widen, might be to deal potential free agents such as right-hander Garrett Richards.

The ticking clock on Trout's tenure in Anaheim makes the potential long-term loss of Ohtani that much more ominous. The Angels arguably would lose their two best starting pitchers for 2019 if Richards departed in free agency and Ohtani underwent Tommy John surgery. Ohtani presumably would return in '20, in time for Trout's final season under contract. But that might be it, just one full season together for two of the best players in the world.

Trout is set to become a free agent at 29. His price will only increase after Bryce Harper and Manny Machado re-set the market. At some point, he surely will want to win, and perhaps play closer to his home in Millville, N.J, even if Angels owner Arte Moreno is willing to pay him whatever he desires.

Get well soon, Shohei. The Angels need you, in more ways than one.

****Article edited to include only Angels-related material.*

Losing Shohei Ohtani is a huge blow. But the rest of the Angels' rotation may be able to keep the team in contention

By Brent Maguire

The Angels currently sit at 37-29 and find themselves right in the thick of the AL playoff picture. Thanks to a scorching-hot start from Mike Trout, the dynamic two-way play of Shohei Ohtani and Andrelton Simmons' transformation into a star, the Angels have a real shot at making the playoffs for the first time since 2014.

A big reason for the Angels' hot start is tied to a surprisingly effective starting rotation. I wrote about the Angels' serious arm issues coming into the season, and the very low success rate of past rotations in similar positions. The Angels' rotation appeared to be bucking that trend ... until the bad news broke regarding Ohtani.

Ohtani was diagnosed with a Grade 2 sprain of the UCL in his throwing arm, leaving the rest of his season in jeopardy, and possibly the next calendar year as well if he undergoes Tommy John Surgery. To

say Ohtani's production will be quite tough to replace would be an understatement, given his elite performance on the mound and at the plate.

Among starters with at least 40 innings, Ohtani ranks near the top in numerous categories, especially in those involving missing bats.

		Rank
ERA	3.10	28th
Strikeout %	30.5 %	10th
Contact %	64.8%	1st
Swinging-Strike %	15.7%	2nd

Ohtani has legitimately been one of the best pitchers on an inning-per-inning basis. Injuries to pitchers J.C. Ramirez (Tommy John Surgery) and Matt Shoemaker (Forearm Surgery) have depleted the depth in the rotation and put a lot of pressure on the rest of the starters.

Luckily for the Angels, though, Ohtani hasn't been the only valuable member of that starting rotation. Viewed as a weakness entering the season, it has churned out production that places them near the top in several categories.

		Rank
ERA	3.61	8th
fWAR	5.1	11th
Strikeout %	24.1 %	8th
Contact %	73.2 %	1st

The group is walking too many batters (ninth worst walk percentage) but they're excelling with their run prevention and they're missing more bats than any other team in baseball. They rank first in both contact percentage and swinging-strike percentage (12.1 percent).

The rotation performing this well isn't too surprising, as many of the Angels' starters have high ceilings. The real surprise has been the fact that several of those starters have stayed relatively healthy.

Garrett Richards has always had dominant, top of the rotation stuff, but this season he's been effective while steering clear of injuries, something that hasn't happened in some time. Richards has churned out a 3.26 ERA in 66 1/3 innings, and while his 11.4 walk percentage is still too high, his rare combination of strikeouts (27.1 percent strikeout rate) and grounders (50.6 percent) has made him tough to beat.

Andrew Heaney, who has a 3.12 ERA in 60 2/3 innings, tossed a one-hit shutout last week and surprisingly leads Angels starters with 1.5 fWAR. In the middle of May, our very own Eno Sarris analyzed Heaney's quirky pitch mix and how he was on the verge of a breakout. It appears that breakout has indeed arrived for the 27-year-old who has long been hyped up since he was selected ninth overall in the 2012 draft.

Like Heaney, Tyler Skaggs is one of the Tommy John Surgery survivors who has finally hit his ceiling. Skaggs added a changeup to his repertoire, which created a stronger arsenal and led to a 3.08 ERA in 73 innings. The combination of Richards, Heaney and Skaggs gives the club a dependable core even without Ohtani.

The club has also received surprises from unexpected sources, such as 21-year-old rookie Jaime Barria posting a 2.48 ERA in 36 1/3 innings. Ohtani's injury likely opens the door for Barria to get more exposure in the majors.

Nick Tropeano, another Tommy John Surgery survivor, hasn't been all that good (4.83 ERA) but will now likely continue to receive more starts as well.

The Angels may also have to explore outside of the organization for another source of quality innings. While the trade market isn't flooded with tons of options (other than perhaps Michael Fulmer or Chris Archer), it wouldn't be a reach to assume the club targets another pitcher if Ohtani is done for the year. The Angels' improved farm system opens the door for a trade to happen, but it's unclear whether the club will part ways with some of their better prospects.

If the Angels manage to stay in the race, (they're currently 4 1/2 games back for the second AL Wild Card spot), they'd be hard-pressed to not actively make moves to improve. With other holes on the roster, such as the bad right field production and a questionable bullpen, the club may not have enough resources to add another piece to the rotation.

And prioritizing those other issues may be the route to go for the Angels, who have relied heavily on the rotation after a shaky first month (5.06 ERA). While the absence of Ohtani undoubtedly complicates things for them, the performance of the starting rotation, along with the typically elite production from Mike Trout, may just be enough to keep the club in contention going forward.

Sarris: Did being a two-way player contribute to Shohei Ohtani's injury?

By Eno Sarris

Because Shohei Ohtani is such a singular player, it makes sense that we have an instinct to blame setbacks on his unique circumstances. Even though injury seems to come for every pitcher, we have to wonder if maybe the way the Angels' star pitches, or the way he plays baseball at least, could have contributed to his current situation. A Grade 2 UCL sprain and a waiting game — is this the reward for trying to hit hard *and* throw hard? The answer is no... but maybe also yes, at least a little.

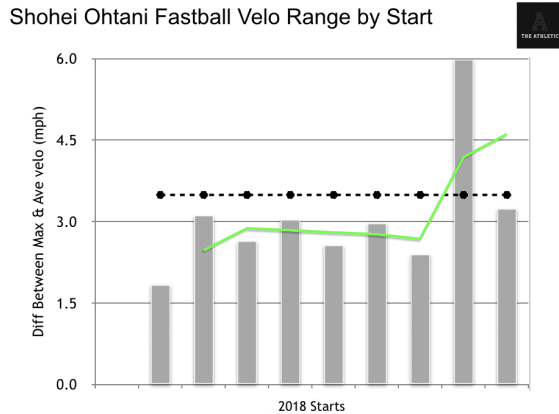
Could Ohtani have hurt himself swinging? Obviously, things *can* go wrong on a swing, as Michael Conforto's shoulder and Jacob deGrom's elbow can attest. But we don't have any report that Ohtani hurt himself that way.

Could swinging over and over again put more stress on the elbow? We don't have all the evidence we need here, but Jason Ochart and the team at Driveline Baseball has tried to measure elbow stress on swings, and found that the rear elbow is subject to less than one third the stress (20 Nm) of a single thrown pitch on a swing (61 Nm). It's probably similar for the front elbow, meaning that in all 125 plate appearances Ohtani has seen this year, he's put the equivalent of one-third of the stress of 238 pitches on his arm. Two-plus starts worth of pitches at 1/3 stress are probably not what bumped Ohtani's elbow from a pre-season Grade 1 UCL sprain to its current Grade 2.

But Ohtani throws harder than your average bear. Could it be that he swings hard *and* throws so hard? All those fastballs, at the third-highest velocity among starters... that has to be the problem, right?

Maybe. Velocity has been shown to be a stress on the arm. But Glenn Fleisig at ASMI found that there was something more important than raw velocity when it came to arm stress. *Relative* velocity — how close the pitcher was throwing to his own maximum velocity — was more important. And when it comes to relative velocity, Ohtani doesn't stick out when seen in aggregate. His fastball has averaged 97.4 and he's maxed out at 100.5, and that 3.1 mph difference is only slightly tighter than last year's 3.5 mph league average difference.

That doesn't tell the entire story, though. Here's Ohtani's difference between max and average velocity by start this year.



The dashed line is the league average, the green line is Ohtani's rolling average, and there are a few things that stand out from the graph. One, he debuted with a lot of adrenaline and was throwing closer to his max than your average playoff starter last year. Then he chilled out a bit, and then in his second-to-last start, against the Tigers, he gave himself a lot of breathing room. Maybe he was already feeling sore in that start, though, and maybe it was the early stress in those first few starts that were the problem.

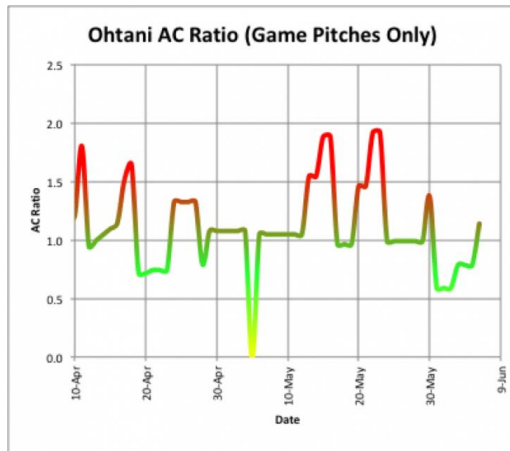
All of this doesn't account for Ohtani's schedule, though. Pitching once a week is one thing, but once he skipped a start and went a full ten days between starts, he put himself on a truly unique calendar. And one that might not have been a benefit to his health.

Think about your life. Have you ever taken a break from working out and then pulled a hamstring trying to sprint to make a light or impress your kid or leg out that infield single in beer league softball? There's a relationship between acute and chronic work in your body: Working out regularly prepares your body for those acute stress moments. Ask American League pitcher Masahiro Tanaka, who just strained both hammies running the bases in a National League game.

That relationship has long been a truism when it comes to muscles in the legs, but Dr. Tim Gabbett adapted the work to find a similar relationship between acute and chronic work in a pitcher's throwing arm.

Over at Motus, a company that makes products that help measure stress on athletes, they've used Gabbett's work to make the recommendation that pitchers should keep their acute to chronic ratio (ACR) between 0.8 and 1.2. In other words, there should be a balance between game day work and side days and days off — your arm has to be prepared for the huge stress of game day (especially at 100 mph, especially so close to your personal max).

Will Carroll broke it down and produced this graph, which shows Ohtani's ACR ratio over time.



What we don't know here is important, though. We don't know what Ohtani's side work looks like. We can assume that it's about the same as a major leaguer for the purposes of graphs like these, and if that's the case, maybe the pitcher's schedule contributed to his injury by not properly managing the relationship between build-up work and gameday.

Even if his side work was more extensive, it's hard to get the same adrenaline as you do during a major league start. That's part of why they do "pull downs" at Driveline Baseball — max effort throws from a running start: They're trying to ramp up stress in order to prepare the pitcher to throw at higher velocities on gameday. It's possible, but not probable (especially given his ankle injury this year), that Ohtani had a similar quirk in his build-up work.

Is starting once a week akin to sprinting once a month at softball? Maybe not exactly, but it is worth wondering if this relationship between acute and chronic stress was properly accounted for by the Angels. Of course, in some ways, how could it have been? We haven't had a player like Ohtani in a long, long while. Certainly not during the era of Big Data.

Still, the data we do have says that a couple of his quirks in the early going — throwing very close to his maximum, and throwing on an uneven schedule — may have contributed to the worsening of his elbow strain.

FROM MLB.COM

GM pumps brakes on Ohtani surgery report

MLB Network insider Ken Rosenthal on Monday spoke to Angels general manager Billy Eppler, who said, "There have been no changes in [Shohei] Ohtani's diagnosis and neither our physicians nor medical staff have recommended [Tommy John surgery] or said it's likely."

On Sunday night, ESPN's Pedro Gomez reported on SportsCenter that Ohtani will "probably" need elbow surgery, which would force Ohtani to miss the rest of the season and likely keep him off the mound for

all of 2019, though it's possible he could return to serve as a designated hitter sooner than that, as the timetable for hitters returning from the procedure is shorter than it is for pitchers.

Ohtani was placed on the disabled list Friday with a Grade 2 sprain of the ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow, and he received both platelet-rich plasma and stem-cell injections. The Angels said Ohtani would be re-evaluated in three weeks and an update on his treatment would be provided at the time.

"We're all bummed," Mike Trout said Saturday. "It's a tough loss for this team. Obviously, he hits and pitches, so it's a double loss. The biggest thing in this game is to stay healthy. That's the toughest part."

Eppler said Ohtani complained of stiffness in his elbow after he got his blister drained Wednesday, prompting the Angels to order an MRI exam that revealed the sprain. Yahoo! Sports reported in December that Ohtani had received a PRP injection in October to heal a Grade 1 sprain, which is considered the least severe of UCL injuries. The procedure was disclosed in the medical report that was distributed to all 30 MLB clubs prior to the courtship of the two-way phenom.

The 23-year-old rookie had been enjoying virtually unprecedented success as a two-way player this season. He has gone 4-1 with a 3.10 ERA and 61 strikeouts over 49 1/3 innings as a right-handed pitcher and batted .289 with a .907 OPS and six home runs over 129 plate appearances as a left-handed hitter.

FROM MiLB.COM

Bees' Thaiss ties career high with four hits

Angels No. 8 prospect reaches milestone for first time at Triple-A

By Chris Bumbaca

Matt Thaiss is quickly learning just how friendly the Pacific Coast League can be for hitters.

The Angels' eighth-ranked prospect logged the fifth four-hit game of his career -- his first since joining Triple-A Salt Lake last month -- in the Bees' 6-5 loss to the Baby Cakes on Monday at Smith's Ballpark.

The outburst pumped Thaiss' average to .338 since his promotion to Salt Lake from Double-A Mobile on May 22. The University of Virginia product sports a .338/.376/.600 slash line with four homers and 13 RBIs in Pacific Coast League play. Twelve of his 27 hits have gone for extra bases.

The 2016 first-round pick worked himself into a hitter's count during his first at-bat of the game, taking a 3-1 offering from New Orleans starter Tyler Cloyd the other way for a single to left field.

In the third, Thaiss laced a 1-1 pitch from Cloyd to center for his first double of the game. Dustin Ackley's RBI single two batters later plated him.

Facing Baby Cakes left-hander Mike Kickham with two outs in the fifth, the 23-year-old slapped the first pitch he saw to the opposite field for a single. Jumping on the first pitch once more, this time against lefty Jose Quijada, Thaiss lined a double to right for his fourth hit of the game.

Angels No. 11 prospect Jose Suarez, making his third Triple-A start, allowed three hits and three walks while striking out three over 4 2/3 scoreless innings. The left-hander threw 47 of his 82 pitches for strikes.

Scott Van Slyke hit a two-run homer with New Orleans down to its final out to turn the tide.

FROM BLEACHER REPORT

Shohei Ohtani Tommy John Surgery Not Yet Recommended Despite Reports, Angels Say

By Tyler Conway

Los Angeles Angels general manager Billy Eppler denied reports Shohei Ohtani is heading for Tommy John surgery.

"There have been no changes in Ohtani's diagnosis and neither our physicians nor medical staff have recommended (Tommy John surgery) or said it's likely," Eppler said Monday, per Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic.

Ohtani, 23, has been diagnosed with a Grade 2 sprain to his UCL and underwent platelet-rich plasma and stem cell injections last week. He is scheduled to be re-evaluated in three weeks.

ESPN's Pedro Gomez reported earlier Monday that the Angels were expecting Ohtani to need Tommy John surgery, which would keep him out until the 2020 season.

Ohtani is 4-1 with a 3.10 ERA and 1.14 WHIP, striking out 61 batters in 49.1 innings during his rookie season. He has also slashed .289/.372/.535 with six home runs and 20 RBI. His stellar two-way performance allowed him to live up to his hype as one of the most talented Japanese imports ever.

Ohtani had been one of baseball's best stories. Earlier this season, he became the first player to start a game as a pitcher and then start the following one as a hitter since Babe Ruth in 1921.

FROM CBS SPORTS**Angels manager Mike Scioscia on Reiter's Block: I have not heard Tommy John surgery is a possibility for Shohei Ohtani**

Ohtani was placed on the disabled list last week

By Mike Axisa

Despite rumblings to the contrary, the Los Angeles Angels insist Tommy John surgery is not yet a consideration for two-way star Shohei Ohtani.

"I have not heard that," said manager Mike Scioscia during an interview on Reiter's Block on CBS Sports HQ with Bill Reiter.

"The doctors are obviously very confident that he's going to get back out there," Scioscia added. "We're going to be very conservative with Shohei. We'll see when, first and foremost, the elbow is sound enough to where he can swing a bat. I think that'll happen before he's going to be out on the mound pitching. But we're very hopeful that he's going to be pitching for us again this season."

Monday morning a report from ESPN's Pedro Gomez said Ohtani will "probably need Tommy John surgery" in the wake of his recent elbow injury. Ohtani was placed on the disabled list with a Grade 2 ulnar collateral ligament sprain last week. Here is a transcript of Gomez's video report:

"The Angels are holding out hope that (Ohtani won't need surgery), but everything I'm hearing is that the reality is he probably will need Tommy John surgery. They're trying to hold out because they're in the middle of a season, they're kind of competitive right now, he is their best pitcher. But, it doesn't look good at this point."

Before the season it was revealed Ohtani had a Grade 1 UCL sprain. Now he has a Grade 2 sprain, which is more severe, and that is not good progression. The tear -- a sprain is by definition a tear -- is getting worse, and there's nowhere else to go after this. A Grade 3 sprain is a complete ligament tear that requires Tommy John surgery.

When Ohtani was placed on the disabled list, the Angels said he received a platelet-rich plasma and stem cell injection in his elbow, so they are attempting to rehab the injury. He will be reevaluated after three weeks. Here's what GM Billy Eppler told reporters, including the Associated Press, about Ohtani's injury when he was placed on the disabled list:

"We're hopeful that he can (avoid surgery)," general manager Billy Eppler said, "that this is completely treatable with the biologic prescription that the doctors recommend."

A few hours after Gomez's report made the rounds, Eppler told Ken Rosenthal of *The Athletic* that there has been no change in Ohtani's prognosis. He remains on track with his treatment plan and will be reevaluated in a few weeks.

It is worth noting the Angels have had some success rehabbing UCL tears and avoiding Tommy John surgery. Garrett Richards rehabbed a partially torn UCL two years ago with a PRP and stem cell treatment similar to Ohtani's. Also, New York Yankees righty Masahiro Tanaka was able to rehab a partial UCL tear back in 2014. Rehabbing a ligament tear is uncommon, but not unprecedented.

Tommy John surgery has a very high success rate but it is not 100 percent, and any time there's a chance a star pitcher won't need his elbow cut open, they'll attempt rehab. These days Tommy John surgery rehab takes 12-14 months, sometimes longer. And Ohtani is especially unique because he is a two-way player. Tommy John surgery rehab for position players is typically 6-8 months. Would he be able to hit before being able to pitch?

The soon-to-be 24-year-old Ohtani owns a 3.10 ERA (131 ERA+) with 61 strikeouts in nine starts and 49 1/3 innings so far this season. At the plate, he's hitting .282/.372/.535 (150 OPS+) with six home runs in 129 plate appearances. Ohtani is no worse than the team's third best player behind Mike Trout and Andrelton Simmons. Losing him for any stretch of time is a big blow. Tommy John surgery could mean losing him until 2020.

FROM YAHOO! SPORTS

Will Shohei Ohtani need Tommy John surgery?

By Liz Roscher

It only took two days for Shohei Ohtani's elbow injury to go from bad to potentially worse. After the Los Angeles Angels announced on Friday that Ohtani was going on the disabled list with a grade 2 strain of the ulnar collateral ligament in his pitching elbow, the baseball world is now wondering whether he'll need Tommy John surgery, which could keep him out until 2020.

That chatter was spurred by ESPN's Pedro Gomez, who reported Sunday that Ohtani will "probably" need elbow surgery. However, the Angels denied that report Monday saying nothing has changed since the original diagnosis.

Here's what Gomez said Sunday night:

"The Angels are holding out hope that (Ohtani won't need surgery), but everything I'm hearing is that the reality is he probably will need Tommy John surgery. They're trying to hold out because they're in the middle of a season, they're kind of competitive right now, he is their best pitcher. But, it doesn't look good at this point."

Gomez said that he's reporting what he's heard from his sources, so it's just an unconfirmed report at this point. But considering that Ohtani's UCL strain has gotten worse over time, it's not hard to believe that Tommy John surgery could be in his future.

Here's how Angels GM Billy Eppler responded to Gomez's report: GM Billy Eppler: "There have been no changes in Ohtani's diagnosis and neither our physicians nor medical staff have recommended (Tommy John surgery) or said it's likely."

The Angels announced Friday that Ohtani has a grade 2 sprain of the UCL in his right elbow.

Despite the Angels' comment, the real gut-punch of the report, besides that he "probably" needs Tommy John surgery, is the time frame. If Ohtani has Tommy John now, he would most likely miss the rest of the 2018 season AND the entirety of 2019 season. The earliest he'd be back would be spring training 2020. That's 20 long, Ohtani-free months.

Ohtani was diagnosed with a grade 1 UCL strain back in November, before he signed with the Angels. The Angels knew about it, and presumably signed off on his recommended treatment: a platelet-rich plasma injection and rest. Ohtani was able to start the season on time, and he performed brilliantly. However, his UCL was continuing to get worse. ESPN Stats and Info tweeted an interesting statistic about UCL injury treatments and Tommy John surgery on Friday.

That stat provides a little hope, but it's important to remember that Ohtani got a PRP injection in November after his grade 1 strain *and* in June after his grade 2 strain. After two injections for progressively worse UCL strains, his chances of getting Tommy John might be higher.

The Angels have a little history with UCL strains, though. In May 2016, Garrett Richards had a significant tear of his UCL, but opted for stem cell therapy and rest instead of surgery. He missed the rest of the 2016 season, but was able to start the 2017 season. Masahiro Tanaka of the New York Yankees was also able to avoid surgery to repair his partially torn UCL in 2014, similarly getting a stem cell injection and resting for several months. These two cases are far from the norm, but it shows that it's possible to avoid Tommy John if the situation is right.

Though Ohtani "probably" needs Tommy John surgery, there's no harm in waiting to see how things look in a few weeks. When the Angels announced Ohtani was going on the DL, they also said he received a platelet-rich plasma injection and would be evaluated again in three weeks. If he's going to miss all of the 2019 season no matter what, waiting a few more weeks isn't going to hurt anything — even if it feels like it's just prolonging the inevitable.

FROM NBC SPORTS

Mike Trout had X-rays after fouling a ball off his leg

By Craig Calcaterra

The bad news: Angels outfielder Mike Trout fouled a ball off his leg in the eighth inning of last night's game against the Mariners and it looked like it hurt.

The good news: he stayed in the game and promptly hit his second home run of the night in the same at bat, and it flew 459 feet which is . . . not short.

The bad news: it wasn't enough, the Mariners won and his leg was still bad enough after the game that he needed X-rays.

The good news: the X-rays came back negative and Trout told reporters after the game that he expects to play today.

The bad news: the X-rays had potassium benzoate.

Or not. I don't know. I just got carried away.

FROM SPORTING NEWS

Angels GM denies report Shohei Ohtani will need Tommy John surgery

By Jordan Heck

Shohei Ohtani's rookie season is likely over, and he may not be able to return to MLB until 2020.

ESPN's Pedro Gomez reported on SportsCenter early Monday morning that the Angels pitcher will need Tommy John surgery, which means he'd definitely be out all of 2018. Gomez also added 2019 is likely out of the question, too, as "the earliest we might see him, should he have Tommy John surgery, would be the 2020 season."

As Gomez notes, there are three grades of a UCL (ulnar collateral ligament) injury, and Ohtani suffered a Grade 2 sprain. The injury occurred last week, and Ohtani was placed on the disabled list as he recovers.

"The Angels are holding out hope that [Tommy John surgery] won't be the case, but everything I'm hearing is that the reality is, he probably will need Tommy John surgery. They're trying to hold out, because they're in the middle of the season, they're kind of competitive right now, he is their best pitcher, but it doesn't look good at this point," Gomez said.

Gomez also pointed out, the longer the Angels wait now to see if Ohtani absolutely needs the surgery, the longer his road to recovery will be.

Angels GM Billy Epler, however, said Gomez's report was inaccurate.

Ohtani already underwent injections of platelet-rich plasma and stem cells last week. Speaking to reporters then, Epler said he hoped that treatment would be enough.

"We're hopeful that he can [avoid Tommy John surgery]," Epler said. "That this is completely treatable with the biologic prescription that the doctors recommend."

Ohtani turns 24 next month, and has proven to be a success so far in MLB. He is 4-1 with a 3.10 ERA, recording 61 strikeouts in 49 1/3 innings. He's also batting .289 with six home runs and 20 RBIs.

FROM THE WASHINGTON POST

Angels hope Shohei Ohtani doesn't need Tommy John surgery, but 'it's not good'

By Matt Bonesteel

The Los Angeles Angels placed Shohei Ohtani on the disabled list Friday because of a Grade 2 sprain of the ulnar collateral ligament in his pitching elbow, saying they would reevaluate his situation in three weeks.

We might not see the two-way Japanese sensation on the field until well after that.

ESPN's Pedro Gomez reported Sunday night that the Angels are worried that Ohtani's UCL sprain has progressed to Grade 3, a full tear that would require ligament replacement surgery (a.k.a. Tommy John surgery) and a lengthy rehab process.

"It's not good at this point. There's three grades of an ulnar collateral ligament injury, Grade 1 being the mildest; Grade 2 — which is what Ohtani is having right now — is a more severe sprain; Grade 3 being a full tear, where you've got to have Tommy John surgery," Gomez said on "SportsCenter."

"The Angels are holding out hope that [Ohtani won't need surgery], but everything I'm hearing is that the reality is he probably will need Tommy John surgery. They're trying to hold out because they're in the middle of a season, they're kind of competitive right now, he is their best pitcher. But it doesn't look good at this point."

Angels General Manager Billy Eppler denied Monday that the team has made a decision on Ohtani's treatment.

"There have been no changes in Ohtani's diagnosis, and neither our physicians nor medical staff have recommended [Tommy John surgery] or said it's likely," Eppler said, per Ken Rosenthal.

Ohtani, the first two-way MLB pitcher in decades, is 4-1 with a 3.10 ERA on the mound and is hitting .289 with six home runs, 20 RBI and a .907 on-base-plus-slugging percentage in his first season in the majors. Days after he signed as a free agent in December, Yahoo reported that Ohtani had a Grade 1 UCL tear, but Eppler said at the time that there were "no signs of acute trauma" in the ligament.

If Ohtani needs to undergo surgery, he likely wouldn't be back until 2020.

"It's a surgery that normally requires about a 15-month rehab process so, when you just do the math, you figure this whole season is out and in all likelihood all of next season ... as well," Gomez said. "The

earliest we might see him, should he have Tommy John surgery, would be the 2020 season. He'd be ready for spring training. And, really, the more they wait now at the front end, the longer it'll take at the back end. But they're at a point, really, with just four months left in the season, that it's okay to roll the dice and see if three weeks from now he's better, because you're probably going to miss all of next season, regardless, should he have Tommy John surgery."

Eppler told reporters in a conference call Thursday that Ohtani underwent injections of platelet-rich plasma and stem cells Thursday in Los Angeles, a treatment used to aid the healing and regeneration of soft tissues such as tendons and ligaments. He won't throw over the three-week period until his evaluation.

"I'm just going to take every day as it comes and put him on this course of recovery and strengthening for the next three weeks and then deal with what we've got to deal with in three weeks' time," Eppler said during the conference call, per the Associated Press.

The Angels (37-29) are 7-3 over their past 10 games and sit 4.5 games out of first place in the AL West.

FROM THE STAR-TELEGRAM

Ohtani might need Tommy John surgery. Are Rangers breathing a sigh of relief?

By Jeff Wilson

The news broke Friday that Japanese sensation Shohei Ohtani is broken.

He has a Grade 2 strain of the ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow, and Tommy John surgery is in his future.

Nothing has been scheduled by the Los Angeles Angels, who successfully wooed Ohtani in December to knock off six other suitors.

The Angels will first see if the elbow responds to a platelet-rich plasma injection and stem-cell treatment. They will give that three weeks, and probably at least another three weeks if there are signs of healing.

If not, he'll go under the knife. Even if the ligament appears to be healing, there are no guarantees he'll avoid surgery.

(Isn't that right, Yu Darvish, Neftali Feliz and Chi Chi Gonzalez?)

It's possible that Ohtani doesn't throw another pitch until 2020, but don't think that the six runners-up to the Angels in the Ohtani Sweepstakes, including the Texas Rangers, are breathing a sigh of relief.

Each team received the Ohtani medicals and still pursued him. The Rangers had no concerns after seeing the medicals.

He's a one-of-a-kind talent, a flame-throwing right-hander and a left-handed power hitter, and he's only 23. He's making the MLB minimum this season and doesn't have to be paid above that for two more seasons.

Signing Ohtani was well worth the risk.

There's risk with any signing, especially with a hard-throwing pitchers. The Angels were using a six-man rotation to keep Ohtani's workload down as he adjusted to the differences between Nippon Professional Baseball and MLB.

The Rangers would have done the same.

But if there's one thing orthopedists know about Tommy John surgery, it's that the harder a pitcher throws, the higher the likelihood that the elbow goes.

As Rangers' team physician Dr. Keith Meister told the Star-Telegram a few years ago, "You can't put a V8 in a Volkswagon."

Ohtani is no Passat, but his engine appears to have been too big for whatever luxury brand he is.

But don't think the Rangers feel fortunate to have missed out on him. They knew the risks, and they were still very willing to sign him.