



Press Clips

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FROM THE OC REGISTER**Angels pull together for victory, cooling down Mariners**

By Jeff Fletcher

SEATTLE — The 39,518 fans who are used to seeing everything go right these days for the Seattle Mariners likely assumed that Jean Segura's blooper was going to drop and the rally was to continue.

David Fletcher knew better.

The Angels' rookie infielder, who was playing second base, leaped and fully extended to snag Segura's blooper, ending the seventh inning and providing the biggest out of the Angels' badly needed 7-4 victory on Wednesday.

"I got a pretty good read off the bat," Fletcher said. "I kind of felt like I had a bead on it the whole way. It's definitely a good feeling to know I saved a couple runs."

The Mariners had loaded the bases with no outs, down 6-3 in the seventh. Hansel Robles struck out two and then Fletcher ended the inning with that catch, preserving the lead.

"That was huge," Manager Mike Scioscia said. "It showed great athleticism."

It was enough to quiet an entire ballpark full of fans who had been riding the wave of this improbable success story. The Mariners, who have been one of baseball's surprise teams, had won eight in a row to keep pace with the Houston Astros atop the American League West.

Even with Wednesday's victory, the Angels are still 11 games behind the Mariners for the second AL wild-card spot, with the Oakland A's in between.

If the Angels are going to make up that daunting deficit, they will need plenty more of what they got in this game, which was a combination of offensive production from throughout the lineup, strong defense and mostly solid pitching led by Garrett Richards' return from the disabled list.

Richards, out with a hamstring injury for three weeks, gave up three runs (two earned) in 5-1/3 innings on 80 pitches. He allowed back-to-back homers to Kyle Seager and Ryon Healy in the second, but then he buckled down.

"I thought Garrett showed good stuff," Scioscia said. "I think after the back-to-back homers in the second, he just kind of exhaled and made some pitches after that. He hadn't been out there in a while. Getting into the sixth was important, but more important was getting us a chance to win."

While Richards improved as the game went on, the offense sprung to life. The Angels produced 13 hits, more than half of them coming from Kole Calhoun (three, including a homer), Luis Valbuena (two, and two RBIs) and Shohei Ohtani (two).

Those three players had been absent or ineffective for stretches so far this season. The Angels need them to be productive, around the core of Andrelton Simmons, Mike Trout, Justin Upton and Albert Pujols, if they are to get the consistent offense they need.

Scioscia shuffled the lineup in an effort to spark the offense, moving Simmons up to the No. 2 spot and pushing Pujols down to fifth for the first time since 2001.

Based on one day's results, expect them to keep the core in that order for the time being.

"There will be some subtle changes here and there, but I think the template works if we can end up setting the table for the guys in the middle," Scioscia said. "We did. All those guys had opportunities."

Dodgers' Kenta Maeda 'looking forward' to potential matchup against Angels' Shohei Ohtani

By Bill Plunkett

LOS ANGELES — Shohei Ohtani's return from the DL to serve as the Angels' DH sets up a potential matchup against his fellow countryman, right-hander Kenta Maeda, who is scheduled to start Friday's Freeway Series opener at Angel Stadium.

"The Japanese media obviously has been creating hype," Maeda said through his interpreter. "But I am looking forward to facing another Japanese player."

Maeda and Ohtani overlapped in the Japanese league for three seasons (2013-15) but Maeda's Hiroshima Carp were in the Central League and Ohtani's Nippon Ham Fighters in the Pacific League and the two faced each other only once or twice a year – matchups that Maeda joked he got the better of.

This will be a fresh challenge, Maeda said.

"The image I had about him as a hitter has changed, so my approach to the way I pitch to him will change," Maeda said. "I'm just going to approach it as if I'm facing a new hitter."

Teased about the possibility of needing to throw a brushback to Ohtani, Maeda said Japanese fans would probably boo him for that. But it's not likely to happen.

"I'm a nice guy," he said with a laugh. "I would never do that."

Tyler Skaggs becomes 10th Angels starting pitcher to go on the DL this year

By Jeff Fletcher

SEATTLE — On a day when the Angels took Garrett Richards off the disabled list, they lost Tyler Skaggs, at least temporarily.

That sums up the team's injury-marred season, one that has now seen them use the disabled list for 21 players, including two stints for two of them.

Skaggs, who has been the Angels' best starter this year, was diagnosed with a strain of his right adductor, which is a muscle on the inside of the thigh. Skaggs said it's actually the same spot that was referred to as his hamstring when he missed a start last month.

He figures he'll miss just one more.

"I don't think it's very serious," he said. "I'll miss one start and come back hopefully against the Mariners next (week). I don't see any problem. I took a few days off last time and it felt great, but I want to take a few more so I can really get on top of this before the All-Star break."

Skaggs was scratched from a start last month with the hamstring tightness. He didn't go on the disabled list, while his start was pushed back a few days. He came back and pitched twice, including Saturday in Baltimore, and reported no issues. He said he felt it a little when he was awkwardly trying to cover first base in what would be his final inning on Saturday. He left that game after 79 pitches because he said he was "exhausted" by the heat.

He said at the time his hamstring was not an issue, and he maintained that again on Sunday. He threw what he described as a normal bullpen session on Tuesday. Apparently, he still feels just enough that he didn't want to take any chances.

"I could get through it but I can feel it there," he said. "I feel like if I go full speed in a game, it's only going to get worse."

Skaggs' absence means Jaime Barría will start the series finale against the Mariners on Thursday. Barría initially had been pushed back a day so Skaggs could start against the Mariners.

That leaves Deck McGuire, who was recalled Wednesday a day after he was optioned, and Felix Peña, in some order, as the most likely starters for Friday and Saturday against the Dodgers. Andrew Heaney would pitch Sunday's series finale.

The Angels could come back with Richards, Barria and Skaggs against the Mariners next week at home.

The Angels have now had 10 starting pitchers go on the disabled list this year, including Parker Bridwell on the Triple-A DL. That includes Alex Meyer, who had shoulder surgery last year and was expected to miss the entire season. It also includes John Lamb, who was promoted because of the injuries and ended up needing Tommy John surgery after three starts.

Barría, 21, is the only one of the nine starters the Angels had on their original depth chart who has not been hurt this year.

ALSO

Jabari Blash was recalled to take the spot of Chris Young, who was placed on the disabled list with a strained left hamstring suffered on Tuesday night. ...

Kaleb Cowart was optioned to create a spot for Richards, who was activated to pitch on Wednesday after missing three weeks with a hamstring injury.

UP NEXT

Angels (Jaime Barría, 5-4, 3.40) at Mariners (Marco Gonzalez, 8-5, 3.77), Thursday, 7 p.m., Fox Sports West

Angels lineup shuffle drops Albert Pujols to 5th for the first time in 17 years

By Jeff Fletcher

SEATTLE — Albert Pujols is in a lineup spot he hasn't seen since he was a rookie 17 years ago.

The Angels lineup for Wednesday's game against the Seattle Mariners had Pujols hitting fifth, the first time he's started a game lower than fourth since 2001, his first season.

Manager Mike Scioscia moved Andrelton Simmons up to the No. 2 spot, which had been occupied by Mike Trout. That pushed Trout, Justin Upton and Pujols all down a spot, to 3-4-5.

Asked if he needed to have a conversation with Pujols about this move, Scioscia said it wasn't an issue.

"We've talked to all the guys," he said. "They are on board with whatever we think is going to make us more productive. He's got the same grouping in front of him, so he's going to get the same RBI opportunities."

Pujols, 38, has been a lightning rod for criticism in recent years because he's remained in the middle of the lineup while his production has decreased. The Angels have maintained that he was still driving in runs. This season, Pujols, who had two hits and an RBI on Wednesday, has hit .318 with runners in scoring position.

Overall, he was hitting .247 with 12 homers, 45 RBIs and a .688 OPS. Although the Angels had hoped that a surgery-free winter would help Pujols improve from last year, his overall performance is only slightly up from his .672 OPS in 2017.

There had been other times in recent years when Pujols was slumping more than he is now, but the Scioscia apparently didn't have the right mix of other players to make this move until now.

Simmons has been hot for most of the season, hitting .318 with an .826 OPS, but Scioscia had insisted he wanted Simmons to bat with runners on base. Now, the Angels have Shohei Ohtani back, so he can go behind Pujols, where Simmons was.

This allows Simmons to help set the table for Trout.

“Our lineup has a chance to get deeper now, with Shohei in it, with it turning over with David Fletcher at the bottom,” Scioscia said. “Every inning you need to pressure other teams. Hopefully, we can start to get to that, particularly getting some guys on base in front of Mike. Helping him get some of those opportunities is important. That will feed into Justin and Albert.”

Alexander: For Angels prospect Jo Adell, Cal League has been a breeze

By Jim Alexander

RANCHO CUCAMONGA — Someday, if Jo Adell becomes a major league star, the journal might be a sought-after piece of baseball memorabilia.

Adell, the 10th player selected in the 2017 draft by the Angels out of Ballard High in Louisville, Ky., is laying waste to the Cal League just as he did to the Arizona Rookie League, the Pioneer League and the Midwest League before this. He did go hitless Tuesday night at Rancho Cucamonga, ending an 11-game hitting streak, but the Inland Empire 66ers' 19-year-old center fielder was hitting .314 in 37 games in the Cal League going into Wednesday's games, with 10 homers, 24 RBIs, 11 doubles, 2 triples, a .936 OPS and 7 stolen bases in 8 attempts.

He has had 12 multi-hit games in the Cal League, and five three-hit games. And before arriving in San Bernardino, he played 24 games at Burlington (Iowa) of the Midwest League with 6 homers, 29 RBIs, 7 doubles, a .300 average and a .979 OPS. Baseball America currently lists him as the Angels organization's No. 2 prospect, and the only reason he's not higher is that the magazine still lists Shohei Ohtani as a prospect.

There are, of course, Adell's strikeouts: 45 in 159 at-bats with Inland Empire, 26 in 90 at-bats in Burlington. We'll get to those.

The journal? It is Adell's method of keeping track of the pitchers he faces and the way they approach him, and it's indicative of a cerebral approach to hitting.

“One of the best things I've done,” he said. “Kind of (keep track of) what pitches I saw, where they were located. And before we face a guy that we've seen before, I just go back and revisit that and kind of understand what they're trying to do.”

“Most of my outs this year have been me getting myself out. The pitcher is trying to execute a pitch, he's trying to throw something for a reason. So you need to understand why that is.”

It could be a baseball time capsule. Who knows? A decade from now, some of the pitchers he's facing (and chronicling) now might be successful big leaguers themselves.

Adell's baseline approach is to look for location, especially early in counts. When he first moved up to the Cal League, he said, pitchers were challenging him with fastballs, and when he started jumping on those he noticed he was seeing offspeed pitches early and fastballs later in the count.

"For me, the big thing is don't necessarily assume," he said. "React.

"A lot of times when they say the hitters get fooled, it has to do with the assumption, not the reaction part of the game. That's what hitting is, reaction. We can sit (on) a pitch, we can think something's coming, we can have everything the right way – and you get a curveball on a fastball count. You get thrown off, you know? So that's the big thing: clear-mind it, know what zone I'm looking for, and be a reactionary hitter. And that's what I've done."

There were said to be questions about his ability to hit at the pro level going into the 2017 draft. The foot speed and athletic ability were there in a 6-foot-3, 205-pound package, and he projected as a superior defensive outfielder, whether it be in center (his preferred position) or a corner spot.

And consider: He could have been drafted as a pitcher, which might be part of the reason the chess match between hitter and pitcher intrigues him so. He was primarily a pitcher through the end of his junior year at Ballard.

"Good fastball, could get up in the mid-90s, upper-90s from time to time, slider," was Adell's scouting report on himself.

"But I always loved to hit," he added. "Every team I played for, it would be, 'We want him to pitch on Sunday but we'll let him hit through the week.'"

Sound familiar, Angels fans? In this case, Adell enjoyed pitching but loved hitting and was willing to give up one to concentrate on the other. Years from now, if the Ohtani experiment is ultimately deemed a success, young players might not have to make that choice.

In the meantime, Adell traded a position that treasures strikeouts for one in which they are worrisome. But while the minor league analysts wonder if those knockout totals portend difficulty when Adell gets to higher levels, he sees them as the cost of doing business.

"I say this before a game: Even if I get fooled on a pitch or I swing at a pitch that's out of the zone, I'm not going to sacrifice a good swing just to hit the ball," he said. "I could go into a game and just try to make contact, right? But when I get in the box I'm trying to do damage, and you're going to get some swings and misses.

"I've watched big league games this year where guys have gotten down in the count quickly and hit home runs, and it's because they trusted their swing. ... I'm going to put up my best swing every single time. And if things don't fall my way, if I strike out, then it's part of the game."

I believe that approach is known as “high risk, high reward.” It has worked for Adell to this point, and it likely will earn him a promotion to Double-A before this season ends.

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

Kole Calhoun hits a home run, helps Angels end Seattle's winning streak with a 7-4 victory

By Jeff Miller

The Angels' search for offense reached historic levels Wednesday.

Manager Mike Scioscia shuffled the batting order and did so in a manner that put Albert Pujols in a place he hadn't been in since his rookie season.

Pujols batted fifth and had two hits as the Angels beat Seattle 7-4 on a day when they scored more times than they had in a game since June 21 and produced 17 at-bats with runners in scoring position.

“It takes a lot of pressure off us as starting pitchers or just pitchers in general,” Garrett Richards said. “Anytime you can pitch with a lead, you can let your shoulders down a little bit and just work.”

The Angels' latest lineup marked the first time since 2001 that Pujols began a game batting lower than fourth.

His most recent start batting fifth had come that year, on July 24, when he played right field for St. Louis in the 97th game of his rookie season.

Scioscia dropped Pujols from cleanup and elevated Andrelton Simmons to the No. 2 spot behind Kole Calhoun.

“Kole and Andrelton at the top did a good job,” Scioscia said. “It fed the guys like we wanted to. If the two guys at the top can keep doing what they're doing, we're going to get a lot of opportunities.”

Calhoun finished with three hits, including a home run, and three runs batted in. He scored twice. Luis Valbuena had two hits and two RBIs, and Pujols drove in a run and scored one.

After going hitless in four at-bats Tuesday in his first game off the disabled list, Shohei Ohtani had two hits, including a double, and scored twice.

“I felt a lot better today,” Ohtani said through an interpreter. “I feel like I took a pretty big step forward.”

The victory allowed the Angels (44-43) to avoid falling below .500, which they haven't had since losing on opening day.

They also slightly trimmed Seattle's lead for the American League's second wild-card spot, though the gap between the teams remains a daunting 11 games.

To understand just how discouraging that difference can be, realize that if the Mariners win 38 of their remaining 75 games, the Angels would have to go 49-26 to catch them.

Richards' most recent start had come in this same stadium three weeks ago when he left after two innings because of what was later diagnosed as a strained hamstring.

After facing only three batters in the first inning Wednesday, he gave up consecutive home runs to Kyle Seager and Ryon Healy in the second as the Mariners took a fan-pleasing and loud 2-1 lead.

But then, Richards seemed to awaken and return to being the pitcher Scioscia often has called "the lead dog."

"He just kind of exhaled and made some pitches after that," Scioscia said. "That was a good outing from Garrett."

Richards (5-4) faced no trouble again until the sixth inning when his error contributed to Seattle scoring again. Reliever Cam Bedrosian gave up the hit that brought home the run but, by then, the Angels had scored six times and were mostly in control.

They did avoid disaster in the seventh by the margin of second baseman David Fletcher's vertical leap.

After Jose Alvarez gave up a single and walk to start the inning, Hansel Robles relieved him and walked Mike Zunino to load the bases.

Robles rebounded in an instant, striking out Denard Span and Dee Gordon to bring up Jean Segura, who sent a liner toward center field for what appeared to be a two-run single.

Instead, Fletcher jumped and, needing all the 5 feet 10 at which he's listed, plucked the ball out of the air.

"It's definitely a good feeling to know I saved a couple runs," Fletcher said. "Being in that situation, makes it better."

Tyler Skaggs is the latest Angels pitcher to be injured

By Jeff Miller

In spring training, the Angels had nine candidates for their starting rotation.

Not even four months later, eight of them have been on the disabled list.

Tyler Skaggs became the latest Wednesday when he was knocked out of his next scheduled start because of a muscle strain.

Rookie **Jaime Barria**, the only one of the original nine to spend no time on the DL, will start in Skaggs' place Thursday against Seattle.

The news arrived on the same day **Garrett Richards** came off the DL to beat the Mariners for his first victory since May 4. He had been out because of a hamstring strain.

Skaggs skipped a start late last month because of the same injury, which is in the area of his right hamstring, and returned Saturday to pitch five innings in Baltimore.

He said he felt discomfort covering first base late in that game, the condition lingering when he threw his regular between-starts bullpen session.

"I don't think it's very serious," Skaggs said. "Miss one start and hopefully come back."

He has been the Angels' best starter. Skaggs is 6-5 with a 2.64 earned-run average, ninth-best in the American League before Wednesday.

He said he hoped to return when the Angels host the Mariners for a three-game series starting Tuesday.

"Took a few days off last time and it felt great," Skaggs said. "I want to take a few more so I can really get on top of this before the All-Star break."

With another starter down, the Angels recalled right-hander **Deck McGuire**, who could start this weekend at home against the Dodgers. Converted reliever **Felix Pena** figures to remain in the rotation for now.

The Angels again have 14 players out because of injuries; no other team has more than nine. They have used 49 players, the most in the majors and only six shy of the franchise record.

Their starting pitching carnage doesn't include **Alex Meyer**, who is out for the season because of shoulder surgery, or **John Lamb**, who just had elbow ligament-replacement surgery. Neither was among the Angels' top nine in March.

Short hops

Reserve outfielder **Chris Young** was put on the disabled list because of a left hamstring stain suffered Tuesday. He figures to be out for a while. **Jabari Blash** was recalled from triple-A Salt Lake to take Young's place. ... To make room for Richards on the active roster, the Angels optioned utility man **Kaleb Cowart** to the minors.

FROM ANGELS.COM

Calhoun helps Richards end Mariners' streak

By Maria Guardado

SEATTLE -- **Kole Calhoun** homered and drove in three runs to help back a solid effort from right-hander **Garrett Richards** as the Angels celebrated the Fourth of July by snapping the Mariners' eight-game winning streak with a 7-4 win Wednesday afternoon at Safeco Field.

Richards, who was activated off the disabled list Wednesday after missing three weeks with a left hamstring strain, gave up three runs (two earned) on four hits over 5 1/3 innings in his first MLB start since June 13. He walked one, struck out eight and threw 80 pitches in the outing.

"I felt good," Richards said. "Just tried to execute pitches. Tried to just stay pitch to pitch. Hamstring felt good. Everything felt good. We got a win, so that's obviously most important. It's a good one to build off of."

Searching for a way to spark the Angels' inconsistent offense, manager Mike Scioscia tweaked the club's lineup Wednesday, moving **Andrelton Simmons** up to the No. 2 spot ahead of middle-of-the-order hitters **Mike Trout**, **Justin Upton** and **Albert Pujols**. The Angels' bats seemed to click under the new configuration and outhit the Mariners, 13-10, to set up a rubber match in Thursday's series finale.

Calhoun went 3-for-5 in the leadoff spot to lead the balanced attack and is now batting .306 with three doubles, four home runs and eight RBIs since returning from the disabled list on June 18. **Luis Valbuena** finished 2-for-4 with two RBIs, while Pujols added another pair of hits after being dropped to the No. 5 spot in the order for the first time since 2001.

"I think the template works if we can end up setting the table for the guys in the middle," Scioscia said. "This afternoon, we did. All those guys had opportunities. ... We had a lot of guys in scoring position. I think that was a plus. I think Kole and Andrelton at the top did a good job today. They were on base about five times. It fed the guys that we wanted to."

The Angels got on the board in the second inning after **Shohei Ohtani** reached on catcher's interference and scored from first on Valbuena's two-out RBI double to left field. **Kyle Seager** and **Ryon Healy** then hit back-to-back home runs off Richards to give the Mariners a 2-1 lead in the bottom half of the inning.

Still, the Angels added two more runs in the fourth to go ahead for good. Pujols led off the inning with a double to the right-field wall, advanced to third on Ohtani's single -- his first hit since returning from the disabled list Tuesday -- and scored on Valbuena's single to left field, tying the game at 2. After **Martin Maldonado** struck out and **David Fletcher** flied out, Calhoun delivered an RBI single up the middle to give the Angels a 3-2 lead.

"I was seeing the ball a lot better today compared to yesterday, so I feel like I took a pretty big step forward," said Ohtani, who collected two hits after going hitless in four at-bats Tuesday.

The Angels added an insurance run on Pujols' RBI single in the fifth and then extended their lead to 6-2 on Calhoun's two-run homer off reliever **Nick Rumbelow** in the sixth. It was Calhoun's fifth home run of the season.

After yielding the home runs to Seager and Healy in the second, Richards settled in and faced the minimum over the next three innings. The only other blemish for Richards came in the sixth. After **Guillermo Heredia** singled, Richards was unable to cleanly field a bunt from **Dee Gordon**, putting runners on first and second with no outs. Richards struck out **Jean Segura** for the first out, but he was subsequently removed from the game after reaching his prescribed pitch limit.

"I think that was just a precautionary thing," Richards said. "I knew that I was going to be on somewhat of a leash today, but I didn't want to pitch like that or think about that. I didn't know exactly where my pitch count was. I just tried to make the most out of the pitches I had."

Cam Bedrosian replaced Richards and struck out **Mitch Haniger** before yielding an RBI single to **Nelson Cruz** that cut the Angels' lead to 6-3.

The Mariners made it interesting in the ninth after **Mike Zunino** singled and **Denard Span** doubled to put runners on second and third with no outs. **Blake Parker** induced a flyout from Gordon, a fielder's choice from Segura and a groundout from Haniger to close the door for the Angels and pick up his 10th save of the season.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Down by three runs, the Mariners threatened in the seventh after Healy singled and **Ben Gamel** and Zunino walked to load the bases with no outs. **Hansel Robles** struck out Span and Gordon swinging before receiving an assist from Fletcher, who made an incredible leaping grab at second base to rob Segura of a single and record the final out of the inning, keeping the Angels' 6-3 lead intact.

"I got a pretty good read off the bat, and I kind of felt like I had him beat on it the whole way," Fletcher said. "It's definitely a good feeling to know that I saved a couple runs."

SOUND SMART

The Mariners intentionally walked Trout twice Wednesday, giving him an MLB-high 14 intentional walks this season. Trout is batting .548 with five doubles, five home runs and nine RBIs in eight games at Safeco Field this year.

UP NEXT

The Angels will send rookie **Jaime Barria** (5-4, 3.40 ERA) to the mound Thursday as they close out their three-game series against the Mariners at 7:10 p.m. PT at Safeco Field. Barria, who will start in place of the injured **Tyler Skaggs**, will be opposed by Seattle left-hander **Marco Gonzales** (8-5, 3.77 ERA). Barria made his only appearance against the Mariners on June 12, when he gave up three runs (two earned) over five innings. The Angels are 6-15 against left-handed starters this season.

Young, Skaggs join Angels' crowded DL

By Maria Guardado

SEATTLE -- The Angels' injuries continued to mount Wednesday, as left-hander **Tyler Skaggs** and outfielder **Chris Young** were placed on the disabled list ahead of the club's Fourth of July matinee against the Mariners.

Skaggs, who was scheduled to pitch Thursday's series finale at Safeco Field, was shelved with a right adductor strain, while Young was sidelined with a left hamstring strain that he suffered during the Angels' 4-1 loss Tuesday. Rookie **Jaime Barria** will start against the Mariners on Thursday in place of Skaggs.

Losing Skaggs is significant for the Angels, who now have an MLB-high 14 players on the disabled list. No other team currently has more than nine. Skaggs has been the club's best starter this season, logging a 2.64 ERA over a team-best 92 innings this season.

Skaggs, 26, missed a start last month because of right hamstring tightness, though he managed to avoid the disabled list at the time. Skaggs said he felt a recurrence of the injury during his last outing against the Orioles on Sunday, when he departed after throwing a season-low 79 pitches over five innings.

"I felt it covering first base in Baltimore, and I thought it'd be all right," Skaggs said. "Clearly, it's still lingering. I don't think it's very serious. ... I took a few days off last time and it felt great, but I want to take a few more so I can really get on top of this before the All-Star break."

Skaggs said he hopes to only miss one start with the injury and return to pitch against the Mariners in next week's series in Anaheim.

Skaggs is the 10th Angels pitcher to land on the disabled list, joining **Matt Shoemaker**, **JC Ramirez**, **Nick Tropeano**, **Jim Johnson**, **Keynan Middleton**, **Blake Wood**, **John Lamb**, **Jake Jewell** and **Alex Meyer**.

The Angels recalled outfielder **Jabari Blash** and right-hander **Deck McGuire** from Triple-A Salt Lake to replace Young and Skaggs on their roster. They also optioned utility man **Kaleb Cowart** to clear a spot for right-hander **Garrett Richards**, who was activated off the disabled list and started against the Mariners on Wednesday.

Lineup shuffle

The Angels, who entered Wednesday having scored only 32 runs over their previous 10 games, moved **Andrelton Simmons** up to the No. 2 spot ahead of **Mike Trout**, **Justin Upton** and **Albert Pujols**. It marked the first time Pujols has started a game batting lower than fourth since 2001, his rookie season with the Cardinals.

"Our lineup has a chance to get deeper right now with Shohei [Ohtani] in it," manager Mike Scioscia said. "Every inning, you really need to pressure other teams. Hopefully we can start to get to that. Just getting some guys on base in front of Mike and helping him to get some of those opportunities is

important, and then it'll feed into Justin and Albert. Albert is doing a great job with guys in scoring position. All that hopefully will make us a little more productive."

Asked if he had to have a conversation with Pujols prior to dropping him in the lineup, Scioscia said, "We've talked to all the guys. They're on board with whatever we think is going to help to make us more productive. He's got the same grouping in front of him, so he's going to get the same RBI opportunities."

Pujols, 38, entered Wednesday batting .247 with a .688 OPS, 12 home runs and 45 RBIs in 78 games for the Angels this season, though he has been one of the club's top run producers, hitting .318 with an .816 OPS with runners in scoring position.

FROM THE ATHLETIC

The Defensive All-Stars: Assembling a team of the best defenders in baseball

By Mark Simon

All-Star voting wraps up this week for the Midsummer Classic set for July 17 in Washington D.C. That got us to thinking: What if we composed the lineups entirely of defensive standouts?

Who would be our selections? We'll go from third to first, pick an outfield and a battery and give you our explanations for each.

Third Base

AL: Matt Chapman, Oakland Athletics

The easiest selection we have is Matt Chapman of the A's. Chapman leads the majors with 18 Defensive Runs Saved. As of Tuesday, no other third baseman had more than nine.

Chapman's range exceeds that of any other third baseman. Not only does he get to balls, but he also throws strikes with the arm of a pitcher who used to throw 98 mph. He has surpassed Nolan Arenado as the game's premier defensive third baseman.

NL: Nolan Arenado, Colorado Rockies

Speaking of Arenado, we're going to pick him in the NL even though he's saved only one run this season. Every indicator other than DRS shows that he's still a premier third baseman (we think his DRS will catch up to his skill as the season progresses).

His 27 Good Fielding Plays lead all third basemen. The next-most in the National League is Christian Villanueva's 16. And Arenado's 2-to-1 ratio of Good Fielding Plays to Defensive Misplays & Errors is best at the position.

Shortstop

AL: Andrelton Simmons, Los Angeles Angels

Andrelton Simmons has won five consecutive Fielding Bible Awards (our honor for defensive excellence) and seems headed to a sixth, leading the AL with 10 runs saved at shortstop.

It's typical for Simmons to be great fielding balls either up the middle or in the shortstop-third base hole, but not the other. This season, he's very good at both. He's the only shortstop to be at least five plays made above average in both areas of the field this season. This image shows how much ground he covers compared with a shortstop who rates average in range and positioning (Didi Gregorius).

NL: Dansby Swanson, Atlanta Braves

There were many good candidates here, Addison Russell, Trea Turner and Freddy Galvis among them, but we liked Dansby Swanson because he was good in a lot of ways. He's massively improved at fielding balls hit in the shortstop-third base hole, he's been above average at turning the double play, and his rate of Good Plays to Misplays ranks second at the position.

Second Base**AL: Ian Kinsler, Los Angeles Angels**

Ian Kinsler leads the pack, having saved seven runs this season. Though considerably older than most of his competition, Kinsler still covers ground well.

With Simmons handling much of the work up the middle, Kinsler is able to get to a lot of balls hit in the first base-second base hole. And he's returned to top form on double plays after those numbers came down a bit last season.

NL: Kolten Wong, St. Louis Cardinals

Kolten Wong has a considerable lead in Defensive Runs Saved at this position. Why? Wong has been exceptional at turning balls hit in the first base-second base hole into outs. He's also cut back considerably on his mistakes. Last season, he had 32 Defensive Misplays & Errors in 880 innings (one every 27.5 innings). This season, in just over 500 innings, he has only eight miscues (one every 64).

First Base**AL: Matt Olson, Oakland Athletics**

We were surprised to see that Matt Olson leads AL first basemen not only in Defensive Runs Saved but also in other defensive metrics, including UZR.

Olson had four Defensive Runs Saved last season and now has six this season. They've been accumulated in several ways – three runs for turning batted balls into outs, a combined two runs for Good Fielding Plays, including assists on plays at the plate, as well as handling difficult throws, and one run for initiating 8-of-10 ground ball double play chances.

NL: Brandon Belt, San Francisco Giants

We stay in the Bay Area and tab Brandon Belt over Joey Votto at first base. Belt has been a little more multitalented than Votto, as he's covered a similar amount of ground but defended bunts and handled throws a little better. You wouldn't go wrong with Votto as the choice, either.

Right Field**AL: Aaron Judge, New York Yankees**

By year's end, Mookie Betts may be our winner here, but Aaron Judge has been great so far in 2018. He's totaled 10 Defensive Runs Saved, six coming from his arm.

Judge has six unaided assists (the most without a cutoff man at the position) and has allowed runners to advance on only 38 percent of opportunities (fourth-lowest among right fielders).

He edges out Mitch Haniger of the Mariners, who also has 10 Defensive Runs Saved.

NL: Domingo Santana, Milwaukee Brewers

This one may look like a head-scratcher, and if you're wondering where Jason Heyward is, check back with us at season's end. Domingo Santana has a 7-3 edge over Heyward in Defensive Runs Saved, and before you say small sample, consider this:

Santana went from 8 Good Fielding Plays and 24 Misplays & Errors last season to 6 and 5 this season. Heyward has 12 Good Fielding Plays, but already has 16 Defensive Misplays & Errors in right, more than he's had in either of the past two seasons.

Center Field**AL: Delino DeShields Jr., Texas Rangers**

It has been a rough season for the Rangers, but two of their young defenders have starred. Isiah Kiner-Falefa's path to a selection at third base is blocked by Matt Chapman, but Delino DeShields Jr. has topped everyone in his path in center field.

DeShields has been good to great in all aspects of defensive play, chasing down balls hit to both the shallowest and deepest parts of the outfield. And he's helped his numbers with a pair of impressive home run robberies. He's one of three outfielders with two, along with Odubel Herrera and Jarrod Dyson.

NL: Lorenzo Cain, Milwaukee Brewers

Lorenzo Cain has been well worth the money to the Brewers both at-bat (.832 OPS) and in the field (11 Defensive Runs Saved).

As has been his way in several other seasons, he's accumulated most of that total by excelling at chasing down deep fly balls. Cain also has five assists without using a cutoff man, one shy of his most in center field (set in 2013).

Left Field

AL: Alex Gordon, Kansas City Royals

Even at 34, Alex Gordon has shown he can go and get balls as well as anyone.

His 22 Good Fielding Plays in left are one shy of his 2017 total. But more than that, he's been the total package. He's saved four runs with his arm, thanks to five unaided assists).

NL: Adam Duvall, Cincinnati Reds

For the second time in three seasons, Adam Duvall has racked up a lot of Defensive Runs Saved. Duvall is a well-kept secret outside of Cincinnati, likely because he doesn't play a premium position, but he makes his fair share of good plays.

Thus far in 2018, he's improved on a weakness, catching balls hit to the deepest part of the ballpark. His 14 Defensive Runs Saved tie with Gordon for the MLB lead in left field.

Catcher

AL: Mike Zunino, Seattle Mariners

Mike Zunino excels in two areas of catching: pitch-framing and stolen-base stopping. The former is known to be a skill of his (Mariners pitchers have a 3.9 strikeout-to-walk rate when he catches, 2.8 when he doesn't).

The latter has improved this season. He's thrown out 32 percent of those attempting to steal. He was at 14 percent and 21 percent the last two seasons.

NL: Tony Wolters, Colorado Rockies

We could have taken the easy way out here and picked Buster Posey, who was quite good the last month, but Tony Wolters has been amazing for the Rockies ... when he plays.

Wolters isn't close to hitting .200, so he's a backup, but a very good defensive one. His specialty is framing pitches and making sure that pitches in the strike zone are called strikes (he leads the majors in that). That has propelled him to the lead in Defensive Runs Saved for catchers.

The Rockies, not a great team, won 17 of his first 30 starts behind the plate.

Pitcher

AL: Luis Severino, New York Yankees

Yankees writer Katie Sharp covered what has made Luis Severino so good this season and his fielding made the list. Yankees broadcasters praised his athleticism and he's shown quick reflexes to field a couple balls destined for center field.

NL: Julio Teheran, Atlanta Braves

We'll go with Julio Teheran, who is tied for the major-league lead among pitchers with four Defensive Runs Saved. We trust that number given that Teheran has had at least five DRS in four previous seasons. He's done well this season at something he did well last season: coming off the mound to the third base side to make plays.

Those are our 18. They're certainly arguable at just about every spot (except for AL third base). Feel free to share your thoughts in the comments and we'll try to justify our picks against yours.

How do you stop Mike Trout? For more and more teams, it's walking him

By Fabian Ardaya

SEATTLE — As he strode to the batter's box in the eighth inning of Tuesday's 4-1 loss to the Mariners, Mike Trout could've seen first base open and kept walking to it.

Everyone at Safeco Field knew he was going to be intentionally walked. Trout had barely begun his process of unstrapping and re-tightening his batting gloves before Mariners manager Scott Servais signaled with four fingers to issue a free pass. As an opposing manager facing the best player in the game, it's a sinking feeling.

"Why would you ever pitch to him?" Servais asked.

Servais has plenty of reasons to fear Trout, whose 20 home runs at Safeco are the most ever for a visiting player. Trout had a double Wednesday and has 17 hits at the park this year alone, the most for a visiting player since 2007. Six of the 14 intentional walks Trout has received this season have come from Servais.

"The situation dictates itself," Servais said. "You have to be very cognizant of the game situation, the score of the game, who is on the mound. I think if I remember back last series. There was a particular game where we were up three or four runs and there was a guy on a base and base open. And we pitched to Mike Trout and he hit a homer.

"Before last series, we thought we'd come up with a plan to attack him. It didn't work, obviously. So that plan was not thrown out again. I did notice that the sheet that the pitching guys put together on each hitter, Mike Trout has just one line while other guys have a paragraph in how we want to approach him."

It's not just the Mariners who won't pitch to Trout. Fewer and fewer clubs have. Trout was issued a pair of intentional walks in Wednesday's 7-4 win over Seattle. His previous career high for intentional walks in a season is 15, and he's one away from tying it. In July.

Trout's intimidation of opposing pitchers and managers isn't unprecedented. At his peak, Barry Bonds drew as many as 120 intentional walks in a season. Even contemporaries of Trout, like the Nationals' Bryce Harper, have received 20 or more in a season. But is it simply the fear of Trout? Or is it a damning sign of a lineup that can't protect him?

"I think it's just a function of the situations that might find some hitters," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said.

Trout has been immediately followed by the pairing of Justin Upton and Albert Pujols in the batting order in all but 11 of the first 87 games this season, with the batting grouping seen in large part as the heart of the order.

Scioscia made the "heart" literal Wednesday, sliding Trout-Justin Upton-Albert Pujols to the 3-4-5 spots behind Kole Calhoun and Andrelton Simmons. With more runners on the base paths, he said, it provides more fruitful opportunities for Trout, Upton, Pujols and even Shohei Ohtani to produce runs.

Upton has been an above-average hitter (119 OPS+) this season, but also an inconsistent one. Pujols (90 OPS+) has not, even as he's taken a step forward after a disappointing 2017. Pujols' drop-off at the plate presents the Angels with a problem. Pujols played his 46th game at first base on Wednesday, more than the past two seasons combined. With two-way Shohei Ohtani back in the lineup and restricted to hitting, there are fewer opportunities to use Pujols as a designated hitter to save his legs.

Wednesday's lineup positioning also meant something else for Pujols. For the first time since 2001, his rookie season with the Cardinals, he batted lower than cleanup in the batting order. He arguably has been the best right-handed hitter of his generation. Now, the Angels believe he can still be a valuable asset in the middle of the order — though a 90 wRC+ and .249 average indicate a replacement-level player. Entering Wednesday, his bWAR over the past three seasons (1.3, -1.8, 0.5 through 2018) equaled 0.0.

Scioscia didn't put much stock into dropping Pujols in the order for the first time as an Angel.

"A lot of guys have moved around," he said.

Scioscia has maintained his belief in the group's run production, saying they can help cash in on the free trips on the base paths and make opponents pay for not pitching to Trout. The results haven't been as promising. Pujols is still an apt run-producer at this stage of his career, entering Wednesday batting .318 with 31 RBIs in 99 plate appearances with runners in scoring position. Upton has struggled, entering the day hitting .160 with 27 RBIs in such situations.

"We have to be more than Mike, and we feel we are," Scioscia said. "So if you're not going to pitch to Mike, and to be the kind of offensive club we know we can be, the guys behind Mike have to produce. We're good with that. With Justin and Albert, we're really confident that they're going to pick up whatever Mike creates."

The formula was successful Wednesday, with Upton and Pujols combining for three hits and a pair of RBIs and the team finishing a combined 6-for-17 with runners in scoring position. Trout was intentionally walked twice, once in the eighth inning to load the bases for Upton, who grounded out before Pujols popped out to bring home only one run on the threat.

"It fed the guys we wanted to," Scioscia said. "The template works if we can set the table for those guys in the middle, and that's what we did. All those guys had opportunities."

Pitching to Mike Trout is still a challenge. The game's best player, dubbed the best of his generation by Servais, is in the midst of arguably his best season, posting a 193 wRC+ through Wednesday's play and putting every opposing manager in a bind.

"It's not easy, believe me," Servais said. "I'm sitting in the dugout and my stomach is turning. I'm constantly looking at my lineup card, and it seems like this guy hits every inning against us."

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Calhoun homers, Angels end Mariners' streak with 7-4 win

SEATTLE (AP) — Kole Calhoun has come a long way since getting a needed break on the disabled list last month, and Garrett Richards looked pretty sharp after his own DL stint.

Calhoun hit a two-run homer, Richards pitched effectively into the sixth inning and the Los Angeles Angels beat the Mariners 7-4 on Wednesday to snap Seattle's eight-game winning streak.

Batting in the leadoff spot for only the fourth time this season, Calhoun had three hits and drove in three runs to help lift Richards (5-4) in his return.

Calhoun's towering homer in the sixth gave the Angels a 6-2 lead. He also had a single in the fourth inning for his first RBI. Calhoun is batting .306 with four homers and eight RBIs since coming off the DL on June 18. He was hitting .145 before that break.

"Kole did his job today," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "That's what we need from the guys at the top of the order. It gave us a lot of opportunities today."

Richards, who went on the DL on June 15 with a left hamstring strain, allowed three runs, including back-to-back homers to Kyle Seager and Ryon Healy, over 5 1/3 innings. He struck out eight.

"I just overthrew a couple of heaters there," Richards said of the home runs. "But I felt good. The hamstring felt good. I knew I would be on a leash (80 pitches), so I just tried to execute pitches."

Richards retired 10 of the next 11 hitters he faced after the home runs.

"Garrett just exhaled (after the homers) and made some really good pitches," Scioscia said. "He gave us a chance to win the game."

Blake Parker pitched out of trouble in the ninth for his 10th save. Mike Zunino singled and Denard Span doubled to put runners at second and third, but Dee Gordon flied out to center and Zunino was thrown out at the plate on Jean Segura's grounder to Albert Pujols at first. Mitch Haniger ended it with a groundout to third.

Parker failed to cover first on the grounder to Pujols, so Pujols had no choice but to throw home.

"Pujols getting that guy at the plate was a huge out," Scioscia said. "The pitcher didn't cover there, so Albert made a great decision and threw a strike to the plate."

The Mariners had their chances, including a bases-loaded, no-outs situation in the seventh inning when trailing 6-3. After Gordon and Span struck out, Segura hit a broken-bat flare that looked like it might drop behind second base and score two runs, but Angels second baseman David Fletcher made a leaping catch to end the inning.

"I got a pretty good read off the bat," Fletcher said. "I kind of felt I had a bead on it all the way. It was a nice feeling to save those runs from scoring."

The Mariners struck out 15 times and left eight men on base.

Mike Leake (8-5) allowed four runs and nine hits before leaving with no one out in the fifth. He had allowed two runs or less in seven of his previous eight starts.

"They were battling me, fouling balls off today," Leake said. "Trying to get them to go down, but they found some holes and that's about it."

Luis Valbuena drove in two runs for the Angels and Shohei Ohtani and two hits and scored two runs.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Angels: OF Chris Young was placed on the 10-day DL a day after straining his hamstring. LHP Tyler Skaggs was also placed on the DL with a thigh strain. Skaggs said hopes to miss only one start. OF Jabari Blash and RHP Deck McGuire were recalled from Triple-A Salt Lake, with INF Kaleb Cowart also optioned to Triple-A. ... LHP John Lamb will undergo Tommy John surgery on his left elbow early next week. He'll become the fourth Angels pitcher to have the procedure this season.

Mariners: Manager Scott Servais said RHP Erasmo Ramirez could begin a rehab assignment soon. Ramirez has been on the DL since May 1 because of a right teres major muscle strain in his pitching shoulder. Ramirez said is willing to pitch in relief if that's where he's needed.

UP NEXT

Angels RHP Jaime Barria (5-4, 3.40) will start Thursday's series finale in place of Skaggs. Barria is making his 12th start of the season and has given up two earned runs or fewer in four of his last five starts. LHP Marco Gonzales (8-5, 3.77) will make his 18th start for Seattle. Gonzales pitched the first complete game of his career in his last start, a 4-1 victory over Kansas City when he allowed six hits and didn't walk a batter.

FROM ESPN.COM

Mike Trout and Mookie Betts have opposite approaches -- and both are perfect

By Sam Miller

Something has been gnawing at me about Mike Trout and Mookie Betts.

Both are practically perfect hitters, and in practically identical ways. It's not just that they both hit the ball hard and far, but that they control the construction of each plate appearance:

- Los Angeles Angels center fielder Trout has a phenomenal batting eye -- his chase rate is in the third percentile of qualified hitters. (Which means 97 percent of hitters swing at more pitches out of the zone.) Boston Red Sox right fielder Betts' chase rate is in the first percentile, basically indistinguishable.
- Both are also patient when the pitch is in the strike zone: Betts is in the first percentile for swing rate, Trout in the third. The same.
- Both rarely swing and miss. Betts' contact rate is in the league's 91st percentile, and Trout's in the 83rd.
- And, according to FanGraphs, they've seen the exact same percentage of pitches in the strike zone. They, in fact, hover right around the league's median for zone percentage.
- Put it together, and 56.6 percent of pitches Betts sees end up being strikes (or put in play), the third-lowest rate in baseball. And Trout: 57.6 percent, the fifth lowest.

So, they get the same number of pitches in the zone; they swing at the same number of pitches in the zone, and they chase the same number of pitches out of the zone; and when they swing, they make contact at the same rates. You'll identify those as the basic building blocks of a strikeout or a walk.

And yet, Trout has the highest unintentional walk rate in baseball; Betts ranks around 40th. (Intentional walks are excluded from all stats in this article.) And Betts has the 12th-lowest strikeout rate in baseball, while Trout is around 75th. Despite getting the same number of strikes, swinging at the same number of pitches, and making contact on the same number of swings, Trout walks 50 percent more often than Betts and strikes out 50 percent more often. What in the world?

The answers to this mystery show some of the nuances of how each player approaches a count, and how each player's count rhythm (to make up a phrase) can defy the broad generalities we draw about a player's approach from their overall plate discipline stats. (Trout takes more pitches with two strikes, for example; Betts chases more often with three balls.) More significantly, they show how much foul balls, of all dumb things, matter.

We don't pay much attention to foul balls. They're not a whiff, but they're also not a ball in play. In most counts they're bad (but not too bad), but in two-strike counts they're good (but not too good). Some travel 500 feet; some are detectable only by sound. You can stare at a foul ball percentage leaderboard and struggle to find any pattern.

But Trout is a major foul ball hitter. Of all qualified hitters this year, only two have fouled off a higher percentage of pitches per swing. Betts is a major foul ball avoider, down around the 25th percentile of

fouls per swing. In the case of these two elite hitters, these foul balls create a huge shift in outcomes. Trout and Betts are just as likely to swing at, for example, any 1-0 pitch, but Betts is 60 percent more likely to put the pitch in play, because Trout fouls off so many of those pitches.

It's hard to say whether these different rates represent a deliberate approach by each hitter or merely the subtle differences in their hitting skills and styles. The "deliberate approach" hypothesis draws some evidence from foul ball rates per count: Trout's foul ball "edge" over Betts is especially high in early hitter's counts, like 1-0, 2-0 and 2-1. Betts' foul ball rates go way up with two strikes, when a foul ball gets the batter a new pitch, while Trout's stays steady throughout the count.

But regardless of whether these rates show intent, they do illustrate two different philosophies about count leverage.

The Betts philosophy (again, whether or not intentional) is that, in this era and with the strength of these hitters, there's a tremendous value to simply putting a fair ball in play, and a tremendous penalty to reaching two strikes.

We can see this striking trend in a stat called tOPS+, which measures the league's performance in one split relative to its performance overall. The league's tOPS+ with two strikes is 43 this year, which is a way of saying that its OPS with two strikes is just 43 percent of its OPS in all counts.

That 43 figure is the lowest since at least 1988, when count data began to be recorded. The second-lowest tOPS+ on two strikes came in 2017. The third lowest came in 2016, and the fourth lowest came the year before that. Modern pitchers are pitching for strikeouts, and they're really good at getting strikeouts, and so there has never been a worse time to hit with two strikes.

Now compare that to *every other* count:

- With the batter ahead in the count, the league's tOPS+ this year is the highest on record. The next two highest were last year and 2016.
- On the first pitch, the league's tOPS+ this year is the highest on record. The next highest seasons were last year, 2016 and 2012.
- On 1-1, the three best seasons are the past three.
- On 0-1, three of the four highest came in the past three years.

And on balls hit fair -- anywhere fair, from a bunt to a dinger -- the league's three best seasons have come in the past three years. (Betts hits .395 when he hits a ball fair, and slugs .780; Trout hits .410 and slugs .828.) To the degree that offense has survived the strikeout era, it's because batters today do a ton of damage when they hit it. To the degree that pitching has survived the new juiced ball era, it's because pitchers dominate when they get to two strikes.

So Betts' ability to avoid foul balls -- to actually put the ball in play, especially earlier in counts -- is really about his ability to avoid reaching that point in the at-bat when he gets to two strikes. Only 22 percent of Betts' plate appearances have ended in pitchers' counts, the lowest rate in baseball. (Trout: 27 percent.) And 50 percent have ended in hitters' counts, the highest rate in baseball. (Trout: 42 percent.)

By putting the ball in play, he's avoiding strikeouts. He's also not chasing walks: On 3-2 counts, Betts swings at almost 80 percent of pitches, compared to 54 percent for Trout. He does still walk a fair amount -- walks are always positive -- but the relative value of a walk is diminished when the ball is flying out to left field.

So the Betts foul ball philosophy is simple: Two strikes are bad, so don't get two strikes; hit balls are good, so hit the ball.

The other philosophy, though, sees that Trout (like Betts) is not a normal hitter. Pitchers are dominating the league with two strikes like never before, but that's because *most* batters swing and miss a lot. Trout and Betts don't. Trout and Betts don't swing through pitches in the strike zone like normal hitters, and they don't chase pitches out of the strike zone like normal hitters.

Indeed, Betts and Trout this year have been two of the best two-strike hitters we've ever seen. Trout is hitting .232/.338/.554 after reaching an 0-2 count -- that's basically Bryce Harper's career OPS overall. Trout's OPS in all two-strike counts is 227 points higher than the league average with two strikes, and the 34th best (minimum 150 two-strike plate appearances) since 1988. Betts' two-strike numbers are otherworldly: This year he has been arguably the best two-strike hitter in history, with a .328/.401/.634 slash line that is better (relative to the league) than anybody on record. It's a dead certainty Betts won't keep that slash line up forever, but both hitters' performances demonstrate the obvious point that good contact rates and exceptional eyes blunt the pitchers' two-strike advantage.

Trout (and even Betts) would prefer not to get to two strikes -- a foul ball really does put him in less advantageous counts -- but the reward for a deep count is a potential walk. Strikeouts are up across baseball, but so too are walks. Because Trout doesn't chase pitches out of the strike zone, he's much more likely to cash in those deep counts for free passes. And you can't make an out on a walk.

Imagine it this way: Say a pitcher throws a first-pitch fastball just off the edge of the strike zone. One hitter takes it for ball one, and another swings and misses for strike one. We know that makes a big difference: The league has a .381 on-base percentage after getting ahead 1-0, and a .261 OBP after falling behind 0-1.

But the stakes of a single pitch go up the deeper you get into a count, the closer to the sport's three-strikes/four-balls endpoints. The same pitch on 1-1 would change the expected OBPs to .388 and .225; the same pitch on 3-2 would change the expected OBPs to 1.000 and .000. In a deep count era, the man who controls the strike zone is king.

The net result: Betts' ability to avoid foul balls helps him avoid two strikes, the perfect strategy for this era. Trout's ability to hit foul balls helps him work deep counts, during which his ability to avoid strikes has the highest payoff, also the perfect strategy for this era.

Which hitter's foul ball philosophy is better? I'm not sure either one. The thing is, when you don't swing at pitches outside the zone, when you rarely swing and miss at anything, and when everything you hit goes far, there's not really a wrong way to make offense. Each of these hitters has found a way that works for him. The difference is subtle, but it's personal, and it's producing two historic seasons.

Los Angeles Angels place Tyler Skaggs on DL

Left-hander Tyler Skaggs, who leads the Los Angeles Angels in wins, ERA and strikeouts this season, was placed on the 10-day disabled list Wednesday with a right adductor strain.

The move was made retroactive to Sunday. Skaggs had been scheduled to start Thursday's game against the Seattle Mariners, but Jaime Barria (5-4, 3.40 ERA) will start in his place.

Skaggs, 26, is 6-5 with a 2.64 ERA in 16 starts this season. He has struck out 100 batters in 92 innings pitched.

The Angels activated another member of the starting rotation Wednesday, however, as right-hander Garrett Richards was reinstated from the disabled list. He is scheduled to start Wednesday's game against the Mariners. The 30-year-old Richards, who is 4-4 with a 3.42 ERA in 14 starts, had been sidelined since the middle of last month with a left hamstring strain.

The Angels also placed outfielder Chris Young on the 10-day DL on Tuesday and optioned utilityman Kaleb Cowart to Triple-A Salt Lake. The team recalled outfielder Jabari Blash and right-hander Deck McGuire from Salt Lake in corresponding moves.

FROM CBS SPORTS

Resurgent Calhoun, Angels face Mariners in rubber match

To say Kole Calhoun was struggling would be an understatement.

By STATS

To say Kole Calhoun was struggling would be an understatement.

When the Los Angeles Angels' right fielder was placed on the disabled list June 2 with a strained right oblique, he was in a 12-for-122 slump (.098), dropping his season average to .145.

"Every day is a new day," Calhoun told the Orange County Register last week. "You've still got to go out and perform. I'm not thinking about it much honestly. I just want to go out and have a good game. Just going out and trying to help the team win."

He did that Wednesday, going 3 for 5 with a home run and three RBIs as the Angels snapped the host Seattle Mariners' eight-game winning streak with a 7-4 victory. The teams wrap up their three-game series Thursday night at Safeco Field.

Calhoun has hit two home runs in his past three games after hitting just three in his previous 62. Since returning from the DL on June 18, he's batting .306 (15-for-49) with three doubles, four home runs, seven RBIs and 10 runs scored.

That's helped Calhoun raise his batting average to .180.

He even returned to the leadoff spot in the batting order last week in Baltimore, a spot he held in previous seasons.

"Kole has made some adjustments and hopefully it will pay off," Angels manager Mike Scioscia told The Register.

Scioscia said one key for Calhoun is he's been more selective at the plate as of late.

"He's had a good eye in previous years," Scioscia said. "It's been a part of his game, but it's been elusive this year."

The Angels will send rookie right-hander Jaime Barria (5-4, 3.40 ERA) to the mound Thursday in place of left-hander Tyler Skaggs, who was placed on the disabled list Wednesday with a right adductor strain. Barria suffered a 6-3 loss on June 12 at Seattle, allowing three runs (two earned) on eight hits in five innings.

The Mariners are scheduled to start left-hander Marco Gonzales (8-5, 3.77 ERA). Gonzales is 0-0 with a 4.66 ERA in four career starts against the Angels, including two earlier this season.

Gonzales is coming off his first career complete game in a 4-1 victory against Kansas City. Gonzales lost the shutout bid on Mike Moustakas' two-strike, two-out single in the ninth inning.

"It's a culmination of a lot of hard work this year and having the right guys behind me," Gonzales said after his last start. "Those guys played incredible defense behind me and when your team gives you a lead in the first half of the game, you inch closer to eyeing the end. From the first inning I just had the mentality that this is my game and I'm going to go as deep as I can."

Gonzales has been a big part of Seattle's success this season after earning the No. 5 spot in the rotation this spring.

"He's matured, there's no question," Mariners manager Scott Servais said of Gonzales. "It always works better when guys earn it. He has a lot of confidence right now because everything that's happened this year, he's earned. From coming into spring training, winning a spot in our rotation, he continues to build throughout the season."

FROM KYODO NEWS

Baseball: Shohei Ohtani gets 2 hits in Angels' win

Shohei Ohtani went 2-for-4 and scored two runs on Wednesday as the Los Angeles Angels beat the Seattle Mariners 7-4 to even the three-game series at one apiece.

In his second game since being activated off the disabled list, Ohtani reached on a catcher's interference in the second inning and scored the game's opening run after wheeling home from first base on a double by Luis Valbuena.

Ohtani singled to right field in the fourth and was again driven home by Valbuena, and doubled down the right-field line in the seventh for his first multi-hit game since May 24.

"It was good to win. I felt better at the plate compared to yesterday," said Ohtani, who struck out three times and went hitless in four at-bats the previous day.

"But it was a bit painful since I couldn't get some extra runs when we had chances. If I can just do a little more work in those kinds of situations, I think that I'll get even better results."

The Japanese rookie flied into a double play and grounded out in his other at-bats. He last had a hit on June 4, when he entered the game as a pinch-hitter and scored a tying run that put the Angels on track to a 9-6 comeback victory over the Kansas City Royals.

For the Angels, Kole Calhoun had three hits, including a two-run homer, and drove in three runs, and Valbuena had two hits and two RBIs.

Garrett Richards (5-4) allowed three runs, two earned, in five innings. Mike Leake (8-5) took the loss. Blake Parker closed out the ninth to earn his 10th save of the season.

Ohtani had spent nearly a month on the DL with a Grade 2 sprained ulnar collateral ligament in his right pitching elbow. He was cleared to bat last Thursday but will be re-evaluated within three weeks to determine whether he can pitch again this year.

Among other Japanese players, Masahiro Tanaka pitched five innings in a Triple-A rehab game for the New York Yankees' affiliate Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. The right-hander fanned four and gave up three hits, including a two-run homer, in the 69-pitch outing.

Tanaka is currently on the disabled list with mild strains in both hamstrings. It was his first time pitching since June 8, when he exited the game with stiff hamstrings after sprinting home and scoring the tying run in the sixth inning against the New York Mets.