



# ***Press Clips***

**(June 4, 2018)**

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**FROM THE OC REGISTER****Rene Rivera's long and winding road finally led him to the disabled list**

By J.P. Hoornstra

ANAHEIM – The long and winding career of Angels catcher Rene Rivera includes 1,613 games for nine major league organizations. He was unemployed at one point in 2010 and played 22 games in an independent league. He's played 10 seasons of winter ball, and his former teammates include Edgar Martinez, Clayton Kershaw, Yadier Molina and Andruw Jones.

Until May, Rivera had seen it all and done it all – except go on the disabled list.

Rivera, who turns 35 in July, said he never even had a close call since being drafted out of high school by the Seattle Mariners in 2001. He's played through bumps and bruises, but never needed surgery until an MRI last month revealed a tear in his right meniscus. The surgery was performed May 25 by Dr. Brian Schultz.

"He was surprised how my knee looked," Rivera said on Sunday. "It looked like an 8-year-old kid. He was surprised I'd been playing for 18 years on my knee."

Rivera caught all 12 innings of the Angels' loss to the Minnesota Twins on May 12. He remembered feeling unusually sore after that game, but tried playing through the pain as usual. When Rivera caught another nine innings three days later, the pain didn't let up.

"When I went to squat down, that's when it felt like there was a lot of fluid down there," he said. "I couldn't squat. That's when it felt like there was something we had to look at."

Angels manager Mike Scioscia cited "wear and tear" as the cause of injury. Rivera said Sunday that he couldn't be sure.

The Angels initially said Rivera would need 4-6 weeks to recover. Rivera hasn't resumed swinging a bat since the surgery, so there's little reason to think that timetable will accelerate.

In the meantime, Rivera is sitting in on the Angels' pitcher-catcher meetings as he usually would. He's become a de facto mentor to Jose Briceño, the rookie catcher who was recalled from Triple-A to back up starter Martin Maldonado. Rivera said he will not travel on the Angels' road trip next week to Minnesota, Seattle and Oakland.

In a sport that forces many of its participants down the rehab path before they reach legal drinking age, Rivera is a unicorn. What's his secret to staying on the field?

"I really don't know," he said. "I would say just take care of your body, rest, eat, know what 100 percent is for you. Just play the game right, I think. I never think that doing this I'm going to get hurt. I always do it with confidence and that's pretty much why, I guess, it's taken me all the way to now."

“This is the first time. It’s something that you cannot control.”

### **FEELING A DRAFT**

Major League Baseball’s annual amateur draft begins Monday. The Angels will draft twice on the first day, 17th overall and 57th overall. Tim Salmon will be the team’s representative at the MLB Network studio in Secaucus, N.J.

MLB Network and MLB.com will provide video coverage beginning with a preview show at 3 p.m. The Detroit Tigers will be on the clock for the No. 1 about an hour later.

Beginning with the first pick in Round 2 and continuing through the end of the second round of compensation picks, the draft will air live exclusively on MLB.com.

Rounds 3 through 10 of the draft will be held Tuesday beginning at 10 a.m. Rounds 11 through 40 will be held Wednesday beginning at 9 a.m.

### **ALSO**

Andrelton Simmons was not in the Angels’ starting lineup Sunday, putting a temporary hold on his 11-game hitting streak. Scioscia said it was a previously scheduled day off for Simmons, who had appeared in every game since April 28. ... Zack Cozart started at shortstop in Simmons’ place. He had not played since last Tuesday because of a strained left forearm. ... Ian Kinsler’s six-game hitting streak came to an end Sunday. He finished 0 for 4. ... Mike Trout was shaken up after hitting the wall in left-center field catching a fly ball in the fifth inning. Scioscia said that Trout’s knee bore the brunt of that hit but the center fielder isn’t expected to miss any time.

### **UP NEXT**

Angels (RHP Nick Tropeano, 3-3, 3.80 ERA) vs. Kansas City (LHP Danny Duffy, 2-6, 5.71 ERA), 7 p.m., Fox Sports West, ESPN+

## **Tyler Skaggs and the Angels survive ninth-inning drama to beat Texas Rangers**

By J.P. Hoornstra

ANAHEIM – Tyler Skaggs watched the ninth inning of Sunday’s game from inside Angel Stadium. As teammate Justin Anderson walked three consecutive batters to load the bases, Skaggs might have formed a strong opinion about umpire Chris Conroy’s strike zone. He just didn’t feel like sharing it afterward.

“Not gonna go there,” Skaggs said. “We’ve had enough umpire problems the last two games.”

Crazy as it was, the ending of the Angels’ 3-1 win over the Texas Rangers might have been the least dramatic of the series.

The Rangers were down to their final out when Ronald Guzman, Joey Gallo and Shin-Soo Choo each worked a full count against Anderson. Each time, Conroy decided a borderline fastball was outside the strike zone.

Skaggs didn't need to say a word. The announced crowd of 33,541 did all the grumbling for him.

With the bases loaded, Isiah Kiner-Falefa popped out to end the game. Anderson had reached the finish line of a 24-pitch inning. Skaggs (4-4) got the win, ending a drought of nearly six weeks without a victory.

The Angels (32-28) won two of the three games against Texas (25-37) and maintained their 5-1/2-game deficit in the American League West.

It wasn't easy.

On Friday, the game ended when Rougned Odor slid into the shin of Angels shortstop Andrelton Simmons trying unsuccessfully to break up a double play. The two men argued, and players from both benches and bullpens ran onto the field. Simmons later spoke to crew chief Fieldin Culbreth, hoping that Odor's slide would be ruled illegal in the future.

Ironically, it was Simmons who was called for an illegal slide in the fourth inning Saturday. The Angels thought they won that game 2-1, only to see the Rangers credited with a run when a call was overturned with two outs in the ninth inning. The Angels ultimately lost, 3-2, in the 10th.

Relatively speaking, Sunday's game was a genteel affair. The Angels never trailed. Luis Valbuena hit a two-run double against Doug Fister (1-6) in the second inning, and the score was still 2-0 when Justin Upton hit a solo home run off Fister in the sixth.

Skaggs didn't allow a run over six innings. The Rangers made him work, putting runners on base in each of the first five frames. They out-hit the Angels, 5-4. By the third inning, Skaggs had thrown 70 pitches.

Yet each time the Rangers threatened to score, Skaggs did not break. He grew more efficient as the game progressed and struck out two batters in a 1-2-3 sixth inning. The left-hander allowed four hits, walked three batters and struck out six in all.

None of the Angels' starters – Jaime Barría, Garrett Richards and Skaggs – allowed a run in the three-game series.

"I just think we all want to one-up each other," Skaggs said. "It's a quiet competitiveness and I think we're doing a good job of it right now."

Jim Johnson pitched a scoreless seventh inning. Noe Ramirez allowed a solo home run to Nomar Mazara in an otherwise uneventful eighth inning.

Then came the ninth.

For Anderson, a rookie right-hander, it was his third save opportunity since his April 23 debut. It began easily enough. Odor got under a down-and-away slider and popped out to Valbuena, the Angels' third

baseman. Robinson Chirinos fouled off a two-strike fastball that clocked in at 99 mph but flailed at a fading slider for strike three.

The third out seemed just out of reach. If ball four to the left-handed hitting Guzman was legitimately inside, then ball four to Gallo, another left-handed hitter, was on the corner at worst. Choo, a veteran lefty, was rewarded for letting an inside fastball pass at 97 mph.

"I didn't realize how bad I got squeezed until I came back inside and watched some of the video," Anderson said. "That's part of it and you just have to make the most of it on those days and do what you can."

In the moment, Anderson did not appear frustrated. He threw three sliders to Kiner-Falefa, a right-handed hitter, and got ahead 0-and-2. When Angels right fielder Michael Hermosillo closed his glove on a pop fly in shallow right field, Anderson could finally exhale.

Yet to hear Anderson tell it, he'd taken plenty of deep breaths already. The number of runners on base, he said, did not detract from his focus.

This time a year ago, Anderson was closing out games in Double-A pit stops such as Mobile, Ala., Jackson, Miss. and Pensacola, Fla. At that level, development is the goal. Anderson is treating his time in the big leagues just the same.

"Whether today went good for me or it went south, every day is a learning opportunity for me," he said. "Last night coming into that situation, making sure I did my job right there, then a quick turnaround, day game, back-to-back. Another learning experience."

Mike Scioscia is learning something about Anderson, too. The Angels' manager was robbed of arguably his two best relief pitchers, Keynan Middleton and Blake Wood, when Tommy John surgery claimed their right elbows.

Now, 18 games into his career, Anderson is stepping up to the challenge of filling this void where others have not.

"We can get this done with guys that might have multiple roles down there," Scioscia said of his bullpen. "Sometimes a guy might pitch in the seventh, sometimes in the ninth. That's where we're set up right now. We'll continue to move forward with these guys. Hopefully they stay fresh. Whatever roles develop, they develop. We have confidence that whoever's coming out of there is going to get outs for us."

**FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES****Justin Anderson beats the squeeze in Angels' 3-1 victory over the Rangers**

By Mike Digiovanna

Justin Anderson's eyes did not deceive him. The Angels reliever was sure he had struck out Joey Gallo with a full-count fastball to end Sunday's game against the Texas Rangers, and the replay he saw after surviving the harrowing ninth inning of a 3-1 victory in Angel Stadium confirmed that belief.

"I didn't realize how bad I got squeezed until I came back inside and watched the video," the rookie right-hander said. "But that's all part of it. You've just got to step off, relax, take a deep breath ... fill up the zone and make them hit your pitches."

This was a gut-check moment for Anderson and a beleaguered bullpen. Noe Ramirez gave up a home run to Nomar Mazara in the eighth inning to cut the Angels' lead to 3-1. Anderson got two outs in the ninth before walking Ronald Guzman, who checked his swing on a full-count inside fastball.

Gallo worked another full count. Anderson delivered a high-and-tight 97-mph fastball that was fully inside the K-zone box on the FS West telecast.

Rookie catcher Jose Briceno came up out of his crouch as he caught the pitch, either partially shielding or fooling umpire Chris Conroy, who called it a ball. Anderson couldn't believe it.

"You can go back and look at it — the ball was right there in the zone," Anderson said. "I'm not saying that's on Briceno at all. There was no cross-up. That ump missed that call."

Anderson walked Shin-Soo Choo on a full-count fastball that was slightly inside to load the bases. It was his 31st pitch. Anderson threw an inning Saturday night. If his tank wasn't empty, the warning light was on.

"Just don't quit," Anderson said of his mindset. "It's a dogfight no matter what."

Manager Mike Scioscia, who allowed starter Tyler Skaggs to go an extra inning when the left-hander looked gassed after five innings, stuck with Anderson, who needed three pitches to retire Isiah Kiner-Falefa on a game-ending fly to right field.

"He wasn't missing by much," Scioscia said. "We felt he could get that last out, and he did. The last three pitches he threw were terrific sliders. He had to work hard to get out of that inning, but it says a lot about him. You can't let things like that be a distraction out there, and I don't think he did."

Skaggs was effective if not efficient, needing 107 pitches to complete six bend-but-don't-break innings in which he gave up four hits, struck out six batters and walked three to improve to 4-4 with a 3.27 earned-run average.

With two on and no outs in the third inning, Skaggs won a 10-pitch duel with Mazara, striking him out with a 94-mph fastball. He got Adrian Beltre to fly to right field and Profar to fly to left.

“I just told myself, this is the inning,” Skaggs said of the third. “If I win this inning, I think we win the game.”

After Choo’s one-out double in the fifth, Skaggs struck out Kiner-Falefa and Mazara looking, the latter with a looping 74-mph curve. Scioscia wanted to coax one more inning out of Skaggs, who breezed through a 10-pitch sixth.

“After the first two innings, we were sitting there mapping it out and hoping he could get us five,” Scioscia said. “He came off after the fifth and felt good, so we said, ‘This is one of those days, man, go out there and try to get us another three outs,’ and he did.”

The Angels managed only four hits against starter Doug Fister and Alex Claudio, but one was a two-run double to right field by Luis Valbuena in the second inning and one was a home run to right by Justin Upton in the sixth, the left fielder’s 12th home run and first in 16 games dating to May 15.

Center fielder Mike Trout gave the Angels a scare in the fifth inning when he slammed face-first into the wall after catching Delino DeShields’ drive. Trout walked gingerly to his position but remained in the game, rubbing and flexing his right knee for the rest of the inning.

“Yeah, it was pretty loud,” Upton said of the collision. “He was moving pretty fast. I tried to give him a heads-up that the wall was there, so he was able to brace himself. He’s not the most fragile person in the world, so I wasn’t too worried.”

Neither was Trout, who finished the game and expects to play Monday night.

“I just banged my knee on the wall,” Trout said. “It’s all good.”

Anderson, on the other hand, is not expected to be available for the series opener against Kansas City after throwing 18 pitches Saturday night and 34 on Sunday. Asked whether he had another 35 pitches in him Monday night, Anderson’s answer was far more succinct than Sunday’s outing:

“Probably not.”

## **As Angels prepare for MLB draft, Mike Trout relives his draft experience every year**

By Mike Digiovanna

The Angels will have the 17th overall pick in the amateur draft, which begins with the first round, a competitive-balance round and the second round Monday, and concludes with the 40th round Wednesday.



MLB Network will provide live coverage of the first round and the competitive-balance round beginning at 4 p.m. PDT, giving a few dozen players the same thrill two-time American League most valuable player **Mike Trout** had when the Angels took him with the 25th pick in 2009.

With all that Trout has accomplished in seven big league seasons, the six-time All-Star and three-time MVP runner-up from Millville, N.J., said being in the MLB Network studios in Secaucus, N.J., for the draft is still one of his most treasured memories.

“As a kid, that’s probably one of the coolest things possible, a dream come true,” Trout said Sunday. “All the hard work pays off. It’s fun to go back and watch the draft and hear your name being called. I try to watch it every year and follow a lot of the top guys.”

This will be the Angels’ second draft under amateur scouting director **Matt Swanson**. Their top pick from 2017, high school outfielder **Jo Adell**, who was the 10th overall pick, has advanced to Class-A Inland Empire this season. Their second-round pick, former UCLA pitcher **Griffin Canning**, has advanced to double-A Mobile.

The Angels will have a signing bonus pool of \$6.984 million for the first 10 picks, with the 17th overall pick assigned a slot value of \$3,472,900.

### **Iron man**

Backup catcher **Rene Rivera** said the doctor who performed surgery for torn cartilage in his right knee in late May was surprised when he made his incision and took a look under the hood.

“He said it looked like an 8-year-old’s knee,” Rivera said. “He couldn’t believe I’ve been playing professional baseball for 18 years.”

Despite the thousands of times he has squatted, the hundreds of foul tips off various body parts and the 46 times he has been hit by pitches in 1,390 professional games, Rivera had never gone on the disabled list or had surgery until this season.

“I really don’t know,” Rivera said, when asked the secret to his excellent health. “I would just say take care of your body, rest, eat right, play the game right, and know what 100% is for you.

“Know the maximum you can do without trying to do too much. I never think that if I do this, I’m going to get hurt. I always do it. I have confidence that this is the best thing, and [getting hurt] is something you can’t control. “

Rivera, who hit .259 with three home runs and 10 RBIs in 22 games before getting injured, is expected to be out for four to six weeks.

### **Recovery day**

Shortstop **Andrelton Simmons**, who started 57 of the first 59 games and has been one of the Angels’ most consistent and productive hitters, was given Sunday off. **Zack Cozart**, who sat out the last three

games because of tightness in his left forearm, started at shortstop and singled and scored in the second inning.

Simmons suffered a gash on his left shin when he was spiked by the Texas Rangers' **Rougned Odoron** Friday night, and he was hit in the left knee by a pitch and injured his left hand when he planted it on a slide into second Saturday night.

"But this is not based on anything that's happened short-term," manager **Mike Scioscia** said. "He's been playing a lot. We had targeted a day for Simba to get off his feet and waiting for Coz to get back, and this was a good day to do it."

## FROM ANGELS.COM

### Angels look to bolster farm with 17<sup>th</sup> overall pick

By Maria Guardado

The Angels received a significant boost in young talent last year after acquiring **Shohei Ohtani**, Kevin Maitan and Jo Adell, replenishing a farm system that had previously been considered among the worst in the Majors. Ohtani has already shed his prospect status, but his graduation has not diminished the excitement about the next wave of impact players who are rising quickly through the Angels' improving Minor League system.

They'll look to add more promising young players this week during the 2018 MLB Draft.

The 2018 Draft will take place today through Wednesday, beginning with the Draft preview show on MLB Network and MLB.com today at 3 p.m. PT. MLB Network will broadcast the first 43 picks (Round 1 and Competitive Balance Round A), while MLB.com will stream all 78 picks on Day 1. MLB.com will also provide live pick-by-pick coverage of Rounds 3-10 on Day 2, with a preview show beginning at 9:30 a.m. PT. Then on Day 3, Rounds 11-40 can be heard live on MLB.com beginning at 9 a.m. PT.

Go to [mlb.com/draft](http://mlb.com/draft) to see the Top 200 Prospects list, projected top picks from MLB Pipeline analysts Jim Callis and Jonathan Mayo, the complete order of selection and more. And follow [@MLBDraft](https://twitter.com/MLBDraft) on Twitter to see what Draft hopefuls, clubs and experts are saying.

Here's how the Draft is shaping up for the Angels, whose first selection is the 17th overall pick.

#### In about 50 words

After years of decline, the Angels' farm system is on the rise again and brimming with high-end athletes who are rising quickly through the lower levels.

"I feel good about the growth in that system," general manager Billy Eppler said recently.

**The scoop**

Amateur scouting director Matt Swanson will oversee his second Draft with the Angels after joining the organization in August 2016. Last year, the Angels selected Adell, a prep outfielder, with the 10th overall pick. Adell, 19, is considered the Angels' **No. 1 prospect** by MLB Pipeline.

**First-round buzz**

Callis has the Angels taking Loretto High School (Tenn.) left-hander Ryan Weathers with their first-round pick in his most recent mock draft. The Angels have also shown interest in Green Hope High School (N.C.) outfielder Jordyn Adams, who has committed to play wide receiver at the University of North Carolina, and Georgia prep right-hander Ethan Hankins, per Callis.

**Money matters**

Each pick in the first 10 rounds has an assigned value, and the total for each of a club's selections equals what it can spend in those rounds without incurring a penalty. Any bonus money above \$125,000 given to an individual player picked in rounds 11-40 also counts against a team's allotment. If a player selected in the first 10 rounds doesn't sign, his pick's value is subtracted from his club's pool. If a team exceeds its allotment, it faces a penalty.

A team that outspends its pool by 0-5 percent pays a 75 percent tax on the overage. At higher thresholds, clubs lose future picks: a first-rounder and a 75 percent tax for surpassing the pool by 5-10 percent; a first- and a second-rounder and a 100 percent tax for 10-15 percent; and two first-rounders and a 100 percent tax for more than 15 percent.

This year, the Angels will have a bonus pool of \$6,984,400 for the first 10 rounds. Their 17th overall pick has an assigned value of \$3,472,900.

**Shopping list**

Though the farm system has improved considerably in recent years, the Angels are still short on high-ceiling infield prospects. They took a step toward filling that void by nabbing former Braves prospects Maitan and Livan Soto over the offseason and converting Jahmai Jones into a second baseman, but they could look to replenish their ranks even further during the Draft.

**Trend watch**

The Angels have gravitated more toward taking tooly prep players with high upside in the earlier rounds in recent years. In addition to Adell last year, they selected outfielder Brandon Marsh with their second-round pick in 2016. Adell and Marsh are considered **top 100 prospects** and have progressed to Class A Advanced Inland Empire this season.

**Rising fast**

Right-hander Griffin Canning was the Angels' second-round pick out of UCLA in 2017 and has quickly emerged as one of the organization's brightest pitching prospects. Canning didn't pitch last summer due to concerns about his workload in college, but he's looked very impressive this season, starting two combined no-hitters and logging a 1.49 ERA over 36 1/3 innings in eight starts between Inland Empire and Double-A Mobile. The 22-year-old is rated the Angels' No. 7 prospect by MLB Pipeline.

### Cinderella story

**Matt Shoemaker** went undrafted in 2008 before the Angels signed him as a free agent for \$10,000. Defying the odds, Shoemaker rose through the Minor League system and broke into the Majors in 2013. He's become a key contributor to the Angels' rotation since, though he's been limited to only one start this season because of a right forearm issue.

### In The Show

Eleven members of the current 40-man roster were originally Angels Draft selections: **Mike Trout** (2009, 1st round), **Kole Calhoun** ('10, 8th round), **Tyler Skaggs** ('09, 1st round), **Garrett Richards** ('09, 1st round), **Cam Bedrosian** ('10, 1st round), **Martin Maldonado** ('04, 27th round), **Justin Anderson** ('14, 14th round), **Keynan Middleton** ('13, 3rd round), **Kaleb Cowart** ('10, 1st round), **Jake Jewell** ('14, 5th round) and **Michael Hermosillo** ('13, 28th round).

### The Angels' recent top picks

2017: Jo Adell, OF (Class A Advanced)

2016: Matt Thaiss, 1B (Triple-A)

2015: Taylor Ward, 3B (injured, Double-A)

2014: **Sean Newcomb**, LHP (Braves)

2013: Hunter Green, RHP (retired)

## Halos ride Skaggs' gem to series win over Texas

*Left-hander works out of trouble to pitch six scoreless innings*

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- Left-hander **Tyler Skaggs** managed to keep the Rangers at bay Sunday, but he had to work hard to do it. When he jogged out to the mound for the start of the sixth inning, his pitch count stood at 97. Beyond the left-field fence, the Angels had a reliever warming in the bullpen in the event of distress.

But Skaggs proceeded to deliver one of his most efficient innings of the afternoon, dispatching **Adrian Beltre**, **Jurickson Profar** and **Rougned Odor** on 10 pitches to cap his six shutout innings and paving the way for the Angels' 3-1 win over the Rangers at Angel Stadium.

"Tyler settled down," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He's putting up zeros, but he was working for every out. His stuff looked really good today, but after the first two innings, we're sitting there mapping it out, hoping he could get us five. He comes off in the fifth and felt good, so we said, 'This is one of those days, man. Go out there and try to get us another three outs.' He had a good sixth inning."

Skaggs limited the Rangers to four hits while walking three, striking out six and throwing 107 pitches. **Luis Valbuena**'s two-run double and **Justin Upton**'s solo home run helped make a winner out of Skaggs, who evened his record to 4-4 and lowered his ERA to 3.27 on the season.

**Jim Johnson** relieved Skaggs in the seventh and posted a scoreless inning before handing it off to **Noe Ramirez**, who surrendered a solo home run to **Nomar Mazara** that cut the Angels' lead to 3-1 in the eighth.

Rookie **Justin Anderson** made it even more interesting in the ninth after issuing three consecutive full-count walks to load the bases with two outs. The last two to pinch-hitter **Joey Gallo** and **Shin-Soo Choo** were on borderline calls by home-plate umpire Chris Conroy. Still, Anderson survived the jam by coaxing a flyout to right field from **Isiah Kiner-Falefa** to end the game.

"I didn't realize how bad I got squeezed until I came back inside and watched some of the video," said Anderson, who earned his second save of the year. "But it's part of it. You've just got to make the most of it on those days and do what you can."

With the win, the Angels (32-28) secured a series victory and improved to 15-7 against American League West opponents this season. Angels starters did not allow an earned run over 19 innings during this three-game series against the Rangers and now have a 2.56 ERA since May 1, the best mark in the AL.

"I just think we all want to one-up each other," Skaggs said. "It's that quiet competitiveness. I think we're doing a good job of it right now."

The Angels got on the board in the second inning after **Shohei Ohtani** and **Zack Cozart** strung together back-to-back singles and scored on Valbuena's double to right field off Texas right-hander **Doug Fister**. Upton extended the Angels' lead to 3-0 in the sixth after hammering a cutter from Fister 399 feet over the left-center-field fence for his 12th home run of the season and first since May 15.

Skaggs was tested by a few jams, but he managed to buckle down and dodge trouble. The Rangers put runners on first and second with two outs in the first inning after Kiner-Falefa singled and Beltre walked, but Skaggs induced a flyout to center field from Profar to end the threat.

After Choo doubled and Kiner-Falefa walked to open the third, Skaggs found himself engaged in a long battle with Mazara, who fouled off four consecutive two-strike pitches before striking out swinging on a 94-mph fastball. Skaggs then retired Beltre and Profar on a pair of flyouts to strand the runners.

"Texas, they face me tough," Skaggs said. "I wouldn't say they see me well, but they put together good ABs against me. I just told myself, 'This is the inning. If I win this inning, I think we win the game.' And we ended up winning the game."

In the fifth, Skaggs received an assist from **Mike Trout**, who made an impressive running catch at the center-field fence to rob **Delino DeShields** of a leadoff hit.

Trout banged his right knee after colliding with the wall and briefly limped on his subsequent steps, but he stayed in and played the rest of the game without issue. Scioscia said Trout is fine and is expected to be in the lineup on Monday.

"He's not the most fragile person in the world, so I wasn't too worried," Upton quipped.

**UP NEXT**

The Angels continue their homestand by hosting the Royals for a three-game series beginning Monday night at 7:07 p.m. PT at Angel Stadium. Right-hander **Nick Tropeano** (3-3, 3.80 ERA) gets the start for the Halos, opposing left-hander **Danny Duffy** (2-6, 5.71 ERA) in the opener. Tropeano will look to win his third consecutive start for the first time in his career. He fired 6 2/3 scoreless innings against the Royals on April 12 at Kauffman Stadium and is 1-0 with a 1.50 ERA in two career starts against Kansas City.

**Cozart back in lineup as Andrelton gets day off**

*Rivera progressing well after May knee surgery*

By Avery Yang

ANAHEIM -- **Zack Cozart** was back in the lineup for Sunday's finale vs. the Rangers after missing the previous four games with a left forearm strain.

"Zack's ready to go," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He swung the bat yesterday, took [batting practice], felt good, so he'll get in there and play short this afternoon."

Cozart entered the week with a .232/.310/.395 line, five homers and a 96 **wRC+** over 216 plate appearances thus far this season. On Sunday, he went 1-for-3 with a run scored in the **Angels' 3-1 win**.

Cozart got the start in place of **Andrelton Simmons**, who had ice on his left wrist after Saturday's game, in which he was hit by a pitch in the left knee and tweaked his wrist sliding into second base.

However, Scioscia said the minor dings were not a factor in Simmons getting the day off Sunday. Rather, it was part of a targeted initiative to give him some rest.

"He was banged up on the slide; he had to put his hand down," Scioscia said. "I know he got hit with that pitch right in the knee, but this is not really based on anything that's happened short-term. We've targeted this day for a while and were waiting for Coz to get back and get Simba off his feet."

Simmons played in 57 of the Angels' first 59 games. He is batting .336, the third-highest mark among qualified hitters in the American League.

**Rivera progressing**

**Rene Rivera** has begun to throw as a part of his rehabilitation from a May 25 surgery to repair a torn meniscus in his right knee. He has not begun to swing the bat just yet. Though his expected timetable was to miss four to six weeks, Rivera is hopeful it will be a less arduous process.

"It all depends on how it heals, how the process is," Rivera said. "You hope it's less than that, but who knows. We've already had a week and a couple days, and it feels great. We've been working hard to get the strength back."

The procedure was done after some relatively routine soreness prompted Rivera to seek an MRI, which discovered the torn meniscus. Rivera actually played through the injury -- he's unclear for how long -- before the diagnosis. Regardless, Rivera said his doctor was impressed by the vitality of his knees.

"[Doctor] cleaned it up and was surprised how my knee looked. He said it looked like an 8-year-old kid's," Rivera said. "He was surprised that I played 18 years and that my knee looked so good."

The procedure was the first time in Rivera's 18-year pro career that he had surgery or even been on the disabled list.

"Rene has been very durable, especially as a catcher. You know the wear and tear that a catcher takes," Scioscia said. "He just got nicked up a little, he'll be back."

In addition to a throwing regimen, Rivera has been doing balance exercises and riding a stationary bike in order to get the circulation in his right leg back to normal. He also has been stretching extensively to reduce the swelling and inflammation from the surgery.

Rivera will not be traveling with the team on its upcoming nine-game road trip to Minnesota, Seattle and Oakland in order to rehab with the Angels' trainers in Anaheim.

## Sunday's top prospect performers\*

By Mike Rosenbaum

- No. 84 overall prospect Jahmai Jones (**Angels' No. 3**) and Brandon Marsh (Angels' No. 3, No. 95 overall) combined for six hits and four RBIs in Class A Advanced Inland Empire's loss against Lake Elsinore. Marsh collected a team-high four hits, going 4-for-5 with four singles and two RBIs. Jones went 2-for-5 with a double and a two-run home run, his third in his past five games and sixth of the season.

\* *Article cut to only include Angels-related material.*

**FROM MLB.COM**

## Mock Draft: Who goes in 1<sup>st</sup> round tonight?\*

*Callis, Mayo agree on predictions for top 6 picks*

By Jonathan Mayo and Jim Callis

Welcome to MLB Pipeline's penultimate projection of the first round of the 2018 Draft.

This time, we've combined our mocks into one, for easy comparing and contrasting purposes. You'll have to wait until pick No. 7, however, to see any divergence, as we have the same order for the top six selections.

It all starts with Auburn's Casey Mize remaining at No. 1 (Tigers), where he's been since we started the "mock draft season."

MLB Network's Draft preview show begins at 6 p.m. ET, leading to the start of the real action at 7 p.m. There will be a total of 78 picks made today, the first 43 of those broadcast live on MLB Network, while every pick -- from those 43 and the remaining 35 on Day 1, to all 900 on Days 2 and 3 of the Draft -- will be streamed live on MLB.com.

### 17. Angels

**Mayo: Brice Turang, SS, Santiago HS (Corona, Calif.)** -- Turang was once thought to be a top-of-the-Draft type, but despite falling some, he still has good bat-to-ball skills and can stay at short, with the Angels coveting up-the-middle players.

**Callis: Jordan Groshans, 3B, Magnolia (Texas) HS** -- Another team not locked in on a specific demographic, the Angels could: beat Kansas City to Groshans; pull Adams away from football; gamble on Georgia prep right-hander Ethan Hankins, whose stock slipped after he battled a muscular issue behind his pitching shoulder; start a run on college pitchers; or take Oregon State outfielder Trevor Larnach, whom several clubs will consider from this point on.

*\* Article cut to only include Angels-related material.*

## Each team's best player who's never been an All-Star

By Will Leitch

The ballot for the next month's MLB All-Star Game came out on Friday, which means it's time to start thinking about the roster -- and your vote. The MLB All-Star Game is amazing for many reasons, but high on the list of them is the fact that not everyone who has ever played in an All-Star Game could be considered a "star." Lance Carter was an All-Star. Cesar Izturis was an All-Star. Robert Fick was an All-Star. My favorite is still Bryan LaHair, a journeyman who once had a red-hot April (1.251 OPS!) and served as the lone representative for a 97-loss Cubs team in 2012. LaHair can say he was an All-Star, even though he played a total of 195 games in the Majors -- none of which came after his All-Star season.

People like LaHair make me feel for those players who have put together long, productive MLB careers but never, for whatever reason, reached an All-Star Game. Maybe they were good but not great, maybe they were slow starters, maybe there were too many stars at their position -- but every team has a guy you think would have made an All-Star team by now, but never has. Thus, we look at the player on every



team who has put together the best MLB career but never actually reached an All-Star Game. Bryan LaHair made an All-Star Game, and these guys never did. Maybe you can vote for them.

## **AMERICAN LEAGUE EAST**

### **Blue Jays: Kendrys Morales (2006-18)**

Morales certainly would have made an All-Star Game, and probably more, had his infamous leg-breaking after a walk-off grand slam not happened back in 2010. He missed all of '11 and has not been the same since. He finished fifth in the AL MVP voting back in '09.

### **Orioles: Colby Rasmus (2009-18)**

There was a time that Rasmus was one of the top prospects in baseball. But when the Cardinals traded him in 2011 and then went on to win a World Series, he was never quite able to put it together. Rasmus quit baseball last season but returned this year, only to get off to a nightmare start with the Orioles. He's recovering from an injury now and may return to Double-A next week. Rasmus hit more than 23 homers three different times in his career.

### **Rays: Kevin Kiermaier (2013-18)**

An advanced-metrics darling, Kiermaier's right thumb injury in April eliminates any chance he had of being the Rays' representative this season.

### **Red Sox: Rick Porcello (2009-18)**

So here's something you don't see every day: A guy who has won a Cy Young without ever making an All-Star Game. He currently has seven wins and an ERA a run lower than he did in 2017. But it's tougher to make the ASG on a crowded Red Sox roster than it might be for another team.

### **Yankees: Didi Gregorius (2012-18)**

You also have **Neil Walker** to choose from here, but we'll go with the guy who got off to a start so blistering that despite barely getting a hit over the next month, he is still having a terrific season.

## **AL CENTRAL**

### **Indians: Carlos Carrasco (2009-18)**

**Rajai Davis** would have been an acceptable pick here, but Carrasco has already received Cy Young votes twice and led the AL in wins last season.

### **Royals: Jason Hammel (2006-18)**

Fun fact: Hammel is currently 14th among active pitchers in games started. He has somehow started more games than Adam Wainwright, David Price and Gio Gonzalez.

### **Tigers: Leonys Martin (2011-18)**

Martin has never had an above-average offensive season in the Majors for four different teams over eight seasons.

**Twins: Logan Morrison (2010-18)**

Remember when Morrison was considered a controversial Twitter personality? We've come a long way.

**White Sox: Nate Jones (2012-18)**

Jones needs one of those years where the manager decides the Final Vote will just be between five random relievers.

**AL WEST****Angels: Andrelton Simmons (2012-18)**

Simmons is one of the best players in baseball, right now, and will almost certainly make his first All-Star Game this season. At least he better.

**Astros: Josh Reddick (2009-18)**

Reddick has been a quietly effective player for a whole decade. Now that he's playing for a World Series champion, we're all finally noticing.

**Athletics: Khris Davis (2013-18)**

Davis has already hit 40 homers for two consecutive seasons. Now that he's back from injury, he could do the same thing again in 2018.

**Mariners: Denard Span (2008-18)**

The Mariners are now Span's fifth team. He has proven himself useful, if never spectacular, at every stop.

**Rangers: Shin-Soo Choo (2005-18)**

Choo's walk-off homer over Memorial Day weekend gave him the most homers of any player born in Asia. He has been a lot better for a lot longer than you think.

**NATIONAL LEAGUE EAST****Braves: Nick Markakis (2006-18)**

**Whether he ends up with 3,000 hits**, Markakis almost certainly has put together the longest, most excellent career of any active player who has never made an All-Star Game. Is this finally the year? This might be his last, best chance.

**Marlins: J.T. Realmuto (2014-18)**

Realmuto might have been the last man standing in Miami, but he's also having the best year of his career and might be one of the best catchers in baseball.

**Mets: Juan Lagares (2013-18)**

Lagares might never make an All-Star Game, but he does feel like someone who will be a defensive replacement in the outfield for another 10 years, at least.

**Nationals: Anthony Rendon (2013-18)**

It sure feels like Rendon should have been on an All-Star team by now, probably even twice.

**Phillies: Carlos Santana (2010-18)**

Santana has a lifetime .364 OBP and plays a terrific first base. He might be one of the most underappreciated players in the game, though not by the Phillies.

**NL CENTRAL****Brewers: Christian Yelich (2013-18)**

Only in baseball would playing in Milwaukee give you a more high-profile opportunity to showcase your talent than in Miami.

**Cardinals: Tommy Pham (2014-18)**

Pham has been one of the 25 best players in baseball for two straight years now, and his journey to the Majors has been as circuitous as anybody in the sport. There are few ASG nods that would have been more earned.

**Cubs: Javier Baez (2014-18)**

Lots of guys to choose from here -- **Kyle Schwarber, Albert Almora Jr., Willson Contreras** -- but in a pinch, we'll go with the defensive superstar who's knocking the cover off the ball this season.

**Pirates: Francisco Cervelli (2008-18)**

Cervelli was once thought to be solely backup-catcher material, but he has shown a consistent ability to get on base in the Majors -- particularly compared to others at his position.

**Reds: Scooter Gennett (2013-18)**

He's hitting even better than he did last season, and he hasn't even had his yearly four-homer game yet.

**NL WEST****D-backs: Jorge De La Rosa (2004-18)**

De La Rosa was once, seemingly not that long ago, the Rockies' top pitcher. He's now 37 and has been in the big leagues for 14 years. Time is a flat circle.

**Dodgers: Rich Hill (2005-18)**

It looks like the moment has passed, which is a shame. At one point, Hill's story would have been all the All-Star Game announcers would have talked about the entire telecast.

**Giants: Austin Jackson (2010-18)**

The former Yankees prospect is now yet another of the senior citizens on the Giants' roster ... just the only one who was never quite enough of a star to make an ASG.

**Padres: Craig Stammen (2009-18)**

Definitely the toughest team to come up with an entry for on this list, we'll go with the wily vet who, after missing the entire 2016 season, is having the best year of his career.

**Rockies: Adam Ottavino (2010-18)**

Sticking with the veteran reliever theme, Ottavino has been the best pitcher in a terrific Colorado bullpen.

*FROM MiLB.COM*

**Marsh hitting way out of the slough**

*Angels No. 4 prospect gets hotter with 4-for-5, two-RBI effort*

By Michael Avallone

The learning curve for **Brandon Marsh** in his transition to the California League might have been steep, but he seems to be straightening it out.

The **No. 4 Angels prospect** tied his career high with four hits and drove in two runs in Class A Advanced Inland Empire's 7-6 loss to Lake Elsinore on Sunday afternoon at The Diamond. Marsh has racked up four multi-hit efforts in his last five games to raise his average 149 points to .222.

Marsh kicked off his big day with a single to left field and promptly stole second in the top of the first inning. He opened the scoring in his next at-bat in the third with a single up the middle that plated **DJ Jenkins** and third-ranked prospect **Jahmai Jones**. Marsh singled to right in the fourth, grounded out in the sixth and beat out an infield single to second in the ninth. It marked his third career four-hit game and his first since last Aug. 13 with Rookie-level Orem.

"I'm just getting into the groove of things," he said. "I started off slow [in Class A Burlington] too. It's all about getting your feet wet and then moving forward. I haven't made any changes or anything like that. I'm just trusting in the process of what we do in the [batting] cage each day and then trying to take that into the game. If the pitcher throws it away, I'll go to left. If he throws it inside, I'll pull it. Hitting the ball where they throw it gives you the upper hand. It's something I want to make a key part of my game moving forward."

The 20-year-old began the season in the Midwest League, where he batted .295/.390/.470 with 16 extra-base hits and 24 RBIs in 36 games. After being promoted to Inland Empire on May 18, Marsh went 3-for-41 in his first 10 Cal League games. He's turned things around by going on a 11-for-22 tear with five RBIs. Overall, the Georgia native is hitting .272/.359/.400 in 49 games this season.

Marsh has battled injuries during his first two pro seasons. After the Angels selected him in the second round of the 2016 Draft, the club **prohibited him from playing** after a post-Draft medical report revealed a stress fracture in his lower back. He made his professional debut with Orem in the Pioneer League, but a sprained thumb put him on the disabled list for a month after just three games. He returned July 28 and finished the season as one of the circuit's top hitters after compiling a .350/.396/.548 slash line with 22 extra-base hits and 44 RBIs in 39 games.

"There are some days where I'm like, 'Wow, what am I doing at the plate?' But you just trust the process," Marsh explained. "The injuries certainly weren't fun, but you've got to get through them. It's a part of the game, so I try not to think of the past and just take things day by day. My goal is to stay healthy and play as many games this year as I can. That's my main focus. Keeping the body right, staying healthy and letting everything else fall into place."

Jones homered, doubled and drove in two runs for the 66ers, who led, 6-1, heading into the bottom of the fourth.

**Padres No. 15 prospect Hudson Potts** slugged a two-run homer and **Buddy Reed** stroked a walk-off single for the Storm in the ninth. **Kelvin Melean** doubled twice, including a leadoff knock in the ninth, before scoring the winning run.

Lake Elsinore relievers **Austin Smith**, **Emmanuel Ramirez** and **Colby Blueberg** (1-0) combined to allowed five hits and a walk with three strikeouts over 5 2/3 shutout frames. Starter **Ronald Bolanos** was charged with six runs -- four earned -- on six hits and two walks with a season-high seven punchouts in 3 1/3 frames.

## Farm system storylines: May edition\*

*Guerrero was Minors' best hitter; Hiura promoted after heating up*

### Los Angeles Angels

For the last week and a half, Inland Empire's San Manuel Stadium has been the place to be for Angels fans who are also prospect hounds. The system's No. 1 guy, **Jo Adell**, arrived with the Class A Advanced 66ers from the Class A Burlington Bees on May 22, two days after the arrival of No. 4 **Brandon Marsh**. **Jahmai Jones**, No. 3 in the system, has been with Inland Empire all year. Although Adell had just seven hits over his first nine California League games, three of them were home runs, giving him eight dingers on the month. No Minor Leaguer hit as many as 10 homers from May 1-30, but **Jared Walsh** -- who was promoted from Inland Empire to Double-A Mobile on May 23 -- is among the eight players who had one more longball than Adell in that span. Walsh posted a .363/.471/.775 slash line over 23 games between the two levels, and his presence with the BayBears only makes **Taylor Ward** more of a danger in the Southern League. Ward, the Angels' No. 13 prospect, has batted .345 through 42 games this year, and over the last month he's hit four homers and stolen five bases. **Griffin Canning** also continued his work toward an incredible debut season. — JJ

*\*Article cut to only include Angels-related material.*

## Prospect Roundup: Games of June 3\*

*Phils' Haseley, Twins' Kirilloff kept picking up hits Sunday*

By Sam Dykstra

### Who needed this one

**Angels 2B Jahmai Jones, Class A Advanced Inland Empire: 2-for-4, HR, 2B, 2 RBI, 2 R** -- Jones didn't need this particular games, perhaps -- after all, he did homer for the third time in his last five games. But the Angels' No. 3 prospect entered the weekend hitting just .234 in the California League. The 20-year-old right-handed slugger has shown some pop in the past, and his speed is a weapon. The Halos even moved him to second base this season to give him an easier way to reach the Majors. But he's been inconsistent at the plate in 2018 and needs to string together more performances like this in an ever-improving Los Angeles system.

*\*Article cut to only include Angels-related material.*

## FROM THE ATHLETIC

### TA30: The MLB power rankings have the Red Sox cruising, the Pirates sinking and the Dodgers reviving

By Matthew Kory

Welcome back to TA30, where we tell you who is good (the Red Sox) and who isn't (the White Sox) so you don't have to pay any attention to baseball. Now you can spend more time with your family! I'm Matt Kory, a writer for *The Athletic Boston*, and I'll be substituting for Levi Weaver this week. No throwing spitballs while my back is turned, got it? Unless you're the Orioles, in which case, do what you gotta do, you need all the help you can get.

#### 1. Boston Red Sox (*last week: 1*)

The Red Sox keep on keeping on, or, put another way, winning. They took two of four in Houston and outscored those rascally Astros in the process. That they did it without Dustin Pedroia and Mookie Betts only ups the score on the impressiveness scale to two. (The Impressiveness Scale only goes to two.)

#### 2. Houston Astros (*last week: 2*)

If I told you Justin Verlander gave up the second most runs he's allowed all season to Boston on Saturday, you'd probably think he got absolutely shelled. He gave up two runs and three hits in six innings. He struck out six and walked two. So by his standards, he did get shelled, but for any other pitcher, it was a pretty good outing.

#### 3. New York Yankees (*last week: 3*)

The Yankees were rained out again, making them the team with the fewest games played on the year. One of these days the baseball gods will stop crying in joy at the sight of pinstripes. Until then, though, rainouts aplenty!

#### **T 4. Atlanta Braves** (*last week: 5*)

Braves pitchers are walking 10.5 percent of the hitters they face, the third most in baseball and the most of any team not based in Chicago. So how are they doing this? The team is hitting well, yes, but also, their pitchers aren't giving up home runs. They've allowed the third-fewest homers of any team in the league, which is why the walks haven't mattered much. Sorry for the lack of a joke here. I'm sure Levi will rectify that next week.

#### **T 4. Chicago Cubs** (*last week: 8*)

The Cubs haven't got much from their rotation this season. This mirrors their tear-down and rebuild of a few years ago, in that they focused on building with hitters first, then added the pitching later. The problem here is they've already added the pitching. Somehow, despite that, they're the highest they've been in our rankings all season.

#### **6. Washington Nationals** (*last week: 6*)

While Max Scherzer wasn't on the mound dominating the Orioles Saturday, he was watching the Capitals play in the Stanley Cup Finals. Go out, crush the Orioles' spirit, then rush back to the dugout and hope you didn't miss any goals? Some people have life pretty well figured out.

#### **7. Milwaukee Brewers** (*last week: 4*)

Are the Brewers the most surprising team in the league? They probably shouldn't be, considering that they may have had the best off-season of any team in baseball. Milwaukee added Lorenzo Cain and Christian Yelich, who are one and three in player WAR on the team, and pretty much the reasons (along with Travis Shaw) that the Brewers' offense is above average.

#### **8. Seattle Mariners** (*last week: 10*)

Don't look now, the Mariners are in first place! Seriously, though, don't look. The Mariners being in first place is about as frequent as a solar eclipse, and just as dangerous to the retinas.

#### **9. Cleveland Indians** (*last week: 12*)

How is it that the Indians have a billion injured outfielders and none of them are Michael Brantley? [Checks disabled list] Nope, still no Michael Brantley. [Checks disabled list] Still no Michael Brantley. [Checks disabled list] This is surprising! Good on you, Michael Brantley!

#### **10. Philadelphia Phillies** (*last week: 7*)

Jake Arrieta called out his coaching staff, a fellow player (Scott Kingery), and kind of the entire organization after a loss to the Giants yesterday. That's a veteran move: Arrieta knows the one thing that will, without fail, turn around a struggling team is internal discord. (He does have a point, though.)

#### **11. Los Angeles Angels** *(last week: 9)*

Garrett Richards has been nails, which is good, considering the alternatives (Garrett Richards steps on nails, or has nails inserted into his joints to hold them together). In other news, Mike Trout is crazy bananas.

#### **12. St. Louis Cardinals** *(last week: 11)*

The Cardinals have been caught stealing 17 times this season, the most in the majors. Did they secretly re-sign Albert Pujols?

#### **13. Arizona Diamondbacks** *(last week: 15)*

In three starts, Clay Buchholz has a 1.50 ERA and 14 strikeouts, with just two walks, in 18 innings. He could change his name to Gold Buchholz... but, given who we're talking about, maybe hold off on filing that paperwork for a few more starts.

#### **14. Los Angeles Dodgers** *(last week: 17)*

The Dodgers have a losing record — and the best run differential in the entire NL West. They have the same record as the Giants, and a run differential 75 runs better than San Francisco's. Last year they amazed you with their skill; this year they'll amaze you with their inability to get their skill to show up in the standings.

#### **15. Oakland Athletics** *(last week: 16)*

The A's went 2-for-2 with a home run and two RBIs on 3-0 counts Sunday against the Royals. Swinging 3-0 is one of those binary things: Either awful or great. Either you're blowing an easy base by hacking, or you're crushing a meatball. The A's did the second, and in the process climbed to their highest ranking of the season.

#### **16. Colorado Rockies** *(last week: 14)*

The Rockies keep waiting for Jon Gray to go off, forgetting that MLB bylaws state they're the Rockies and aren't allowed to have any good pitchers. You might assume Gray's problem is pitching at home in Colorado while he's been fine on the road, but don't be so quick to make assumptions. I mean you're totally right, that's absolutely the problem, but watch out with assumptions anyway.

#### **17. Pittsburgh Pirates** *(last week: 13)*

Things aren't looking good for Pittsburgh, and the worst of it is that moving Phil Kessel to the third line won't solve anything. Probably.



**18. Tampa Bay Rays** *(last week: 19)*

Chris Archer is scheduled to undergo an MRI on his injured groin. If he's sidelined for any significant period of time the Rays may need to invent another pitcher role. Maybe a "Set Down Man" to follow the opener? I don't know, I'm just spitballing here.

**19. Detroit Tigers** *(last week: 23)*

The Tigers will be picking first in the first round of today's major league draft. Nothing is confirmed but I'm hearing rumors they're thinking about taking a whole bunch of Advil.

**20. New York Mets** *(last week: 18)*

They continue to employ José Reyes, they for some reason employ José Bautista, and then they managed to give up the shortest sacrifice fly ball of the season to the Cubs on Sunday. It's hard sometimes to tell if the Mets are more victims of a cruel fate or of their own self-inflicted bumbling. Either way, it's an entertaining combination, unless you are a Mets fan.

**21. San Francisco Giants** *(last week: 20)*

Have you seen a picture of Dereck Rodriguez? If not, [click here](#), but you should know that the image you are about to see is not, I repeat *not*, Tim Lincecum. In other news, they're still not paying for Pablo Sandoval's contract, so that's good, I guess.

**22. Toronto Blue Jays** *(last week: 21)*

How much money would you have won by betting that through May the most valuable Blue Jays hitter by WAR would be Luke Maile? The answer is a lot, but that's not the point. The point is Luke Maile is good now, which means baseball analysis is officially dead.

**23. Minnesota Twins** *(last week: 22)*

Eddie Rosario hit three homers to beat the Indians on Sunday, and it didn't look like any of the three pitches he hit out were strikes. So how do you pitch a guy who hits pitches a foot outside, and three inches too high, both for home runs? Do you throw him 80 mph meatballs down the middle? Whatever the trick is, the Indians might want to figure it out.

**24. San Diego Padres** *(last week: 24)*

Padres pitchers have picked off 11 hitters, the most in the majors. They also are one of only six teams to not yet be called for a balk. If you don't look any further, the Padres pitchers are fantastic!

**25. Texas Rangers** *(last week: 25)*

The Rangers' rotation reads like a who's who of good pitchers from 2012. Or in Bartolo Colon's case, 1912.

**26. Cincinnati Reds** *(last week: 26)*

Checking in on Matt Harvey, his ERA in New York was 7.00, but in Cincinnati it's all the way down to 4.44. If he gets cut a few more times, he may win the Cy Young.

**27. Kansas City Royals** *(last week: 28)*

The Royals are like a prolonged game of whack-a-mole. Every 30 years they poke their head out of the hole and grab a World Series win, then a huge mallet comes down on their heads and we don't hear from them again for a few decades.

**28. Baltimore Orioles** *(last week: 30)*

Rumor has it the Orioles are interested in the recently released Hanley Ramírez, which is surprising considering they would seem to be pretty much set for guys who hit for power, strike out a ton, and can't play defense.

**29. Miami Marlins** *(last week: 27)*

The last two drafts have seen the Marlins take two left-handed high school pitchers. One is currently recovering from Tommy John surgery and the other has a 12.00 ERA in Single A. So, given that and that they're the Marlins, there are two ways for them to go this year. Either select another left-handed high school pitcher, or, when their pick comes up, just set it on fire to save some money.

**30. Chicago White Sox** *(last week: 29)*

Last week, Levi told White Sox fans to take heart because, although they had the worst record in baseball, they were only second worst in our rankings. This week, well, you can give the heart back.

**For starters, the Angels' pitching staff has been difficult to predict – but that's a good thing**

By Steve Dilbeck

The best laid plans of mice and baseball executives often go madly awry. They can map out this and make contingencies for that, but mostly there is a lot of crossing of fingers.

The Angels figured they had put together an impressive offensive club with the return of Justin Upton and the additions of Shohei Ohtani, Zack Cozart and Ian Kinsler to a lineup that already featured Mike Trout and Albert Pujols.

Starting pitching, though, was another matter. The rotation consisted of an entire group battling back from injury and, save for Ohtani, did not feature a single new arm.

So, you know where this is going. Now their offense is in hiding and their rotation is acting like one of the best in the American League.

It's oddly true. A rotation that lost two starters (Matt Shoemaker, JC Ramirez) to new surgeries early in the season nonetheless has been acting like one of the most effective units in the league, all while the offense has been meeker than a nerd at the high school dance.

That trend continued Sunday when Tyler Skaggs threw six scoreless innings and the offense made four hits stand up for a 3-1 victory over the Rangers.

The Angels' rotation did not allow an earned run throughout the weekend, Garrett Richards, Jaime Barria and Skaggs combining to hold Texas to one unearned run in 19 innings, allowing just nine hits. Since May 1, Angels starting pitchers have an A.L.-best 2.56 ERA.

It's all backwards.

"I think we all just want to one-up each other," Skaggs said. "It's a quiet competitiveness, and we're doing a good job of it right now."

Meanwhile, their offense had been limited to three runs or less in 32 of 60 games. Since May 1, the Angels have batted .225 with runners in scoring position.

"We're getting the good starting pitching we're going to need," said manager Mike Scioscia. "When the offense catches up and matches it and we get guys swinging the bats to their capabilities, we will go on one of those good runs."

That's the new plan, but who knows? Right now, the Angels are sort of defying expectations. A piecemeal rotation of Andrew Heaney, Richards, Skaggs, Barria, Ohtani and Nick Tropeano is proving better than just effective. And doing it long enough to convert some non-believers that this run can continue.

"We don't see any reason why it can't," Scioscia said. "We have a lot of confidence in the guys we're giving the ball to. The first couple weeks of the season, the length wasn't there. We had some guys trying to find themselves. And, obviously, 'Shoe' went down, and JC. Then you're looking at a little different rotation.

"Fortunately for us, we had the depth. Nick Tropeano has come up and been doing a great job. And we're getting length now. So if you look outside of the first three weeks of the season when the bullpen was throwing an extraordinary amount of innings, that's all leveled off now."

Not that the bullpen hasn't remained a sore spot.

It was the other iffy area on the team going into the season, filled with veterans who had seen better days and a promising young arm in Keynan Middleton that was still relatively unproven. Middleton evolved into an effective closer early in April, saving six games. But by mid-May, his elbow flared and he headed for Tommy John surgery.

Now, it's an undefined group, with no particular roles or specific job descriptions beyond getting batters out. The bullpen blew Richards' excellent effort Saturday and flirted with disaster Sunday, when rookie Justin Anderson loaded the bases with two outs in the ninth on three consecutive walks before getting Isiah Kiner-Falefa to fly out to end the game.

"I still felt under control," Anderson said. "I don't even know who the last guy was I faced, but I was like, 'I'm going to come after them with my best stuff and get them out.' "

He needed 34 pitches to close it out and earn his second save. Anderson started the season in Double A. It's the bullpen they have.

"They're all going to have to go in there and trust their stuff," Scioscia said. "We like their arms down there. We've got some guys that know what they're doing and know how to pitch.

"Sometimes a guy might pitch in the seventh, sometimes in the ninth. That's how we're set up right now. We'll continue to move forward with these guys."

At least for now, that concern is not also with the starting pitchers. Plans, however, tend to change in baseball and with the Angels.

## **José Briceño, the other guy in the Andrelton Simmons deal, making the most of new chance**

By Fabian Ardaya

When José Briceño first arrived at the Angels' spring-training complex in Tempe, Arizona some three-and-a-half months ago as a non-roster invitee to big-league camp, it was clear.

It was time for the 25-year-old catcher, then best known as the essential throw-in at the end of the Andrelton Simmons trade with Atlanta in the 2015 offseason, to make a change. For one, he couldn't hit — he'd carried a combined .194/.241/.313 line through Double A and Triple A in 2017 while struggling to find other ways to get on base. He hadn't posted an even average OPS since low-A ball and had gone 3-for-30 in a brief stint in winter ball in Venezuela for Navegantes del Magallanes.

So, Briceño and Angels minor-league hitting coordinator Jeremy Reed set to overhaul his swing from start to finish. Reed a former big-league veteran for parts of eight seasons, tinkered with each part of Briceño's base, with a main and essential goal in mind — keep the head steady.

First, he took Briceño's hands and raised them before flattening them out so the bat lay on his shoulder horizontal to the ground as the pitcher begins his motion, then pointing it directly behind him. As he begins his leg kick, the hands twist and elevate the bat perpendicular to the dirt to get things moving.

Reed also stood Briceño up more in the box, allowing him to keep the leg kick and generate power without coming off-balance.

“They were some pretty big changes to my mechanics,” Briceño said in Spanish. “It was something I really had to take a while to get comfortable with. But eventually the coaches and me kept making little adjustments from there, and it went a little smoother.”

He’s reaped the benefits, hitting .261/.272/.500 while tapping into some power in Triple A this season before earning his first big-league call-up on May 20, when René Rivera was placed on the disabled list. Now, his locker is just a few down from Simmons, the headliner and name everyone remembers from the transaction.

“It’s something I never actually imagined actually happening,” he said. “It’s a dream that I had with him, just to be here and playing with all these guys.”

In just four starts in the big leagues, he’s already slugged two homers. Briceño said keeping his head steady has done more than just allow him to stay balanced.

“Doing that has also helped me get better at identifying pitches,” Briceño said. “Instead of swinging at everything, I’m just locked in to swing at pitches in my zone and just focusing on that, and I’ve seen results.”

Being a catcher, and seeing the depth and spin of pitches through that same perspective actually proved to be a detriment to Briceño as a hitter. He’d react late and often wrong, leaving him falling off when trying to swing. With his head now steady, he said, he’s able to read pitches quicker and jump on them. The swing changes are still seeing some minor tweaks but have left an impression on Angels officials.

“It’s come a little later, but he’s figured some things out,” Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. “You’ve seen the power come, and he’s become a much better hitter.”

The defense has come along, as well. Scioscia, himself a former backstop, noted that Briceño had always impressed with his skills as a receiver, but the organization went to work to reconstruct the rest of his game, from going through a lineup to talking to pitchers and even the minute details such as how and when he gets set up in his crouch. Briceño flashed a bit of his quicker reactions in Sunday’s 3-1 win over the Rangers, popping up to pick up a pitch in the dirt and throw out Robinson Chirinos as he headed for second.

A few innings later, he quickly pounced and tracked down a foul pop-up from Jurickson Profar down the third base line to record the out.

“In the couple years we’ve seen José in spring training, he’s grown by leaps and bounds on the defensive end,” Scioscia said.

Briceño’s emergence has been a surprise, both in the fact that he’s performed so well and that he even was needed as all. The Angels signed Rivera to a one-year deal this offseason to back up Martín Maldonado, with his durability and dependability as one of his strongest attributes. Briceño was, at best,

viewed as the club's fourth-best big-league catching option, also lagging behind Juan Graterol already on the 40-man roster.

Instead, on May 13, Rivera woke up with a different kind of pain in his right knee after catching a full game against the Twins a day prior. He played through it for two more games before finally succumbing to an MRI.

"It felt weird," Rivera said. "It didn't feel like the typical soreness that comes with baseball."

The MRI revealed torn meniscus in the right knee. Rivera, who'd played 18 years of professional baseball as a catcher and somehow never dealt with a stint on the disabled list, was headed for his first-ever surgery.

"They cleaned it up and were surprised how my knee looked; he said it looked like an 8-year-old kid's," Rivera said. "He was surprised that I played 18 years and that my knee looked real good."

"Sometimes, it's cyclical," Scioscia said. "Sometimes, it's luck of the draw. René's been very durable, especially as a catcher. You know the wear and tear that takes to be a catcher. Now, he just got nicked up a little bit."

Even with Graterol already on the 40-man roster, the Angels elected to select Briceño's contract. Rivera's role would be replaced by the man whose career reinvention he'd witnessed firsthand. After all, the two were locker mates this past spring in Tempe.

Rivera, now a week removed from surgery, has begun throwing and doing some light exercises on an exercise bike to regain range of motion in the knee. Sometime next week, he hopes to begin swinging a bat. Overall, a four- to six-week timetable seems reasonable. In the meantime, he has remained engaged, sitting in on catchers' meetings and helping bring along the 25-year-old.

"I think that any good moment to try to teach other kids like Briceño the game of baseball and how things are here in the big leagues is great," Rivera said. "He's a great kid. He listens, and we've been talking back since we were locker neighbors in spring training. Seeing him come up here and have some good early success, that's huge for him and huge for us."

**FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

## **Anderson can't get call, still leads Angels past Rangers 3-1**

By Greg Beacham

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — After Justin Anderson got two outs in the ninth inning, the Angels reliever got two strikes on three consecutive batters. All three drew full-count walks when Anderson couldn't get a call.

With the Angels' bullpen on the brink of collapse for the second straight day, Anderson dug in and made sure another Angels starter's strong effort wasn't wasted.

Tyler Skaggs pitched six scoreless innings of four-hit ball and Justin Upton homered in Los Angeles' 3-1 victory over the Texas Rangers on Sunday.

Anderson got Isiah Kiner-Falefa on a popup to complete his second career save, but only after walking the bases loaded in three at-bats totaling 21 pitches. The Angel Stadium crowd thought Anderson had struck out the last two — pinch-hitter Joey Gallo and Shin-Soo Choo — but the pitches didn't persuade home plate umpire Chris Conroy.

"I didn't realize how bad I got squeezed until I came back inside and watched some of the video," Anderson said. "But that's part of it, and you've just got to make the most of those days and do what you can."

While Skaggs' stellar performance completed a weekend series in which the Angels' three starting pitchers allowed no earned runs, the Los Angeles bullpen nearly gave away another game after wasting a stellar performance by Garrett Richards in a 10-inning loss Saturday night.

After Skaggs left, Noe Ramirez gave up Nomar Mazara's 14th homer in the eighth. Anderson then survived the ninth on 34 pitches, including 10 after a full-count pitch to Gallo that looked a strike to nearly everybody in the park — including Angels catcher Jose Briceno, who rose swiftly out of his crouch in anticipation of the game being over.

"You can go back and look at it," Anderson said. "The ball is right there in the zone. I'm not saying that's on Briceno at all. That umpire missed that call."

Luis Valbuena had an early two-run double as the Angels managed only four hits, but took two of three from their AL West rivals.

Skaggs (4-4) ended his six-start winless skid despite laboring for long stretches of his six innings. The left-hander needed 70 pitches to get through the first three innings alone, but still managed to keep the Rangers scoreless while walking three and striking out six.

"I think we all want to one-up each other," Skaggs said of the Angels' starting pitchers, who lead the AL with a 2.56 ERA since May 1. "It's a quiet competition, and I think we're all doing a good job."

Choo had two doubles while reaching base in his 20th consecutive game for the last-place Rangers, who went 3-4 on their road trip.

"I loved how patient we were," Texas manager Jeff Banister said of the ninth inning. "We had some guys at the plate with some really good looks."

The Angels went up 2-0 in the second inning when Shohei Ohtani and Zack Cozart doubled and Valbuena drove them home.

Upton's homer was his 12th of the season, but the veteran slugger's first in 16 games since May 15.

#### FISTER'S FINISH

Doug Fister (1-6) provided another solid, innings-eating start for the Rangers, giving up four hits and three runs in six innings. He retired 13 consecutive Angels between Valbuena's RBI double and Upton's solo homer.

"Really efficient game from Doug," Texas manager Jeff Banister said. "Lot of ground ball outs. Very weak contact."

#### TROUT CAUGHT

Mike Trout went 0 for 3, ending his six-game hitting streak. The center fielder also appeared to be shaken up after running into the wall while catching Delino DeShields' long drive in the fifth inning. Trout stood with his hands on his knees for a long moment, but stayed in the game. "Mike is OK," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He banged his knee into the wall a little, but we anticipate him playing (Monday)."

#### OHTANI'S TURN

Ohtani began the Angels' rally in the second inning when he singled for just his second hit since May 24. He is scheduled to pitch Wednesday against Kansas City on his usual once-a-week mound schedule. The Angels gave extra rest time to their two-way rookie before his last start in Detroit.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Rangers: LHP Martin Perez threw another bullpen session. He is on the disabled list with nerve inflammation in his right arm.

Angels: Cozart returned from a four-game absence with a strained left forearm. The Angels' regular third baseman played shortstop, his former position in Cincinnati, to give a rest day to Andrelton Simmons, who had missed only two previous games all season.

#### UP NEXT

Rangers: After a day off, Matt Moore (1-5, 7.85 ERA) looks for a turnaround start when Texas opens a two-game home series with Oakland.

Angels: Nick Tropeano (3-3, 3.80 ERA) takes the Big A mound Monday in the opener of a three-game series with Kansas City. The right-hander has capably filled a gap in Los Angeles' rotation, and he will attempt to win three straight starts for the first time in his big-league career.



**FROM CBS SPORTS****Royals, Angels open series in LA**

*The Kansas City Royals have played better lately, but they're still searching for improvements from their bullpen heading into a three-game series at the Los Angeles Angels on Monday night.*

By STATS

The Kansas City Royals have played better lately, but they're still searching for improvements from their bullpen heading into a three-game series at the Los Angeles Angels on Monday night.

Kansas City (21-38) came into Sunday ranked 28th of 30 major league teams with a 5.46 ERA from its relief corps. The bullpen then gave up two runs in 1 2/3 innings in a 5-1 loss to the visiting Oakland A's on Sunday.

"You're waiting for somebody to step up and take a role," Kansas City coach Ned Yost told reporters before the game. "Grab it. Take it. I'll gladly give it to you, but you've got to take it. I'm not going to hand it to you."

Even with the loss on Sunday and a 16-0 blowout loss to the A's on Friday, the Royals are 7-5 since May 22.

They'll look for left-hander Danny Duffy to build off his past two starts.

Duffy (2-6, 5.71 ERA) was 1-6 with a 6.88 ERA after an 8-3 loss to the New York Yankees on May 19. It was the sixth time in seven starts he allowed at least five earned runs.

Duffy, the Opening Day starter for the Royals, has bounced back with consecutive quality starts against the Texas Rangers and the Minnesota Twins.

He allowed just one earned run and four hits in 7 2/3 innings on May 24 in Texas and the offense rewarded him in an 8-2 victory.

Duffy came back Tuesday and gave up one earned run and four hits in six innings to visiting Minnesota. He was long gone by the time the Royals won 2-1 in 14 innings.

Duffy is 2-1 in his career against the Angels with a 3.46 ERA. His last start against Los Angeles was April 17, 2017, when he allowed one run and three hits in seven innings of a 7-1 win in Kansas City.

The Angels (32-28) will turn to right-hander Nick Tropeano, who has also strung together two good starts, both on the road. He also had success in Kansas City on April 12, his first major league appearance since undergoing Tommy John surgery in August 2016.

Tropeano (3-3, 3.80) most recently allowed two runs and seven hits in 5 1/3 innings on Tuesday and came away with the victory in the Angels' 9-2 win. Five days earlier, he held the Toronto Blue Jays to one run and four hits in 7 1/3 innings of a 7-1 win by Los Angeles.

He was even better against the Royals while helping the Angels to a franchise-best 13-3 start, blanking them for 6 2/3 innings in a 7-1 win.

Tropeano told reporters after his last game that the team's potential to score a lot of runs is comforting.

"This is one of the most dangerous lineups in the league," he said. "It's going to be scary once everything clicks."

Tropeano made one other appearance against the Royals in April 2016.

### ***FROM LARRY BROWN SPORTS***

## **Angels expect Mike Trout to play despite banging his knee**

By Larry Brown

Los Angeles Angels manager Mike Scioscia expects Mike Trout to be able to play on Monday despite banging his knee during Sunday's game.

Trout bumped his knee on the wall while making a catch in center in the top of the 5th inning of the Angels' 3-1 win over Texas.

Trout remained in the game but finished 0-for-3.

"Mike is OK," Scioscia said after the game, via the AP. "He banged his knee into the wall a little, but we anticipate him playing (Monday)."

The Angels are 32-28 after taking 2 of 3 from Texas. They will host the Royals for a three-game series beginning on Monday.

### ***FROM KYODO NEWS***

## **Baseball: Shohei Ohtani puts Angels on road to victory over Rangers**

Japanese two-way phenom Shohei Ohtani got his team's first hit and also scored the first run of the game as the Los Angeles Angels posted a 3-1 win over the Texas Rangers on Sunday.

Ohtani and Zack Cozart put together back-to-back singles off Texas right-hander Doug Fister and both then scored on Luis Valbuena's double to give the Angels a 2-0 lead in the bottom of the second inning.

Justin Upton homered to extend the Angels' lead in the sixth inning and helped make a winner out of lefty Tyler Skaggs, who tied his record at 4-4 and lowered his ERA to 3.27.

Rangers' only run came courtesy of a homer from Nomar Mazara in the top of the eighth.

Ohtani, who was batting as a designated hitter fifth in the lineup, went 1-for-3 after flying out and striking out in his other at-bats in the fourth and seventh innings.

"I am glad that we were able to put the game away," said Ohtani.

"There are games every day and every day I am learning. All I have to do is take what I learn into the next game. I'll just keep giving it my best shot."

### **FROM REUTERS**

## **Angels make most of four hits to beat Rangers**

Tyler Skaggs gave up four hits over six scoreless innings and got just enough offensive support to lead the Los Angeles Angels to a 3-1 win over the Texas Rangers Sunday afternoon at Angel Stadium.

The Angels had only four hits themselves, but one of them was a two-run double by Luis Valbuena and another was a solo homer by Justin Upton, helping Los Angeles win the rubber game of the series.

Skaggs allowed two doubles to Shin-Soo Choo and also walked three batters, but was able to make pitches when the Rangers threatened to score. Texas was 0-for-6 with runners in scoring position when Skaggs was in the game.

Except for a couple mistakes, Rangers starter Doug Fister nearly matched Skaggs. Fister (1-6) gave up three runs on four hits in six innings. He struck out just one but didn't walk a batter.

The Angels got all the offense they would need in the second inning when Shohei Ohtani singled and went to second on a single by Zack Cozart with one out. Valbuena followed and immediately fell behind in the count 0-2.

But he worked the count full, fouled off a couple pitches, then hit a changeup from Fister on the eighth pitch of the at-bat into the right field corner to score both baserunners for a 2-0 lead.

Upton homered off Fister with two out in the sixth, his 12th of the season, for a 3-0 lead.

Skaggs (4-4) was finished after six innings and 107 pitches, striking out six.

Three Angels relievers - Jim Johnson (seventh inning), Noe Ramirez (eighth) and Justin Anderson (ninth, second save) - pitched the final three innings in relief of Skaggs.

The Rangers did threaten against Anderson in the ninth, getting three walks with two out before Isiah Kiner-Falefa flied to right to end it.

The Rangers scored their run on a solo homer by Nomar Mazara in the eighth inning off Ramirez.

**FROM FORBES.COM**

## **Mike Scioscia, on Path to Hall of Fame, Should get a new contract with Angels on the way**

By Barry Bloom

Mike Scioscia is in his 19th year as manager of the Los Angeles Angels and nearing the end of a decade-long, \$50 million contract. He can be a free agent at the end of the year and doesn't like to talk about it, but there's no doubt where his sentiments lie.

"I still enjoy what I do," he told me on Sunday. "I'd like to see this through."

No doubt. He has a team replete with the best young player in the game (Mike Trout), a veteran who sets new records and milestones all the time (Albert Pujols) and the two-way Japanese sensation (Shohei Ohtani), who has proved in his first Major League season he's as good a hitter as he is a pitcher.

All the Angels need right now is a bona fide big-league closer, and let's go. The American League's second wild-card berth is there for the taking.

Scioscia is only 59 and has evolved in the role just as the manager's job has evolved in the majors. Two of his former coaches – Joe Maddon of the Chicago Cubs and Bud Black of the Colorado Rockies – are among the best skippers in baseball.

Scioscia's tenure is by far the longest right now with one major league club, a rarity in an age when managers are moved with more regularity than so many musical chairs. Angels owner Arte Moreno could do worse than re-upping Scioscia. A lot worse.

But what do I know? New York Yankees principal owner Hal Steinbrenner fired Joe Girardi at the end of last postseason after the Yanks fell one win short of the World Series. Girardi left with a .554 winning percentage over 11 seasons, .562 in 10 seasons with the Yankees, the highest winning percentage of any active manager.

There's all that stuff about a new voice in the clubhouse. The Yankees have that in Aaron Boone. But sometimes the same old voice is just fine.

Scioscia, who managed the Angels to their only World Series win, in 2002, has done his best job the last two seasons. Last year's team, with a depleted pitching staff, finished 80-82 and was in the wild-card race almost the entire season.

This year, he has balanced keeping Ohtani healthy with the onslaught of Japanese media and the twice-a-day question-and-answer sessions (translated into another language to boot). Those are actually fun.

He teases Grace McNamee – a Japanese-American whose career dates back to the 1990s and the emergence of Hideo Nomo with the Dodgers – about her translations.

If Ohtani's name comes up in response to a question, Grace has to translate for the Japanese media accordingly.

"Did you say 'gorilla bullpen?'" Scioscia asks.

"Did you say 'penciled in?'"

The answer is always "yes," and Grace offers the Japanese translation.

There's also the Japanese word of the day. On Sunday, it was *Ohayo*. Pronounced like "Ohio," it means good morning.

"He's a special guy to play for," said Trout, who has never played for anyone else in his eight big-league seasons. "He comes in, and he wants to win. That's the biggest thing a player wants in a manager. We have a great team around him, and he wants us to win."

Whether Scioscia is back or not, it isn't too soon to consider him as a managerial candidate for the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Not surprisingly, he has Trout's vote.

With 1,602 wins, Scioscia recently passed his mentor Tommy Lasorda and is tied with Fred Clark for 19th on the all-time list. Clark managed the Pittsburgh Pirates early in the 20th century.

Lasorda led the Dodgers for 21 years and was elected to the Hall in 1997. Scioscia caught his entire playing career for Lasorda from 1980 to '92.

They teamed on the World Series winners of 1981 and '88, the only times Lasorda's Dodgers won the title. They also won two other National League pennants during Lasorda's tenure, and Lasorda's teams had a .526 winning percentage. Scioscia's Angels have won at a .538 clip, and counting.

Scioscia has never played, coached or managed in the majors for a club outside the Los Angeles area. He said he still hasn't spoken to Lasorda since roaring past him on the all-time list.

"Tommy congratulated me when I spoke to him in spring training," Scioscia said. "He said: 'I heard you're getting close to me. I'm proud of you.' And this and that. I'll touch base with him within a week and see how he's doing. So he'd already congratulated me."

Lasorda is 90 and hasn't been in the greatest health in recent years. He still represents the Dodgers in what amounts to a ceremonial position.

There's no doubt that Scioscia, with a World Series title and six first-place finishes in the AL West, has the résumé to join Lasorda in the Hall.

Scioscia said he doesn't view himself in an historical perspective. Not yet, anyway, not while he's still in the middle of it.

“I think about it in the context of passing Tommy, but as a manager, I’m just one small part of it,” Scioscia said. “You’re just one small piece of what you hope is a full pie of achievement. It reflects more on the organization than it does on me. I don’t look at it as my wins. I’ve had the great opportunity to be that small piece of the pie.”

But other people do look at the individual wins, including the Veteran’s Committees that vote managers into the Hall.

And here’s the thing: If Scioscia continues to manage and move toward the 2,000-win plateau, there’s solace in the fact that all 10 managers above that mark are in the Hall, including the last three: Tony La Russa, Bobby Cox and Joe Torre, all inducted in 2014.

Of the eight others ahead of Scioscia in wins, two are also in the Hall, and four are certainly candidates – Bruce Bochy, Dusty Baker, Lou Piniella and Jim Leyland.

Aside from Scioscia, these are my future managerial Hall of Famers:

- Bochy, with his three World Series wins managing the San Francisco Giants and a pennant with the San Diego Padres, is a no-brainer.
- Leyland managed the then-Florida Marlins to a World Series title and last year led Team USA to its first title in the World Baseball Classic.
- Terry Francona, who managed the Boston Red Sox to two World Series wins after an 86-year drought and took his Cleveland Indians within one batter of beating the Cubs in the 2016 Fall Classic, is also a must when it’s all said and done for this generation of managers.

“These are great guys who don’t only have terrific baseball minds but have the people skills you need to lead,” Scioscia said. “There are guys all around baseball who are great in the dugout and great with players, great in all the things you have to do to excel in this position.”

Scioscia won’t tell you so, but he’s certainly one of them. Hopefully, he’ll be managing the Angels for years to come and for a long while won’t have to worry about it.

## FROM THE RINGER

### Mike Trout is on his way the best season ever

*The best has gotten even better once again, chasing Babe Ruth’s single-season WAR record by willing himself to improve the one weaker point in his game: defense*

By Ben Lindbergh

On Sunday, Mike Trout went 0-for-3, failing to reach base via hit or walk for only the eighth time in a game he’s started this season. Even so, he helped his team win. With the Angels up 2-0 on Texas in the fifth, Delino DeShields drove a ball to the wall in left-center, 103 feet from where Trout was standing when the pitch left Tyler Skaggs’s hand. Based on the distance and direction of the wall and the ball, an

average outfielder would have had only a 19 percent chance of corralling the probable extra-base hit, according to Statcast. But Trout made the grab, running a nearly direct route (104 feet) and reaching a top speed of 29 feet per second. It was the unlikeliest catch that Trout has recorded in the 2015-18 Statcast era, and the latest highlight of the multitime MVP's consistently extraordinary season.

That play was a microcosm of Trout's 2018: not the most eye-catching, but upon closer inspection, an exceptional effort in every respect. Later this year, Trout will almost certainly surpass Ty Cobb for the highest WAR total ever through a position player's age-26 season, even though Cobb came up a year younger and played more games through that point. In less than seven full seasons, Trout has already amassed a Cooperstown-caliber career stat line. For all he's accomplished since he rose to stardom in 2012, though, Trout's best baseball isn't behind him. As he approaches his 27th birthday, the Angels center fielder may be in the midst of the most valuable season ever. And if this unparalleled player does have an unparalleled year, it will have a lot to do with defense.

By going 3-for-5 on Saturday with a single, a triple, a home run, and a tag-evading stolen base so slick that it required a replay review to sort out, Trout propelled himself to 5.3 wins above replacement, 1.2 WAR ahead of anyone else on the Baseball-Reference leaderboard. That put him on pace for a 14.6-WAR season, which would surpass Babe Ruth's 14.1 in 1923 as the best ever by a position player.

Ruth's record-setting season, which came at age 28, wasn't his most memorable or his most impressive on the surface. It wasn't one of his two-way triumphs, like the year when he led the AL in games started, ERA, and hit rate while also posting a 123 wRC+ (1916), or the year when he led the majors in complete games while recording a 161 wRC+ (1917), or the year when he pitched to a 2.22 ERA while also leading the majors in homers (1918). It wasn't the year he hit 60 bombs (1927), or the year he won his lone batting title (1924), or the year when he played the most games (1928), or the year when he managed his highest wRC+ (1920), or the year when he produced the most runs on offense (1921). It was, in fact, his *worst* baserunning season, the year when Ruth, a historically bad base stealer, stole 17 bags and was caught 21 times.

Naturally, Ruth was ridiculously great at the plate in 1923, but his *defense* set that season apart. Defensive ratings aren't perfect today and are considerably less precise for seasons that took place almost a century ago, but based on the most accurate information we have, Ruth was never better in the field than he was at 28. That year, Ruth set personal highs in defensive innings and putouts and recorded his second-most outfield assists. According to Total Zone, which Baseball-Reference relies on for seasons prior to 2003, Ruth was 19 runs better than the average corner outfielder. Without that extra all-around value, his WAR wouldn't have been as otherworldly.

Trout, who's slashing .308/.443/.678 in a pitcher's park, is having a career year at the plate: He's played in every Angels game, and he's leading the majors in home runs, total bases, walks, and on-base percentage. Increased selectivity has helped him record a career-low chase rate, career-high contact rate, and career-best strikeout rate relative to the league, and he's also tied for second in the AL with 13 stolen bases. In stark contrast to Ruth in 1923, he has yet to be caught. Like Ruth, though, he's having a standout season on defense. If Trout approaches or surpasses Ruth's single-season WAR record, it will be because range in the field is the latest in a line of modest shortcomings that Trout has targeted for improvement and immediately managed to turn into strengths.

Trout has a track record of refusing to be less than exemplary at anything. In 2015, he fixed his former weakness against high fastballs; later, he learned to hit better with two strikes and became less

passive at the plate. When he came up, he had a below-average arm, but he set his mind to being better, and soon enough he was: Through a combination of conditioning, long toss, and practice throwing to bases, Trout went from minus-11 throwing runs in his first four seasons to plus-2 runs in the four seasons since.

When Trout came up, he was a fantastic fielder: In roughly a full season's worth of innings from 2011-12, defensive runs saved and ultimate zone rating graded Trout's defense in center as 22 runs above average and 10 runs above average, respectively, despite his subpar arm. (UZR run totals are regressed and tend to be more conservative.) Over the following five seasons, though, Trout's cumulative ratings in center sank to minus-18 (DRS) and minus-2.2 (UZR), even as his arm improved. Most of that drop-off was attributable to decreased range.

When Trout's once-lofty stolen-base totals slipped in 2014 and 2015, he resolved to run more often and bounced back to 30 steals in 2016. Something similar has happened this season to Trout's eroding range. Last year, Trout had the sixth-worst DRS range rating among center fielders. As a result, right after reporting to spring training in February, Trout announced his intention to improve his defense and win his first Gold Glove, which would be difficult to do if he couldn't impress DRS and UZR, both of which factor into Gold Glove voting. "There are a lot of defensive metrics out there that you want to get better on," he said at the time. In light of his history, that statement alone came close to guaranteeing that at least some of his range would return; as one AL assistant general manager says, "If he's been working on it, it's probably gotten better, because he's a freak."

He has indeed been working on it, and lo and behold, it has gotten better. Trout's DRS range rating has rebounded from minus-9 to plus-6, which puts him on pace to finish near where he was as a rookie. His UZR range trend has also reversed, climbing from minus-4.5 to plus-2.6. And after finishing at minus-2 in MLB Advanced Media's Statcast-based outs above average in 2016 and minus-3 in 2017, Trout is sitting at plus-4 in 2018, which puts him in an 11th-place tie among all outfielders. Last year, according to Statcast, Trout converted only one of five potential four-star plays (those with a catch probability of 26-50 percent), four of 13 potential three-star plays (those with a catch probability of 51-75 percent), and 21 of 23 potential two-star plays (those with a catch probability of 76 to 90 percent). This year, he's 1-for-2 on four-star plays and has a perfect record on three- and two-star plays. His defensive feat on Sunday was his first five-star catch on record.

All of this has happened in a fairly small sample of fewer than 500 innings, but it's almost certainly not a fluke. This is just what it looks like when Trout's plan plays out. "Mike's been a guy that always comes to me every year and says, 'What do you see, what do you want to work on, what do I need to get better on?'" Angels third-base and outfield coach Dino Ebel, who recently reassumed the latter responsibility after a two-year hiatus, says via phone. This spring, the Angels had answers to Trout's annual inquiry. In spring training, Ebel says, "We got together with our people upstairs, our analytical department, and they said, 'This is what we can improve on,' and [Trout] took it to heart." Getting good jumps and making the most of Trout's elite speed were the orders of the day.

Not every superstar has Trout's hunger to improve; some players are oblivious to their flaws until it's too late to overcome them, and others might resent the suggestion that they're coming up short. Not Trout: "He doesn't have grudges or anything like that, doesn't get mad," Ebel says, adding, "He is on board, and he's coachable, and he likes it. He wants it." This year, Ebel says, Trout is doing drills to read the ball off the bat; in April, Trout told the *Orange County Register* that he's "trying to be aggressive" and making sure that he's not merely "going through the motions" when he shags flies in batting



practice. According to Baseball Info Solutions, Trout dove for a ball only once last season, but the Angels' goal this spring wasn't to have him dive more; the benefit of occasionally catching an extra fly or liner isn't worth the risk of an injury that would deprive the team of his bat. (In 2015, Trout missed time after hurting his wrist mid-dive, and his hitting subsequently slumped.) Rather, the hope was that Trout would get to more balls without needing to get dirty, as he demonstrated against DeShields.

In recent years, some outfielders have improved their performance by drastically repositioning themselves; Dexter Fowler, for one, posted a positive DRS total for the first time in a full season after playing much deeper in 2016. Trout, who prefers coming in to going back on balls, already played deep, and that hasn't changed: Angels center fielders this season have stood 324 feet from home plate on average, the third-deepest mark in the majors but virtually unchanged from last year's 323. Nor has the Angels' batter-to-batter positioning strategy substantially changed, although Ebel, who's newly returned to his role as an in-game outfield director, is particularly diligent about implementing the front office's recommendations. (To cut through the noise of the crowd, Ebel blows a whistle to get outfielders' attention when necessary, although he says he rarely, if ever, has to whistle at Trout.) Optimized positioning might explain some of the Angels' overall outfield improvement—the unit as a whole has climbed from minus-11 DRS last year to plus-10 thus far in 2018—but as indicated by the positioning-independent Statcast-based numbers, Trout's uptick goes deeper than that.

"The thing about Mike this year, when the ball's hit, he's moving, where even if it's not hit to him, it's the first step," Ebel says. "If it's hit to left field, he takes a hard step to the right. If it's hit to right field, he takes that hard step to right field." Ebel adds, "The most important thing that Mike is doing is in his mind he wants to catch every ball that's hit to him and hit in the gaps, and he's going for it."

Although Trout's sprint speed on the bases—29.3 feet per second, which ranks 24th among 400-plus qualifiers—is unchanged from last season, his sprint speed in the outfield is up. According to MLBAM senior data architect Tom Tango, Trout's outfield sprint speed, which Tango calculates by taking the average of the top 5 percent of an outfielder's runs, had increased from 27.4 ft/s in 2016 to 27.6 ft/s in 2017 to 28.6 ft/s this season even before that snag on Sunday. His rankings among center fielders with at least 60 runs, meanwhile, have climbed in that three-season span from 25th of 39 to 31st of 54 to eighth of 28 (also prior to Sunday). In other words, while Trout's maximum speed probably hasn't changed, he's routinely coming closer to achieving that speed in center.

Outfield sprint speed measures only a player's peak rate of travel; it doesn't tell us anything about how quickly he *reaches* that top speed, or how quickly he reacts to the flight of the ball. Tango and his team are working on a metric called "burst," which will account for those factors and will likely roll out later this season, but many teams have already developed such stats. According to one source in a non-Angels front office, Trout "is running way faster in the outfield and is getting to his top speed way faster," yielding speed and acceleration figures that put his percentile ranks in the 80s or 90s, easily his highest on record. A source in another non-Angels front office confirms that Trout's reaction time, peak speed, and acceleration are all improved from past seasons, and that his run value derived from fielding range, as assessed by that team's in-house metric, is positive for the first time in the period covered by Statcast.

The GIF below shows a montage of Trout's five best catches this season besides the one on Sunday, featuring catch probabilities ranging from 46 percent to 62 percent.

Although the broadcast views make it tough to tell how quickly Trout is mounting his horse, replays reveal his jumps and acceleration in all their quick-twitch glory. Here he is on April 13, ranging to his left and laying out to rob a gapper from Paulo Orlando.

Here he is on May 15, going back and to his right to take at least two bases from José Altuve.

And here he is on May 30, sprinting in to steal a single from Niko Goodrum, much to Shohei Ohtani's delight.

No matter which way he's called upon to move, Trout is wasting no time in 2018. Compare those plays with this montage of his five worst non-catches from 2017, which feature catch probabilities ranging from 99 percent to 65 percent.

No outfielder looks great when he's at his worst, but thus far, Trout has all but eliminated lowlights like those, reflexively getting himself into high gear. "It's not like he never thought that way," Ebel says. "It's just maybe, he is blessed with a lot of speed, so a lot of balls that hang in the air a lot longer, he can catch up to it [without going all-out]. But [now] he's catching those ones that are in front of him that ... should be hits, and he's taking away balls in right-center and left-center. It's just making him self-aware where when that ball's hit, [he's] gonna take that step, if it's in or back or sideways to his left or right."

If baseball were more like the NBA, Trout would be taking his spotty supporting cast to the playoffs year after year. As it is, though, baseball's closest LeBron equivalent may miss out on October for the fourth consecutive season. Even after their win on Sunday, the 32-28 Angels have less than a 30 percent chance of qualifying for the postseason. If the Haloes fall short, though, Trout won't be to blame. He can't do any more than be the best ever, and he's already doing that.

Ebel, who has coached for the Angels for 14 seasons and spent the previous 17 as a minor league player, coach, and manager in the Dodgers organization, says that Trout is "probably the best [outfielder] I've seen in my 31 years of baseball." He notes that experience has helped Trout read hitters and compartmentalize his performance such that whenever he's wearing a glove, he's always focused on fielding. But most of Trout's improvement boils down to a process as simple as it is mind-boggling: He's *decided* to be better, and baseball has bent to his will. As Angels GM Billy Eppler told me in April, "We're just witnessing him reach another level that we really didn't know was there."

By restoring his defense to its rookie-level luster, Trout—who's challenging Ruthian records in a league that's much more competitive, talented, and outlier-averse than the one Ruth had his way with—has not only put the all-time top single-season WAR within view, but also brightened the already-rosy outlook for the rest of his career. The average outfielder's range peaks early and shrinks steadily from there, but Trout is spitting on that pattern; as one of the front-office sources who relayed his stats asked, "Is he reverse-aging?" Perhaps that's hyperbole, but if he hasn't found the defensive fountain of youth, Trout has at least reset the clock on his aging curve. Whereas after last year it was easy to project a few years forward and envision Trout moving to a corner, where his hitting wouldn't clear the typical player's by as great a degree, it's now possible to picture him providing passable defense in center at an advanced age, a la Willie Mays, which would help him age gracefully and aid his odds of becoming baseball's best-ever player through *any* age. "I think he's gonna play center field for a long time," Ebel says.

Trout is like a *Lost* character: It's best not to tell him what he can't do. He's currently leading all AL center fielders in DRS, so he may get that Gold Glove after all. "When he puts his mind [to] something that he's gonna get better on, or somebody says that this he can't do or he needs to improve on this, he will prove them wrong," says Ebel. At the end of one answer, Ebel sputters, searching for something else to say. "So, he just, uh, you know, it's—he's Mike Trout!" he says. Yeah, that sort of sums it up.