



Press Clips

(May 14, 2018)

CLIPS CONTENT

FROM THE OC REGISTER (PAGE 3)

- **This is when you will see Shohei Ohtani pitch and hit in the same game**
- **Shohei Ohtani and Zack Cozart lift Angels over Minnesota Twins**

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES (PAGE 7)

- **It was a walk-off win at Angel Stadium, and another Sunday spent with Shohei Ohtani**
- **Shohei Ohtani pitches another gem before Angels get walk-off win over Twins**
- **Angels continue conservative use of Shohei Ohtani but that could change in the future**

FROM ANGELS.COM (PAGE 12)

- **Halos walk off Twins after Ohtani's 11-K start**
- **Middleton exits with elbow pain, to have MRI**
- **Angels honor 'Momma Anne' on Mother's Day**

FROM THE ATHLETIC (PAGE 17)

- **The Shohei show (mound edition) plays to rave reviews again**

FROM THE MLB.COM (PAGE 19)

- **Biggest Questions as season hits quarter mark**

FROM MiLB.COM (PAGE 21)

- **MiLB, Satisfi Labs partner to enhance fan experience**

FROM ESPN.COM (PAGE 22)

- **Power Rankings: Can anyone challenge the Evil Empire?***
- **Angels reliever Keynan Middleton removed with right elbow discomfort**

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS (PAGE 24)

- **After Ohtani dazzles Twins, Angels rally late for 2-1 win**
- **Top AL teams setting bar high so far in postseason chase**

FROM CBS SPORTS (PAGE 27)

- **Angels need to get bats going against Astros**

FROM YAHOO! SPORTS (PAGE 29)

- **Walk-off win gives Angels split with Twins**
- **Shohei Ohtani sets Angels record after another dominant start**
- **Shohei Ohtani sets Angels record after another dominant start**

FROM USA TODAY (PAGE 32)

- **Twins' Logan Morrison on Angels' Shohei Ohtani: 'Probably the best player in the world'**

FROM SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (PAGE 33)

- **Logan Morrison on Shohei Ohtani: 'He's Probably the Best Player in the World'**

FROM FORBES (PAGE 34)

- **Next Step is for Angels' Starter Shohei Ohtani to hit and pitch in the same game**

FROM THE SPORTING NEWS (PAGE 34)

- **Keynan Middleton injury update: Angels reliever to have MRI exam on elbow**
- **Shohei Ohtani makes history in latest dominant start for Angels**

FROM KYODO NEWS (PAGE 37)

- **Baseball: Ohtani dominant in 6th start as Angels beat Twins 2-1**

FROM THE JAPAN TIMES (PAGE 38)

- **Shohei Ohtani strikes out 11 as Angels edge Twins on walk-off single**

FROM THE OC REGISTER**This is when you will see Shohei Ohtani pitch and hit in the same game**

By J.P. Hoornstra

ANAHEIM – Shohei Ohtani the pitcher lowered his earned-run average to 3.58 on Sunday. He allowed only one run over 6 1/3 innings against the Minnesota Twins, but didn't factor into the decision.

If only he had Shohei Ohtani the hitter to provide run support. Ohtani is batting .348 with five home runs in 20 games (17 starts) as the Angels' designated hitter.

So far, the Angels' decision-makers have been content to let Ohtani bat four days a week, resting him entirely the day before and after he pitches. On the days he does pitch, there has been no talk of sacrificing the designated hitter and letting Ohtani bat for himself.

Until Sunday.

"We have considered that scenario," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Obviously you'd like him to hit in your lineup, but not to have a DH in your lineup really gives you a tactical disadvantage. If he got a blister in the second inning, or if his pitch count got up and he was done after five innings, right now our bench isn't deep enough to be able to play a National League game."

If an American League team allows the pitcher to bat for himself, by rule there can be no designated hitter for the remainder of the game. The Angels currently have 12 position players on their active roster, not including Ohtani. If Ohtani batted for himself, Scioscia would have only four position players to choose from to bat for the pitcher. That might not change between now and Aug. 31.

On Sept. 1, teams are allowed to expand their active rosters from 25 to 40. The Angels could add to their bench without subtracting someone from their active pitching staff.

So, Scioscia said, letting Ohtani bat for himself "is something we might consider in September if it was something that was really critical and we needed his bat in our lineup."

The manager also left open the possibility that Ohtani could bat in a National League park, but the Angels have just eight interleague games remaining on the road: July 13-15 at Dodger Stadium, Aug. 13-15 at Petco Park in San Diego and Aug. 21-22 at Chase Field in Phoenix. Ohtani didn't start either Tuesday or Wednesday at Coors Field in Denver.

TROUT OUT

May 13 was circled on the calendar as a day off for Mike Trout, and the Angels' center fielder knew it when he arrived at the ballpark.

It so happens that May 13 this year is Mother's Day. Trout is batting .318 with three walks, a home run, two runs, three RBI, and a stolen base in his career on Mother's Day. It was also a Sunday, Ohtani's day to pitch, so the Angels removed another middle-of-the-lineup regular and put him on the mound.

Trout had started every game this season. He had played all but two innings in the field in May. Trout's day off had nothing to do with a slide into third base Saturday night, Scioscia said, and everything to do with sticking to a plan.

"When a guy needs a day off you have to give it to him," Scioscia said. "Certainly the health of not only Mike but all our players is paramount. We just don't have that much depth that we absorb losing guys for extended periods of time. There are days that when Shohei's not going to swing the bat that some other guys have the day off and you're not going to have the lineup as deep as you could, but it's something that needs to be done."

Trout entered the game as a pinch hitter in the seventh inning.

CALHOUN BATS SECOND

With Trout out, Scioscia penciled in a surprising name in the No. 2 spot in his lineup: Kole Calhoun

Calhoun hadn't batted higher than eighth since April, and not for no reason. He entered the game with a .143 batting average this month (4 for 28) and just two walks, but Scioscia said that Calhoun's at-bats have recently improved.

"I remember talking to Joe Maddon about this a long time ago, Mickey (Hatcher): sometimes when a guy's struggling, move him up in the lineup just see if he can't shake the tree a little bit," Scioscia said.

Calhoun went 0 for 3 with two strikeouts.

ALSO

Matt Shoemaker will meet with a nerve specialist in Missouri on Tuesday, Scioscia said. The pitcher's throwing program was shut down in light of the results of an electromyogram on his right forearm Monday. ... Scioscia called on right-hander Keynan Middleton to pitch the eighth inning, when the Twins sent two left-handed hitters and a switch hitter to the plate. The one left-hander in the Angels' bullpen, Jose Alvarez, was not available except as a "last resort," Scioscia said. ... Alvarez hasn't pitched since a 22-pitch appearance Thursday and is not injured, but Scioscia said "there's a fatigue factor involved."

Shohei Ohtani and Zack Cozart lift Angels over Minnesota Twins

By J.P. Hoornstra

ANAHEIM – Chris Young was on second base Sunday when Zack Cozart entered the batter's box in the bottom of the ninth inning. Cozart was enough for one pitcher to worry about; he had two hits in his first four at-bats against the Minnesota Twins. This was his fifth at-bat, and it could end the game with one swing.

Besides the proximate threat of Cozart, there were ghosts. A two-time Most Valuable Player, Mike Trout, was lurking on deck. Standing in the hold, Justin Upton had more RBIs than any Angel. An outfield counter displayed Albert Pujols' latest career milestone in a font size roughly equal to his 3,007 career hits.

So Zach Duke, the pitcher, went after Zack Cozart.

Duke pumped a fastball over the plate and Cozart delivered the game-winning RBI, a single to left field. The Angels beat the Twins 2-1.

It was Cozart who dutifully spoke with a television reporter afterward, pausing for teammates to douse him with two buckets of liquid, one red and one blue. It was a ghost who garnered all the superlatives.

"I think he's doing something that nobody has probably ever done and it might be a long time before you see it again," Minnesota Twins first baseman Logan Morrison said of Shohei Ohtani. "There's another guy in that clubhouse who is a really good player, but to me, with what he does on the mound and with the bat, he's probably the best player in the world."

As the Angels' designated hitter on Thursday, Ohtani drove in two runs with a double and a home run. He had one hit in four at-bats Friday, and his batting average dropped to .348. He did not play Saturday.

Sunday, Ohtani pitched his best game in at least a month. He struck out 11 batters in 6 1/3 innings before Angels manager Mike Scioscia decided Ohtani had reached his pitch limit. The Twins' only run was charged to Ohtani's ledger, but only after he exited the game.

If Cam Bedrosian had not allowed back-to-back singles in the seventh inning, Ohtani would be leading the Angels in slugging percentage (.652) and tied for the team lead in wins (4-1).

"That was a pretty phenomenal start," Scioscia said. "Not a solid start. That was phenomenal."

Ohtani throws four pitches: a four-seam fastball, a slider, a curveball and a split-fingered fastball. He was commanding all of them on Sunday, which isn't always the case. Ohtani's fastball peaked at 99 mph in the sixth inning, an energy-conservation habit that scouts say he brought over from Japan. Ohtani struck out left-handed hitters with both his curveball and slider, which had not been his habit to this point in the United States.

As the legend of Ohtani expands, it still hasn't veered into fiction.

"Dude's throwing the ball extremely well," Angels second baseman Ian Kinsler said. "When he's on the mound you forget that he's a hitter. You forget that he's our five-hole guy who can smash homers."

When he's jogging around the bases after a home run you forget that he's one of our best pitchers. It's a unique situation and he's obviously been extremely successful. It's been fun to watch."

Sunday's game might still be going if Kinsler didn't accurately relay a one-hop throw from Trout in center field to Angels catcher Martin Maldonado in the top of the ninth inning. The 8-4-2 putout retired a sliding Ehire Adrianza at home plate and made a winner of Blake Parker (1-1), whose only pitch was the last of 156 thrown by the Angels.

Neither team scored for the first four innings. Fernando Romero, a 23-year-old right-hander making his third career start for the Twins, looked every bit Ohtani's equal. Romero allowed four hits and struck out six batters in five innings. When the rookie finally allowed a run, it was the first he had allowed after 15 2/3 innings to start his career.

Martin Maldonado greeted Romero with a double to begin the bottom of the fifth inning. A single by Cozart gave the Angels runners on first and third base with nobody out. Romero struck out Kole Calhoun and very nearly ended the inning by getting Justin Upton to hit a ground ball to third baseman Eduardo Escobar. But Upton beat the relay throw to first base by Brian Dozier, the Twins' second baseman, thwarting a double play and allowing Maldonado to score the game's first run.

The Angels were still leading 1-0 when Ohtani walked Morrison, then was removed, with one out in the seventh inning. Bedrosian quickly found trouble.

Robbie Grossman singled, sending Morrison to third base. Adrianza pinch-ran for Morrison and scored on a single by Joe Mauer. Bedrosian got out of the inning without allowing another run, but the game was tied 1-1.

Ohtani threw 103 pitches, the most he has thrown in six major league starts. He topped out at 98 pitches in each of his previous two outings.

"I didn't feel fatigued at all," Ohtani said through his interpreter. "The way I ended my last outing, with a home run and a walk, maybe (Scioscia) thought that was going to happen again. I need to earn that trust from him."

In the eighth inning, Scioscia called on right-hander Keynan Middleton to face two lefties and a switch-hitter because his only left-handed reliever, Jose Alvarez, was not available. Middleton retired the first two batters. His fastball speed was normal.

After the second batter grounded out, Scioscia and an Angels trainer went to the mound to check on Middleton, who left the game. Middleton developed discomfort in his right elbow and will undergo an MRI exam Monday, Scioscia said.

In the ninth inning, Duke hit Young in the back foot with a pitch. Maldonado laid down a sacrifice bunt, sending Young to second base. Cozart needed only one pitch to finish the job that Ohtani started. His line drive-single allowed Young to score standing up.

The Angels (24-16) split the four-game series with Minnesota (17-19) to remain in second place in the American League West. They're one game behind the Houston Astros, who visit Anaheim for three games beginning Monday.

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

It was a walk-off win at Angel Stadium, and another Sunday spent with Shohei Ohtani

By Dylan Hernandez

The Rally Monkey danced on the video scoreboard and the Angels later danced on the field.

The 2-1 walk-off victory over the Minnesota Twins was the latest reminder of how Southern California offers the perfect conditions for early afternoon baseball games at this time of the year, the majority of the 30,000-plus patrons at Angel Stadium in T-shirts and replica jerseys with the temperature at a comfortable 67 degrees at first pitch.

And something else: This was another Sunday with Shohei.

Shohei Ohtani, who struck out 11 batters over 6 1/3 dominant innings of a no-decision, has gifted Major League Baseball more than its first two-way player in nearly a century. He has also provided the league with a regularly scheduled attraction.

Nothing about baseball is predictable and that includes when starting pitchers will take the mound. It's not uncommon for managers to forget who will pitch three days from now. About the only people who are certain to have this information memorized are pitching coaches and daily fantasy sports players.

Mike Scioscia can make fun of the idea as much as he wants — and he did — but baseball wins if everyone knows when the sport's most interesting athlete will take the mound.

Even better that he happens to pitch on Sundays, when fans don't have to go to work or school.

Enjoy it while it lasts because Ohtani won't remain on this schedule forever. Weather or injuries could change his schedule. So could the Angels, who are looking to maximize the contributions of their one-of-a-kind player.

Ohtani is too good to be pitching only once a week.

The Angels wanted Ohtani's playing schedule to remain similar to what it was in Japan, when he pitched once a week. That his turn fell on a Sunday was a coincidence, according to Scioscia, who added that Ohtani has never said he likes to pitch on Sundays or in day games.

"I think he'll pitch at midnight if we have a game," Scioscia said.

Ohtani pitched against the Boston Red Sox last month on a Tuesday, after a scheduled start in Kansas City was cancelled because of the weather. He made another Tuesday start in Houston, only to be moved back to Sunday because of an ankle injury.

Scioscia has refrained from using Ohtani the days directly before and after his starts and the player said his has physically responded well to the schedule.

"My body is feeling good after starts," Ohtani said in Japanese. "I feel I've been able to incorporate my training well into my cycle, too. I think things are going well right now."

His condition has made the Angels wonder if it's possible for them to get more out of him, with Scioscia already saying he will likely pitch once every six days at some point this season.

"In the big picture of where I think we will need to be with our rotation, it's going to be very helpful if he can come back and pitch on that sixth day," Scioscia said.

Ohtani lowered his earned-run average to 3.58 on Sunday. He has struck out 43 batters in 32 2/3 innings this season.

Typically, rookie pitchers become less effective as the league learns about them. The opposite appears to be happening here, as Ohtani looks to be benefitting from his increased familiarity with his new environment.

As was the case in Seattle a week earlier, Ohtani had a good feel Sunday for all four of his pitches: fastball, splitter, slider and curveball. He struck out nine batters in the first four innings.

"I think that's one of my characteristics, to be able to throw a variety of pitches and come up with different plans for each hitter," Ohtani said. "It will change depending on the opponent. But for the most part, I think being able to throw four pitches will be a weapon."

Ohtani walked Brian Dozier to start the sixth inning and allowed him to advance to second on a wild pitch. Ohtani retired the next three batters to preserve his team's 1-0 advantage.

"His stuff was electric and his presence in a tight ballgame is what Shohei's about," Scioscia said.

Ohtani was removed from the game after walking Logan Morrison with one out in the seventh. His replacement, Cam Bedrosian, allowed Morrison to score and tie the score 1-1.

Ohtani threw a season-high 103 pitches. He allowed three hits, all of them singles. He walked two.

Ohtani said he understood why Scioscia removed him from the game, pointing to how he allowed a two-run home run in the seventh inning of his previous start.

"I still can't be counted on in a place like that," Ohtani said. "I was the one who created the situation where he had to make a change."

He added that he was upset with himself.

"I think how you leave the mound is important," he said. "That wasn't a good way to leave."

Still, Scioscia politely corrected a reporter who described Ohtani's performance as "solid."

"That was a pretty phenomenal start, not a solid start," Scioscia said.

And the best part was that it didn't catch anyone by surprise. Chances are that anyone who was interested knew Ohtani was pitching.

Shohei Ohtani pitches another gem before Angels get walk-off win over Twins

By Jeff Miller

For the second time in barely five weeks, the Angels won when a batter named Zack delivered a walk-off hit against a pitcher named Zach.

And you thought the most inexplicable thing to happen Sunday at Angel Stadium was manager Mike Scioscia's decision to remove a dominating Shohei Ohtani.

"That's a little crazy, right?" said Zack Cozart, who has two game-ending hits after having zero in his first six years in the big leagues. "I never even thought about that. That's weird."

His run-scoring single in the ninth inning against Minnesota's Zach Duke lifted the Angels to a 2-1 victory. On April 4 at Angel Stadium, Cozart's 13th-inning home run against Cleveland's Zach McAllister was the difference.

That's a lot of Z's coming together in moments too tense for anyone to be napping. Before the hit, the Angels were one for 13 — and two for 23 over two games — with runners in scoring position.

"The Angels must be my good-luck charm," said Cozart, who played 749 games before getting his first walk-off hit and only 28 more before getting his second.

The thrilling finish salvaged what also was an exhilarating start, Ohtani striking out 11 batters and limiting the Twins to one run and three hits in 6 1/3 innings.

During one stretch, six consecutive outs and nine of 11 outs came via strikeout as the right-hander found so many holes that he threatened to turn Minnesota's bats into the land of 10,000 leaks.

"That was a pretty phenomenal start," Scioscia said. "His presence in a tight ballgame is what Shohei's about."

In the seventh, however, the story instead became about Ohtani's absence. He was pulled after throwing a career-high 103 pitches and walking Logan Morrison.

The cheers Ohtani exited to were more than matched by the boos that greeted Scioscia's choice to go to the bullpen.

The manager said he thought Ohtani had "another handful" of pitches left but that it would have been "a stretch for him to go out there anymore."

"We're trying to stage him up a little bit," said Scioscia, citing 110 pitches as Ohtani's next checkpoint. "I don't think we need to stretch Shohei right now."

Still, the move became even less popular only two batters later when Cam Bedrosian gave up a run-scoring single to pinch-hitter Joe Mauer, making it 1-1 and ending Ohtani's chance to be rewarded with a victory.

That led to perhaps an hour's worth of consternation among the faithful, until Cozart came through. Many of those fans no doubt already were fretting about Mike Trout not being in the lineup.

Few players start 162 games these days, and, at some point, Trout has to rest, there being no good time to not play the player generally regarded as the best in baseball.

Without Trout, who later entered as a pinch-hitter and finished in center field, Scioscia inserted .165-hitting Kole Calhoun into the No. 2 spot in the order.

The unorthodox move is one Scioscia said he has discussed over the years with several of his coaches, including Joe Maddon, whose less-than-traditional thinking as a manager has won everything from admiration to a World Series.

The decision, however, didn't work as Calhoun went hitless in three at-bats, striking out twice and stranding three runners.

As it was, Trout struck out looking in his only plate appearance, though he helped "save the game" — Cozart's words — with a throw that second baseman Ian Kinsler in turn relayed home to nail Ehire Adrianza in the top of the ninth inning.

"At the end of the year," Kinsler said, "those are plays that can change the course of a season."

Injuries can, too, and the Angels' win came with a loss, a potentially significant one, when reliever Keynan Middleton walked off the mound in the eighth inning because of what Scioscia called "a little elbow discomfort."

Having just returned from the disabled list Thursday because of inflammation in the same area, Middleton left after getting two outs and throwing 12 pitches. He's scheduled to have an MRI exam Monday.

"We'll keep our fingers crossed," said Scioscia, the Angels hoping their luck didn't end when Sunday's game did.

Angels continue conservative use of Shohei Ohtani but that could change in the future

By Jeff Miller

It was the late innings of a taut game — a game they would eventually lose — and the Angels had one of the most dangerous, productive hitters in baseball on their bench.

That's where **Shohei Ohtani** stayed Saturday during the ninth, 10th, 11th and 12th innings, with manager **Mike Scioscia** opting to not employ him as a potential game-altering pinch-hitter.

The decision honored the team's original plan of resting Ohtani on the days before and after he pitches with the focus being on his long-term health and availability.

Scioscia suggested Sunday that the plan could change.

"This is a template that's very conservative right now," he said. "If we [need to] move off of that as his career goes on, then we'll evaluate it at that time."

Scioscia said the fact that the game Sunday started at 1 p.m. also would have made playing Ohtani late Saturday night more difficult.

"There's not as much recovery time if you use him last night," he said. "When he puts on that pitching cap, it's important for us to respect that and let him get ready to pitch."

Ohtani's start against Minnesota was his sixth overall and fourth on a Sunday. He was sharp, allowing just three hits in 6 1/3 innings and striking out 11 in a no-decision. He could've used his own bat in the lineup as the Angels scored just one run behind him.

Scioscia said the Angels had looked at attempting to align Ohtani to start last week during either of their games in Colorado but the schedule didn't break correctly.

That would have permitted Ohtani to bat — thus noticeably lengthening the Angels lineup — since the designated hitter isn't used in games played in National League parks.

Scioscia on Sunday even left open the possibility of the Angels one day going without a designated hitter in an American League game started by Ohtani, allowing him to bat.

Such a move would put the team at a tactical disadvantage because of a need to pinch-hit for the pitcher's spot once Ohtani is relieved, straining an already thin bench.

"We have considered it," Scioscia said. "It would take an extreme, you know, something you might consider in September, if it was something that was really critical and you needed his bat in the lineup."

Short hops

The win Sunday came with a loss, a potentially significant one, when reliever **Keynan Middleton** walked off the mound in the eighth because of what Scioscia called "a little elbow discomfort." Having just returned from the disabled list Thursday because of inflammation in the same area, Middleton left after getting two outs and throwing 12 pitches. He's scheduled to have an MRI exam on Monday. ... **Matt Shoemaker** (forearm strain) is scheduled to see a nerve specialist in Missouri on Tuesday. ... Angels starters have given up 20 earned runs in 74 2/3 innings over the last 13 games for a 2.41 earned-run average.

FROM ANGELS.COM

Halos walk off Twins after Ohtani's 11-K start

Phenom sets Angels record with 43 strikeouts through 6 outings

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- **Shohei Ohtani** didn't come away with the win, but his brilliant effort didn't go for naught, as **Zack Cozart** delivered a walk-off single to lift the Angels to a 2-1 win over the Twins in Sunday afternoon's series finale at Angel Stadium.

With the game tied, 1-1, in the bottom of the ninth, **Chris Young** reached on a hit-by-pitch, advanced to second on a sacrifice bunt by **Martin Maldonado** and scored the winning run on Cozart's single to left field off Twins reliever **Zach Duke**. The Angels (24-16) secured a split of the four-game series and improved to 8-4 in May with the win.

"We had two tough games, but the group of guys in there know to turn the page," manager Mike Scioscia said. "We saw two really good arms out there, but fortunately for us, we got through that. It was a good game. Our guys grinded it out."

The Angels' rally ensured that they didn't waste a gem from Ohtani, who struck out 11 over 6 1/3 innings. Ohtani carried a shutout into the seventh inning, but he departed after issuing a one-out walk to **Logan Morrison**. **Cam Bedrosian** was summoned to relieve Ohtani with the Angels clinging to a 1-0 lead, but he gave up a single to **Robbie Grossman** to put runners on the corners for the Twins. **Joe Mauer** then tied the game with a pinch-hit RBI single, leaving Ohtani with a no-decision.

He was charged with one run on three singles and two walks while throwing 103 pitches in his first start at home since April 17. He induced 20 swinging strikes -- eight with his slider -- while also locating his upper-90s fastball and nasty splitter, skillfully overpowering the Twins' lineup for much of the afternoon.

Ohtani was so impressive that Scioscia felt the need to correct a reporter who described the start as "solid" during his postgame news conference.

"That was a pretty phenomenal start, not a solid start," Scioscia said. "That was phenomenal. His stuff is electric. I think just his presence in a tight ballgame was what Shohei is about. He's going to go out there

and make pitches. He used all his pitches and probably had another handful in his back pocket, but that was a stretch for him to go out there for any more this afternoon."

Ohtani now has 43 strikeouts, setting an Angels record through a pitcher's first six games. The previous mark had been 38, set by Bo Belinsky in 1962. The 23-year-old two-way phenom has a 3.58 ERA over 32 2/3 innings as a pitcher and has batted .348 with a 1.044 OPS with five home runs and 16 RBIs this season.

"He was really good," said Morrison, who reached base three times against Ohtani. "He's only 23 years old and is going to get better. I think he's doing something that nobody has probably ever done, and it might be a long time before you see it again. There's another guy in that clubhouse who is a really good player, but to me, with what [Ohtani] does on the mound and with the bat, he's probably the best player in the world."

Brian Dozier led off the game by bouncing a grounder down the third-base line that got past Cozart, though **Andrelton Simmons** alertly corralled the ball and fired to **Ian Kinsler** to hold Dozier to a single. Ohtani then induced a potential double-play ball from **Max Kepler**, but Kinsler bobbled the grounder and managed to only get the out at first base. Still, Ohtani subsequently struck out **Eduardo Escobar** swinging and coaxed a groundout from **Eddie Rosario** to leave Dozier stranded.

Ohtani faced little trouble the rest of the way. He retired 12 of the next 14 batters he faced -- allowing only a pair of singles to Morrison -- and struck out the side twice. In the third, Ohtani spotted a 98.5 mph fastball on the outside corner for a called third strike against **Bobby Wilson**. He then whiffed Dozier on a splitter before getting Kepler to flail at a curveball, completing an efficient 12-pitch inning.

"I think that's one of my biggest strengths, being able to mix in my four pitches and try to keep the hitters off balance," Ohtani said through interpreter Ipei Mizuhara. "Of course, it depends on which team and which batter I'm facing. I study the reports pregame, and try to mix in pitches and try to keep them off balance."

Ohtani took the mound in the sixth with a 1-0 lead after Maldonado doubled and scored on a forceout by **Justin Upton**, but the command wasn't as crisp. Ohtani issued a leadoff walk to Dozier, who advanced to second on a wild pitch to give the Twins their first runner in scoring position since the first inning.

Kepler followed by flying out to right field, and **Kole Calhoun** made a strong throw back into the infield to hold Dozier at second. After a groundout by Escobar, Ohtani struck out Rosario swinging on a diving splitter to emerge unscathed, pumping his chest in an outward show of emotion as he walked off the field.

Despite Ohtani's tremendous success, the Angels have been conservative with his workload and have kept him on a once-a-week pitching schedule. The Angels hope that he'll eventually be able to pitch every sixth day instead of every seventh day, but they don't see that schedule change as imminent.

"In the big picture of where I think we will need to be with our rotation, it's going to be very helpful if he can come back and pitch on that sixth day," Scioscia said before the game. "He feels good, but it's something we certainly don't want to do prematurely. We'll look at some things and see when it's a possibility."

Ohtani said he's been bouncing back well and is open to pitching on shorter rest at some point this season.

"My body feels great physically," Ohtani said. "Everything's going great. The six days' rest I'm getting right now, I'm getting used to the rhythm and flow of that, but if there's a time that comes where I need to go on five days' rest, then I'll have to make some adjustments. Once again, that's not up to me. It's going to be up to the team. I just have to wait for them to make that decision."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Angels snap Romero's scoreless streak: The Angels were blanked through the first four innings by Twins rookie **Fernando Romero** before scratching a run across in the fifth. Maldonado, who entered Sunday batting .545 (12-for-22) in May, led off the inning with a double, advanced to third on Cozart's single and scored after Upton beat out a potential double-play grounder to give the Angels a 1-0 lead. The run snapped Romero's streak of 15 2/3 scoreless innings to start his career.

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

Ehire Adrianza tried to score from first on Grossman's double into the right-center field gap in the top of the ninth, but he was thrown out at the plate on a great relay throw by the Angels. **Mike Trout** fielded the ball and threw in to Kinsler, who fired to Maldonado in time to nab Adrianza and keep the score tied, 1-1. The Twins challenged the ruling, but the call was confirmed following a replay review.

"You just try to put the best throw on the bag you can and hope for the best," Kinsler said.

Added Scioscia: "That's a huge play, Adrianza could really run and just a clean relay. 'Kins' got rid of it quickly -- a little bit to the first-base side of the plate -- but Martin did a textbook of how to get the ball back to the other side of the plate and made a great tag."

MIDDLETON DEPARTS

Keynan Middleton came in to pitch the eighth and retired the first two batters, but Scioscia and trainer Adam Nevala then came out to the mound to check on him after he threw a 93 mph fastball high to Rosario. Middleton, who returned from the disabled list on Thursday after dealing with right elbow inflammation, exited the game with discomfort in the elbow and was replaced by **Jim Johnson**. Middleton will undergo an MRI on Monday, according to Scioscia. **More >>**

SOUND SMART

Ohtani, who racked up a career-high 12 strikeouts in his second start of the season against the A's on April 8, is the fourth Angels rookie to record at least 10 strikeouts as a pitcher in multiple outings, joining Frank Tanana (1974), Belinsky (1962) and Ken McBride (1961).

HE SAID IT

"When he's on the mound, you forget that he's a hitter. You forget that he's our five-hole guy that can smash homers. And when he's jogging around the bases after a home run, you kind of forget that he's one of our best pitchers. It's a unique situation, and he's obviously been extremely successful. It's fun to watch." -- *Kinsler, on Ohtani*

UP NEXT

The Angels will continue their 11-game homestand by opening a three-game set against the Astros on

Monday at 7:07 p.m. PT at Angel Stadium. Left-hander **Andrew Heaney** (1-2, 4.78 ERA) will square off with Houston right-hander **Lance McCullers Jr.** (5-1, 3.72) in the series opener. After allowing 11 runs over 9 1/3 innings in his first two starts of the season, Heaney has a 2.12 ERA over his past three outings. He is set to face the Astros for the first time since Sept. 13, 2015.

Middleton exits with elbow pain, to have MRI

By Avery Yang

ANAHEIM -- Angels reliever **Keynan Middleton** was pulled in the eighth inning of the Halos' **2-1** victory over the Twins on Sunday with right elbow discomfort, manager Mike Scioscia said. Middleton will undergo an MRI on Monday.

"Fingers crossed, hopefully it's just a mild setback," Scioscia said.

Middleton retired **Max Kepler** with six pitches to induce a flyout to lead off the inning -- reaching 97 mph twice -- and retired **Eduardo Escobar** with a groundout before departing with a 1-1 count against **Eddie Rosario**. Middleton's two fastballs to Rosario were clocked at 88 and 93 mph. The average speed of his four-seam fastball this season is 96 mph.

Middleton, 23, returned Thursday from a stint on the disabled list for right elbow inflammation. He pitched a scoreless inning on both Thursday and Saturday before exiting after 12 pitches Sunday. He has a 2.04 ERA and 16 strikeouts over 17 2/3 innings this season.

Before his 13-game stay on the disabled list, Middleton was the de facto closer for the Halos. **Cam Bedrosian** and **Jim Johnson** have since each recorded a save, and nearly every reliever in the bullpen entered in high-leverage situations in Middleton's absence.

Angels honor 'Momma Anne' on Mother's Day

MLB clubs wear pink to support breast cancer initiatives

By Avery Yang

ANAHEIM -- Anne Fleck, her husband and their two daughters have made the roughly 10-mile trip from Yorba Linda to Anaheim countless times throughout their lives. They grew up, as a family, on trips to Angel Stadium. Now, one daughter, Ashley Fleck, is a sponsorship services coordinator for the club. The Angels have been, and literally are, family to the elder Fleck, who is affectionately referred to as Momma Anne by loved ones.

It is that Angels family that was a part of her support system when, last August, after a routine mammogram, Momma Anne discovered she had breast cancer.

"I didn't have any signs or symptoms," Fleck said. "It was shocking because I don't have any family history -- my grandmother had ovarian cancer, but I didn't know anybody [in the family] with breast cancer."

The sudden nature of her diagnosis has motivated her to become an advocate for women to get routine checkups to ensure early detection. She hopes to get more involved with Susan G. Komen, which hosted a three-day, 60-mile walk in 2016 that her daughter Ashley took part in. Fleck's early detection prevented her from having to conduct chemotherapy or radiation treatment as part of her recovery, which required just a surgery, then consistent monitoring. Fleck, an occupational therapist for children with special needs, is now in remission, and feeling great.

"I was really pretty lucky because I found out about it just through a routine screening," Fleck said. "I'm just so blessed that I've had such good care."

"It was shocking to me, but fortunately I've had really great doctors and I've had a lot of testing but I'm feeling great, and I'm just feeling so lucky that it all worked out so well."

Fleck was honored as the Angels' **Honorary Bat Girl** before Sunday's game against the Twins at Angel Stadium as part of MLB's annual "Going To Bat Against Cancer" initiative, an effort to raise awareness and funds to fight breast cancer. All players in MLB wore hats with a pink crown and donned pink ribbons on their jerseys in honor of the event. **Martin Maldonado** wore pink catcher's gear, while **Luis Valbuena** and **Kole Calhoun** rocked pink shoes. Pink sleeves and wristbands littered the diamond. **Justin Upton**, **Albert Pujols** and Valbuena used pink bats. The proceeds of all sales of this year's Mother's Day merchandise will help go to Susan G. Komen and the Stand Up 2 Cancer foundation, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

While Fleck felt "very spoiled" and "very lucky" for the honor, she felt a similar excitement for the man toeing the rubber on the afternoon of her occasion -- **Shohei Ohtani**.

"I'm so tickled that he is pitching today," Fleck said. "I love him. He is so fabulous, he is so talented, and yet so humble. It's been a fabulous season to watch him and see him grow. ... He's going to be a legend."

Worth noting

- **Mike Trout** received the day off on Sunday for rest. He did enter in the seventh inning, striking out as a pinch-hitter and remaining in the game at center field. It was his first day out of the starting lineup this year.
- **Matt Shoemaker** will travel to Missouri on Tuesday to see a peripheral nerve specialist. Shoemaker made one start this season before hitting the disabled list with a strained right forearm, which has kept him sidelined ever since. **A recent setback** necessitated him to visit a specialist.
- **Blake Wood** will make a rehab assignment with Class A Advanced Inland Empire on Monday. He has been on the disabled list since April 21 with a right elbow impingement.

FROM THE ATHLETIC**The Shohei show (mound edition) plays to rave reviews again**

By Steve Dilbeck

Many will claim it's too early, that six weeks into a new season is not enough time. Grand observations and declarations are earned through an arduous 162-game season, not its initial 40 games.

Still, naysayers are already becoming increasingly difficult to locate when the subject turns to the Angels' youthful two-way phenom, Shohei Ohtani.

The 23-year-old took to the pitching side on Sunday in the Angels' 2-1 victory over the Twins, which is to say he continued his dominance on the mound. Just as he had earlier in the series as a hitter.

On a team with Mike Trout, routinely called the game's best player, Ohtani is braving new ground that continues to earn the highest praise. The four-game series was enough to make a believer out of Minnesota's veteran first baseman, Logan Morrison.

"There's another guy in that clubhouse who is a really good player," Morrison said. "But to me, with what he does on the mound and with the bat, he's probably the best player in the world."

Six weeks into the season, Ohtani looks very much like the real deal.

Ohtani struck out 11 in his 6 1/3 innings on Sunday. He was left with an impressive no-decision when reliever Cam Bedrosian took over with an inherited runner at first and gave up consecutive hits that tied the game.

Ohtani allowed only three hits, all singles, and a pair of walks. He had all four of his pitches working and the Twins muttering to themselves.

"That was a pretty phenomenal start, not a solid start," said Angels manager Mike Scioscia. "That was phenomenal. His stuff was electric.

"It's not like he's a one-trick pony, just out there throwing splits. This guy's got four pitches that are really, really good."

As a hitter, Ohtani is batting .348 with five home runs and 16 RBI in just 69 at-bats. He owns a 1.044 slugging and on-base percentage.

"The dude is throwing the ball extremely well," said Angels second baseman Ian Kinsler. "When he's on the mound, you forget he's a hitter, that he's our five-hole guy who can smash homers. When he's jogging around the bases after a homer, you kind of forget he's one of our best pitchers.

"It's a unique situation. He's obviously been extremely successful. It's fun to watch."

There is still a long ways to go for Ohtani; many more tests await. Twins manager Paul Molitor suggested teams are now getting their first look at him as a pitcher and things might prove different when he's seen by them more than once.

The A's are the only team that has faced Ohtani twice this season. In their second meeting, Ohtani struck out 12 and came within eight outs of a perfect game.

"I've faced (Cleveland's Corey) Kluber 50 times, and it's not gotten any easier," Kinsler said.

When Ohtani faced the A's the second time, his splitter was unhittable. In his last start against Seattle, it was his slider that gave the Mariners fits.

But Sunday against the Twins might have been his best game in terms of all four of his pitches working. His fastball hit 99 mph. His splitter and slider were sharp, and he threw his best curveballs of the season.

"He had both breaking balls working, his slider and his curveball," Scioscia said. "His splitter was as good as we've seen it. And I thought he made some really good pitches with his fastball. He elevated it when he needed. He pitched a great game."

Outside of a rough start against the Red Sox, when he left the game after two innings with a blister, he has been nothing but impressive as a pitcher. Take away the Boston start, and Ohtani is 3-0 with a 2.93 ERA with 41 strikeouts in 30 2/3 innings.

About the only thing the soft-spoken Japanese phenom hasn't done yet is both hit and pitch in the same game. That could happen in a game at a National League park, and Scioscia said he might be open to it in September, when rosters expand and games potentially offer greater significance.

"That decision is not up to me," Ohtani said through an interpreter. "When that time comes, I'll be prepared to do both ends in the same game."

The Angels won Sunday's game in walk-off fashion, Zack Cozart's single driving in the winning run in the bottom of the ninth.

About the only thing that truly went wrong for the Angels came in the eighth. Closer Keynan Middleton, just off the disabled list with a sore elbow, left the game when it flared up again. Scioscia said an MRI is scheduled for the elbow on Monday.

Sunday was left for more Ohtani acclaim. A fourth of a season seldom makes for definitive pronouncements, but early in, Ohtani very much looks like everything the Angels had dared hope he would be.

FROM MLB.COM

Biggest Questions as season hits quarter mark

Every division has an unexpected storyline worth exploring

By Anthony Castrovine

The majority of MLB teams have reached the 40-game mark, which means the 2018 season is somehow already roughly 25-percent complete, which means our lives are inexorably speeding by at a rate we can't truly process or comprehend, and our youth is but a distant memory and ... wait, sorry, where was I going with this?

Ah, right, baseball's quarter mark is upon us. It hasn't taken long for some unforeseen storylines to develop across the big league landscape, so here's a look at a key question that has sprouted in each division.

AL East: Can the Blue Jays hang around the American League playoff picture?

Not that it was a foregone conclusion that the Yankees and Red Sox would hit the 40-game mark with the two best records in baseball, but we went into the season reasonably certain that rivalry was about to be ratcheted back up. And it's hard to be caught off guard by the sub-.500 starts of the Rays and Orioles, the latter of whom is going to be one of this summer's signature sellers.

The Blue Jays' relatively solid start (21-20) isn't some big shock, either, but Can(ada) it last? The supposed dual-ace setup in the rotation has resulted in a combined 5.49 ERA for **Aaron Sanchez** and **Marcus Stroman** -- and now Stroman is on the shelf indefinitely with a recurrence of the shoulder issues that hampered his spring. The bullpen that has been a surprise strength is now without closer **Roberto Osuna**, who is on administrative leave after being **arrested and charged with assault**. The slow starts of **Josh Donaldson**, **Kendrys Morales**, **Russell Martin** and others seems to have caught up with the offense at large, as the Blue Jays have averaged fewer than three runs per game while dropping seven of their last 10. If these trends continue, Donaldson is likely to join **Manny Machado** in the trade market.

AL Central: Will the Indians' bullpen make this a legit division race?

A Twins team viewed as the Tribe's only realistic threat in the Central got off to a 9-16 start. But **Andrew Miller** hurt his hamstring on April 25 and missed 14 games, and, in that brief period, the Indians went from having the seventh-best relief ERA in baseball to the third-worst. Miller is back now, but enough relief warts were revealed during that horrendous stretch to create curiosity over whether -- or simply when -- the Indians will have to make significant upgrades externally to not only improve their odds of advancing to October, but to fend off a Twins club that's played much better ball of late.

One thing to keep in mind: The Indians have pushed their starting pitchers to 110 pitches or more 10 times already this season. No other team in baseball has done so more than five times. A lack of faith in the middle-inning options could wind up fatiguing a great rotation, so it's imperative the Indians find arms they can trust beyond Miller and closer **Cody Allen**.

AL West: Can Shohei Ohtani keep this up?

If the Astros are going to greedily insist on maintaining the best rotation ERA in baseball by half a run, they're going to be hard to keep up with. But a healthy and more-than-living-up-to-expectations Ohtani, paired with a typically magnificent **Mike Trout**, at least gives the Angels a puncher's chance in the division race and a legitimate pulse in the playoff picture. The Halos have won 18 of the 26 games Ohtani has played in this season, losing eight of 14 without him. A simplistic split, especially at this still-early stage? Perhaps. But c'mon. Dude's got a 1.044 OPS at the plate and, if you take away one sideways start against the Red Sox when he had a blister issue, a 2.93 ERA on the hill. He's a difference-maker, plain and simple.

Now that Ohtani's answered the questions about whether his skills would translate to the states, the biggest remaining question is whether the unique dual nature of his role will wear him out. Ohtani so far has been athletic enough to make all our hand-wringing about the fatiguing nature of pitcher prep look silly, but, you know, he's 23 and it's a long season. If Ohtani can last, so, too, can the Angels.

NL East: Are the Braves and Phillies for real?

Injuries frayed the lineup of a conceivably great Nationals team (**Adam Eaton** and **Daniel Murphy** have a combined 29 at-bats, and it's unclear when, exactly, either guy will be back) and helped create a condition in which other upstart clubs could threaten Washington's ownership of the East. First, there was the hot start of the Mets, who have, unfortunately, become a bit Metsy in recent weeks. Lately, though, it's these young and frisky Braves and Phillies squads that have looked as though they might create a more dynamic division race than advertised.

The Phillies have the youngest roster (average age: 26.5) in baseball, and the Braves are powered in part by the game's three youngest players (**Ronald Acuna Jr.**, **Ozzie Albies** and **Mike Soroka**). To repeat what we said above about Ohtani, where there's youth, there's inevitable uncertainty with regard to second-half staying power. Plus, water seems to be finding its level where the Nats are concerned -- at least if a winning weekend against a good D-backs club is any indication. But it's not like the Braves and Phils are totally reliant on prepubescent players, what with **Freddie Freeman** and **Nick Markakis** mashing in that deep Atlanta lineup and **Jake Arrieta** looking reborn in Philly. So, this could be fun.

NL Central: Have the Pirates created a four-team race?

The Cubs' plus-54 run differential fits with the narrative of their best-on-paper presence in the Central, but their offensive inconsistency, in particular, has them butting heads with the Brewers and Cardinals clubs that we knew had the potential to keep the Cubbies honest.

The shock in the Central is the presence of the Pirates in the early division race, because usually teams that trade away their signature star (**Andrew McCutchen**) and their young ace (**Gerrit Cole**) don't, you know, improve. But the Pirates, who had a winning record on just two of the 182 days of the 2017 season, have not spent a single day below .500 so far this season. Most notably, they're 10-3 against the NL Central. And it's not just beating up on the lowly Reds ... they're a combined 7-1 against the Cubs, Cards and Brew Crew. Their power production has improved drastically, despite fielding six of last year's eight regulars. Beginning May 25, the Pirates will play 29 of 32 games against the Cardinals, Cubs, Brewers, Dodgers, D-backs and Mets. If they survive that, they're legit.

NL West: Whither the Dodgers?

Simply put: If the Dodgers' early issues -- and there are too many of them to even delve deeply into here -- are too much to overcome, that changes everything, not only in the NL West that they've dominated the last five years, but in the National League, in general.

The Dodgers, at 16-24, are off to their worst 40-game start since their inaugural season in Los Angeles in 1958 (15-25). They just lost series against the Marlins, Padres and Reds, and are just 10-15 against sub-.500 teams. **Clayton Kershaw** is hurt (and there were some shaky peripherals behind his 2.86 ERA), Corey Seager is done for the season, the bullpen's gone backward, and the lineup doesn't slug. World Series hangover? Evidently it can apply to the loser as much -- if not more than -- the winner. The good news is that **Justin Turner** is coming back, and the 2013 team was eight games under .500 as late as June 26 before rallying to the division title. So don't bury the Dodgers, yet. But this division's a lot more dynamic than it was in 2013, and, as of this moment, FanGraphs is giving the Dodgers just a 43 percent chance of making the playoffs -- a remarkable 51 percent drop from the start of the season.

FROM MiLB.COM

MiLB, Satisfi Labs partner to enhance fan experience

Bilingual artificial intelligence solution amplifies league-wide multicultural initiative

ST. PETERSBURG, Florida -- Minor League Baseball™ (MiLB™) today announced a new collaboration with Satisfi Labs, a leading artificial intelligence engagement platform, to create a bilingual customer service AI conversation platform for more than 30 MiLB teams. This unique partnership marks the first time a sports league will communicate with its fans in both English and Spanish by leveraging Satisfi Labs' AI capabilities.

This new product solution will amplify MiLB's national multicultural initiative "Es Divertido Ser Un Fan®" (It's Fun to Be a Fan®) and its new "Copa de la Diversión™" ("Fun Cup™") season-long event series specifically designed to embrace the culture and values that resonate most with participating teams' local U.S. Hispanic/Latino communities. The interface will initially be made available to the participating "Copa" teams to support their respective fan engagement efforts.

The AI platform will operate within individual teams' Facebook Messenger pages and serve to answer fans' questions pertaining to aspects of the gameday experience such as ticketing, parking, and other common inquiries surrounding the venue, game, and teams, while providing unique answers based on the users' locations. The platform's bilingual capability allows each team to effectively connect and engage with their fans in the language of their choice to provide the right information, at the right place, in real-time.

"Our new partnership with Satisfi Labs reinforces our tech-infused strategy specifically designed to improve the fan experience any time they engage with MiLB," said David Wright, Minor League Baseball Chief Marketing and Commercial Officer. "This cutting-edge technology will better our ability to understand the fan journey by providing a platform for our teams to engage a more diverse audience and turn data into intelligent action."

"We've developed several unique platforms for brands across entertainment, retail, and sports, but this is the first tool we've created that can communicate as efficiently in Spanish as in English. We're excited to expand our offerings in AI conversation platforms to the Hispanic community and support one of the largest sports leagues in the U.S. in its effort to better connect with all of its fans," said Don White, CEO and Co-Founder of Satisfi Labs.

MiLB and Satisfi Labs plan to roll out an expanded AI conversation platform and league-wide fan engagement tool for the 2019 season.

About Minor League Baseball

Minor League Baseball, headquartered in St. Petersburg, Florida, is the governing body for all professional baseball teams in the United States, Canada and the Dominican Republic that are affiliated with Major League Baseball® clubs through their farm systems. Fans are coming out in unprecedented numbers to this one-of-a-kind experience that can only be found at Minor League Baseball ballparks. In 2017, Minor League Baseball attracted 41.8 million fans to its ballparks to see the future stars of the sport hone their skills. From the electricity in the stands to the excitement on the field, Minor League Baseball has provided affordable family-friendly entertainment to people of all ages since its founding in 1901. For more information visit **MiLB.com**.

Follow Minor League Baseball on **Facebook**, **Instagram** and **Twitter**.

About Satisfi Labs

Satisfi Labs is an intelligent engagement platform that combines the speed and accuracy of artificial intelligence with the ease of real conversation. Satisfi Labs offers a unique location-based solution which enhances the in and out of venue & retail experience by customers 24/7, on any device and platform. More information can be found at **<https://www.satis.fi>**.

FROM ESPN.COM

Power Rankings: Can anyone challenge the Evil Empire?*

Winning 18 of 21 games has a way of turning heads, and this week it convinced almost all of our voters to give the Yankees the nod as our No. 1 for another week. The lone holdout kept faith with the reigning

champs, even though the Astros remain rooted in the No. 3 spot behind the Yanks' traditional rival for AL East -- and now MLB -- dominance over in Boston. All three teams remain rooted in place this week, and most of the top 10 remained pretty close to where they've been. But MLB's top third did get one bit of notable turnover with the Phillies displacing the Indians as the NL East now has three teams among the highest echelon.

In doing so, the Phillies made the week's biggest gain in the rankings, moving up five places to crack the top 10. But they were not the only team to take an impressive step up -- the Twins and Pirates both made three-rung jumps to liven up both leagues' Central Division races.

The biggest declines came from the Giants and White Sox, who both fell four places in our rankings. While the Sox at least have the promise of a better future after already going in the tank and accumulating a rich haul in prospects in last season's teardown, time might be running out for San Francisco's graying roster in the city by the Bay.

This week, our panel of voters comprises David Schoenfield, Eric Karabell, Tim Kurkjian, Bradford Doolittle and Sarah Langs.

4. Los Angeles Angels

Record: 24-16

Week 5 ranking: 5

Teams are pitching around Mike Trout even more than usual. He leads all players in walks this month, but that approach might not work for long. Justin Upton has been red-hot hitting behind Trout, homering in a career-high four consecutive games last week. Andrelton Simmons also ranks among the league leaders in hitting and Shohei Ohtani continues to impress at the plate with five homers. Perhaps most impressively, Ohtani is 7-for-7 with five extra-base hits and a 3.429 OPS with two outs and runners in scoring position. -- *Paul Casella, ESPN Stats & Information*

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

Angels reliever Keynan Middleton removed with right elbow discomfort

Los Angeles Angels reliever Keynan Middleton was removed from Sunday's game against the Twins in the top of the eighth inning with a 1-1 count on Minnesota's Eddie Rosario.

The Angels said after their 2-1 victory over the Twins that Middleton was removed because of right elbow discomfort. He will have an MRI on Monday, the team said.

Middleton just came off the disabled list Thursday. He was put on the DL on May 2 because of elbow inflammation.

Middleton threw only 12 pitches and recorded two outs Sunday before he was removed. He was relieved by reliever Jim Johnson.

Middleton leads the Angels with six saves.

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

After Ohtani dazzles Twins, Angels rally late for 2-1 win

ANAHEIM, Calif. -- Shohei Ohtani had four pitches that were all doing terrible things to the Minnesota Twins. The two-way sensation got five consecutive strikeouts at one point while he pitched into the seventh inning of another dominant performance.

Although the Los Angeles Angels couldn't do enough against the Twins' own rookie pitching star to get a win for Ohtani, they made sure to end their series with a celebration anyway.

After Ohtani racked up 11 strikeouts while yielding only three singles, Zack Cozart delivered a walk-off RBI single in the Angels' 2-1 victory Sunday.

Ohtani again dazzled his home fans while throwing a season-high 103 pitches in his sixth start for the Angels. With his fastball hitting 99 mph and his off-speed pitches plummeting through the strike zone, the Japanese right-hander reached 43 strikeouts for the season, blowing past Bo Belinsky's franchise record for strikeouts in a pitcher's first six games.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia called Ohtani's performance "phenomenal. ... He had both breaking balls working, his slider and his curveball. His splitter was as good as we've seen it, and he got some big outs with his fastball."

Yet Ohtani was denied his fourth win after he left to a standing ovation following Logan Morrison's nine-pitch walk in the seventh. Reliever Cam Bedrosian promptly allowed hits by his first two batters, including pinch-hitter Joe Mauer's tying RBI single.

"I didn't feel fatigued at all, actually," Ohtani said through a translator. "I feel like I was able to mix in all of my pitches and keep the hitters off balance."

Although neither got a decision, Fernando Romero joined Ohtani in an entertaining duel at the Big A.

Romero pitched five innings of four-hit ball in his third big-league start as the Twins finished their impressive 10-game road trip with seven wins, but also their major league-worst sixth walk-off defeat.

Romero allowed his first run in the fifth inning, ending his scoreless start to his career at 15 2/3 innings when Justin Upton beat out a potential double-play grounder in the fifth. But the Dominican right-hander otherwise excelled against the Angels' veteran lineup, striking out six while walking three.

"We battled, and you've just got to take the positive stuff into the next game," Romero said. "I felt so good."

Minnesota put four straight batters on base in the ninth inning, yet the Angels kept it tied.

Ehire Adrianza was thrown out at the plate by Mike Trout and Ian Kinsler while he attempted to score from first on Robbie Grossman's double.

"You just put the best throw on the bag that you can," said Kinsler of his relay throw to Martin Maldonado, who made a slick tag. "There's a lot of ways that can go wrong."

Blake Parker then got Brian Dozier to pop out with the bases loaded to end the ninth. Parker (1-1) got the win for throwing just one pitch.

Chris Young was hit by a pitch from Zach Duke (2-2) leading off the Angels' ninth. After Maldonado bunted Young to second, Cozart cracked his third hit of the day and his second game-ending hit of the season into left field, where Eddie Rosario couldn't field it cleanly for a throw to the plate.

SHOHEI SUNDAY

Ohtani was making his first daytime home start since he took a perfect game into the seventh inning of a brilliant one-hit, 12-strikeout performance against Oakland on April 8. The Twins managed two short singles early on, but Ohtani also struck out nine of 12 batters during the first four innings, including five in a row during the second and third.

"As advertised," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said after his club's first look at Ohtani. "He's got pitches. He could get the breaking ball over, and he got guys to chase it."

MIDDLETON LEAVES

Angels reliever Keynan Middleton threw just 12 pitches in the eighth inning, heading to the dugout with a 1-1 count on Rosario. Middleton only returned from the disabled list last Thursday after sitting out with elbow inflammation. Scioscia said Middleton had "elbow discomfort" and will undergo an MRI exam Monday.

LOMO KNOWS SOMETHING

Morrison got two hits and that key walk against Ohtani while the rest of Minnesota's lineup struggled mightily. He was the only Twins starter who didn't strike out at least once.

IRON MAN 2

Trout didn't start for the first time this season, but the two-time AL MVP struck out looking as a pinch-hitter with two runners on in the seventh inning. He was on deck when Cozart ended it. Trout has played in all 39 games for the Angels, joining Upton in making an appearance every day so far this season.

MARTIN MASHES

Maldonado had two hits and a walk for the Angels, scoring the game's first run on Upton's groundout. The Gold Glove catcher is 14 for 24 since his 0-for-34 hitless streak ended May 1.

UP NEXT

Twins: Jake Odorizzi (3-2, 3.83 ERA) takes the mound when they return home for a makeup game against Seattle. The April 8 meeting was postponed by cold. The right-hander has 38 strikeouts in 42 1/3 innings this season.

Angels: Andrew Heaney (1-3, 4.78 ERA) is on the mound for the start of the Houston Astros' first visit to Angel Stadium since winning the World Series. The Halos won two of three against their AL West rivals last month in Houston.

Top AL teams setting bar high so far in postseason chase

By Noah Trister

The Seattle Mariners haven't made the postseason since 2001. This year, they've looked like contenders, and at the moment, they're on pace to win 91 games.

Yet if the season ended now, they wouldn't even receive a wild card.

The bar may end up being set awfully high for entry into the American League postseason this year — if you're in the AL East or West, at least. The Red Sox, Yankees, Astros and Angels all have winning percentages of at least .600, with Boston and New York up in the stratosphere at .700. If the Mariners are going to end their postseason drought, they'll either have to outlast the Astros and Angels for the division, or win enough games for a wild card. Both routes appear challenging.

"We knew when we left spring training, it was going to be a very competitive division," Seattle manager Scott Servais said. "Up and down the division, the fact that you play those teams so much — I've said all along, the teams that'll be standing at the end, at the top or near the top, are the ones that can stay the healthiest."

Not long after Servais said that Sunday, the Mariners lost second baseman Robinson Cano to a fractured hand.

Last year, Minnesota took the second wild card in the AL with 85 wins. In 2016, both wild cards won 89. The 2015 Astros went 86-76, and that was good enough for a wild card.

A record like that might be enough to win the AL Central this year — although Cleveland (20-19) has plenty of time to pull away — but the other two divisions look stronger. A sizeable gap has opened between the top of the league and the bottom. While the Red Sox and Yankees have been on a tear, the White Sox (10-27), Orioles (13-28) and Royals (13-27) have fallen way, way behind.

At this early point in the season, it's not a huge surprise to see some teams occupying the extremes, but two teams playing .700 baseball is unusual.

Of course, if Seattle wants a reason for optimism, it can look back to the 2002 season. On the morning of May 14, the top two teams in the AL were Boston at 25-9 and ... the Mariners at 26-11. Both those teams came back to the pack and missed the postseason. If there had been a second wild card that year, they'd have finished tied for it at 93-69.

As daunting as the American League terrain may seem at the moment, there's still a long way to go.

Some other developments from around the majors:

HANGING IN

Cleveland's underwhelming start has allowed the Twins a bit of a mulligan on their own 17-19 record. Minnesota is just 1 ½ games out of first place. The Twins rank in the bottom half of the AL in batting average, OPS and home runs. After improving from 59 wins to 85 last year, Minnesota got off to a poor start in 2018 but has won seven of its last nine.

HIGHLIGHT

It doesn't get much better than a defensive gem to preserve a no-hitter. Seattle's Kyle Seager made a diving stop at third base on Kevin Pillar's shot down the line, then he popped up quickly and threw Pillar out at first in the seventh inning Tuesday night at Toronto. James Paxton was able to finish the no-hitter .

LINE OF THE WEEK

Believe it or not, it's not Paxton's no-hitter. Instead, the honor goes to Houston's George Springer, who went 6 for 6 with a homer in a 16-2 win over Oakland on Monday night.

FROM CBS SPORTS

Angels need to get bats going against Astros

The Los Angeles Angels will need to find ways to score runs when they open a three-game series against the Houston Astros on Monday night at Angel Stadium.

By STATS

The Los Angeles Angels will need to find ways to score runs when they open a three-game series against the Houston Astros on Monday night at Angel Stadium.

The Astros (26-16) have allowed one run in each of their past four games to lower their league-leading ERA to 2.49. Houston hasn't allowed more than two runs in its past six games.

By comparison, the only major league team since 1989 with an ERA below 3.00 for an entire season was the 2015 St. Louis Cardinals (2.94).

The Angels (24-16) averaged seven runs per game while going 7-2 to start the month but combined for nine runs in the past three games against the Minnesota Twins. They salvaged a split of the four-game series with a walk-off 2-1 win on Sunday afternoon, keeping them a game behind first-place Houston in the American League West.

"We didn't have a lot going offensively until the end," Angels third baseman Zack Cozart told Fox Sports West after collecting the game-winning single Sunday.

Houston, which lost two of three to the visiting Angels last month, is 6-1 on the road against AL West teams this season.

Astros designated hitter Evan Gattis is 6-for-17 in his five-game hitting streak and has homered in each of the past two games.

"It's nice when we're all clicking on all cylinders, but we don't have to have nine guys absolutely hot to win," Gattis told reporters after Houston's second straight 6-1 win over the Texas Rangers on Sunday.

Houston starter Lance McCullers Jr. (5-1, 3.72 ERA) hasn't lost since April 6 and he'll try to join Corey Kluber of the Cleveland Indians and Luis Severino of the New York Yankees as the only six-game winners in the American League.

McCullers has been especially tough on the Angels in his four-year career. He's 3-1 in nine starts and his 1.78 ERA against Los Angeles is the lowest against any team he has faced more than once.

The Angels didn't face McCullers in Houston last month. The current members who have seen McCullers the most are all hitting below .200 against the right-hander.

Mike Trout, who wasn't in the starting lineup on Sunday but struck out as a pinch-hitter in the seventh inning, is 2-for-17 against McCullers, Andrelton Simmons is 2-for-13, and Kole Calhoun and Albert Pujols are each 4-for-22.

Angels starter Andrew Heaney (1-2, 4.78) has been solid in his past three outings but has just one win to show for the performances.

He gave up one earned run in five innings against the New York Yankees on April 7 but did not get a decision in the 4-3 loss, then allowed one run in six innings on May 2 against the Baltimore Orioles

before the Angels held on to win 10-7. He went another six innings on Tuesday at the Colorado Rockies and gave up two runs in taking the defeat in the 4-2 loss.

He has allowed just five hits in each of his past five starts.

Heaney pitched well against the Astros in his two appearances, both as a rookie in 2015, but did not receive a decision in either game.

Heaney made his Angels debut against the Astros on June 24, six months after he was traded by the Miami Marlins. He allowed one run and four hits in six innings and the Angels eventually won 2-1 in 13 innings.

Heaney faced the Astros again at Angel Stadium on Sept. 13, blanking them for five innings before Houston scored five runs in the top of the ninth to steal a 5-3 win.

FROM YAHOO! SPORTS

Walk-off win gives Angels split with Twins

Zack Cozart's single in the bottom of the ninth inning scored Chris Young from second base to lift the Los Angeles Angels to a 2-1 win over the Minnesota Twins on Sunday afternoon in Anaheim, Calif.

Twins reliever Zach Duke (2-2) hit Young with a pitch to start the ninth inning. Martin Maldonado followed with a sacrifice bunt, moving the runner to second and bringing up Cozart, who already had two hits in the game.

Cozart swung at Duke's first pitch and lined it into left field, Young scoring without a throw and helping the Angels split the four-game series with the Twins.

The Angels survived a Twins threat in the top of the ninth when Robbie Grossman doubled to right-center with one out off reliever Jim Johnson. Ehire Adrianza, on the move from first base on the pitch, tried to score.

The relay from center fielder Mike Trout to second baseman Ian Kinsler to the catcher Maldonado was in time to get Adrianza at the plate.

The Angels weren't out of the jam yet, however. After Johnson walked Joe Mauer intentionally, he walked No. 9 hitter Bobby Wilson to load the bases.

Johnson was replaced by Blake Parker, who retired Brian Dozier on a foul popup to end the inning.

Parker (1-1) got the win despite making just one pitch in the game. He was the last of four relievers who pitched behind starter Shohei Ohtani, who had another impressive performance.

Ohtani gave up just one run on three hits and two walks in 6 1/3 innings, striking out 11.

Ohtani and Twins starter Fernando Romero matched zeros through four innings. But while Ohtani threw a scoreless inning in the top of the fifth, the Angels pushed across a run against Romero in the bottom of the inning.

Maldonado led off the inning with a double and went to third on an infield single by Cozart. After Kole Calhoun struck out for the first out of the inning, Justin Upton grounded into a force play, Cozart out at second but Maldonado scoring to put the Angels up 1-0.

In the Twins' sixth, Dozier led off with a walk and went to second on a wild pitch. Max Kepler flied out to right for the first out of the inning, and Eduardo Escobar grounded out to second, moving Dozier to third. Ohtani escaped when he struck out Eddie Rosario for the final out of the inning.

Romero, who began the season in the minors, did not allow a run over 11 2/3 innings in his first two major league starts, victories over Toronto and St. Louis. On Sunday against the Angels, he gave up just one run on four hits and three walks in five innings, striking out six and finishing with a no-decision.

Ohtani also got a no-decision because the Twins rallied to tie the game in the seventh inning. Ohtani was replaced by Cam Bedrosian with one on and one out. After a single by Grossman, Mauer singled to drive in a run and tie the game at 1-1, the run charged to Ohtani.

Shohei Ohtani sets Angels record after another dominant start

By Chris Cwik

A little over a month into the 2018 season, it's safe to say Shohei Ohtani has lived up to his massive hype. The 23-year-old turned in yet another strong start Sunday, striking out 11 batters in 6 1/3 innings against the Minnesota Twins.

The Los Angeles Angels' bullpen blew Ohtani's lead, but came back to win the game 2-1.

With the performance, Ohtani now has 43 strikeouts on the season. That's the most strikeouts ever by an Angels pitcher through his first six starts.

There are a fair amount of qualifiers there, but it's still worth examining Ohtani's excellent performance in the majors thus far.

On the mound

With Sunday's start, Ohtani now has a 3.58 ERA over 32 2/3 innings in the majors. He's struck out 32.8 percent of opposing hitters. That's exactly what Robbie Ray did during his 2017 breakout. Ray finished fourth among starters in strikeout rate in 2017.

The performance also marks the second time in Ohtani's first six starts that he's struck out 11 batters or more. That puts him in some pretty fun company.

#Angels Shohei Ohtani is the third player since 1908 to have 11+ strikeouts in two of his first six games as a pitcher, joining Cubs' Kerry Wood (1998) and Brooklyn's Karl Spooner (1954).

Baseball fans today may not have been around for Karl Spooner's career, but many still remember what Kerry Wood did during his rookie season.

At the plate

Perhaps improbably, Ohtani has been even better at the plate. That should come as a surprise, not just because he struggled swinging a bat during spring training, but also because many thought he would stand out more as a pitcher.

After his rough spring, Ohtani made an adjustment with his front leg, and he's hit ever since. He has a .348/.392/.652 slash line — with 5 home runs — in 74 plate appearances.

Shohei Ohtani's last two outings on the mound: 12 innings, two runs. He has a 1.044 OPS. He is the best story in baseball in the last 20 years. Absolutely incredible.

What about his competition?

The critics like to point out that Ohtani hasn't faced the best competition, but that's not really the case. Ohtani has gone up against the Oakland Athletics, Houston Astros, Boston Red Sox, Seattle Mariners and Minnesota Twins in his first six starts (he played Oakland twice).

By wRC+ — an advanced stat that measures offensive performance — only the Twins rank outside the top-10 in offense. The M's rank fourth, the Red Sox rank seventh, the Astros rank eighth and the A's rank 10th. He's faced some strong offensive teams and has still managed to perform well on the mound.

Expectations weren't as high at the plate, but it's worth noting that he's hit home runs against Corey Kluber and Luis Severino. That's good enough for us.

What's next?

The Angels have kept quiet about Ohtani's pitching starts this year. Most of his starts have come on Sunday. The one outlier — a Tuesday start against the Red Sox — only came because Ohtani's Sunday start was postponed. Whether or not the Angels keep him on that schedule, his next start should come against the Tampa Bay Rays.

Until then, he should get plenty of chances to hit a few home runs for the Angels during the week.

Shohei Ohtani sets Angels record after another dominant start

By Chris Cwik

Forget about Mike Trout, Mookie Betts, Bryce Harper and Max Scherzer, the best baseball player in the world is Los Angeles rookie Shohei Ohtani. That's not our opinion. That's what Minnesota Twins first baseman Logan Morrison said following Sunday's 2-1 loss to the Angels.

Morrison had high praise after seeing Ohtani for the first time, according to Maria I. Guardado of MLB.com.

Morrison even mentions Trout, saying, "There's another guy in that clubhouse who is a really good player." He then adds, "But to me, with what he does on the mound and with the bat, [Ohtani is] probably the best player in the world."

Feel free to doubt Morrison if you want, but he would know. Morrison saw Ohtani at his best Sunday. The 23-year-old Ohtani gave up three hits over 6 1/3 innings against the Twins. He walked two and struck out 11 during the outing. In the process, he set an Angels record.

Morrison was one of the few Twins to see Ohtani well. He managed to reach base in all three plate appearances against the two-way player. Morrison singled his first two times up and walked in his third plate appearance. It was Morrison's walk that chased Ohtani from the game.

As Morrison said, though, only half of Ohtani's value comes on the mound, where he has a 3.58 ERA in six starts. He's been excellent at the plate thus far, hitting .348/.392/.652 — with five home runs — over 74 plate appearances.

Hey, who are we to judge? Morrison got a closer look at Ohtani than most. If he says Ohtani is "probably the best player in the world," we're just going to let that speak for itself.

We imagine Morrison's comment is going to ruffle plenty of feathers, though.

FROM USA TODAY

Twins' Logan Morrison on Angels' Shohei Ohtani: 'Probably the best player in the world'

By Steve Gardner

The Shohei Ohtani show continues to play to rave reviews.

The Los Angeles Angels rookie turned in another memorable performance Sunday, striking out 11 batters and allowing the Minnesota Twins just three hits through 6 1/3 innings as the Angels won, 2-1.

Ohtani was taken out in the seventh after issuing a walk to first baseman Logan Morrison. He threw 103 pitches, 69 of them for strikes. Morrison scored to tie the score at 1 after Ohtani was relieved by Cam Bedrosian.

Morrison had high praise for Ohtani after the game.

"He's only 23 years old and is going to get better," he said, via MLB.com. "I think he's doing something that nobody has probably ever done, and it might be a long time before you see it again.

"There's another guy in that clubhouse who is a really good player, but to me, with what (Ohtani) does on the mound and with the bat, he's probably the best player in the world."

It marked the second double-digit strikeout game of Ohtani's major league career and lowered his ERA to 3.58.

Even more amazing, the "Japanese Babe Ruth" also is hitting .348 with five home runs and 16 RBI in 69 at-bats.

FROM SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

Logan Morrison on Shohei Ohtani: 'He's Probably the Best Player in the World'

By Nihal Kolar

Logan Morrison found out first hand what it's like to go against Shohei Ohtani on Sunday. Facing the Minnesota Twins, Ohtani was brilliant, allowing just one earned run on three hits and 11 strikeouts in 6.1 innings.

After the game, Morrison, who singled twice off the Japanese pitcher, had some high praise for Ohtani.

"He was really good." Morrison told MLB's Maria Guardado. "He's only 23 years old and is going to get better. I think he's doing something that nobody has probably ever done and it might be a long time before you see it again. There's another guy in that clubhouse who is a really good player, but to me, with what he does on the mound and with the bat, he's probably the best player in the world."

In his pitching appearances, Ohtani is 3-1 with a 3.58 ERA and 43 strikeouts in 32.2 innings pitched. Offensively, the phenom is hitting .348 with five homers and 15 RBIs in 20 games.

Morrison joined Minnesota this offseason on a one-year, \$6.5 million contract. After hitting a career-high 38 home runs last year, the 30-year-old first baseman has struggled, posting a measly .175 average and four home runs through the first 32 games of the season.

FROM FORBES**Next Step is for Angels' Starter Shohei Ohtani to hit and pitch in the same game**

By Barry M. Bloom

The next thing that's coming is Shohei Ohtani hitting, during the same game he pitches. The way things are tracking now, the Angels are leaving one of their most potent offensive weapons out of the lineup when the Japanese right-hander starts.

There's only one tactical reason for it: An American League team loses the designated hitter if the pitcher is in the batting order. A manager must handle substitutions for the pitcher the same way it's done in the other league -- with pinch-hitters and flip-flops for position players in that game's lineup.

"[Ohtani hitting in the same game he pitches] would happen against a National League team, if it comes to that," said Angels manager Mike Scioscia, who's well-aware the pitcher has to hit in interleague games on the road. "There's a lot of risk on the strategy side of it in the AL. It could be done. Right now, our roster on the offensive side is not very deep."

So, what? In Ohtani's case right now, he's pitching only once every seven days. That should be very manageable. The Angels are carrying 13 pitchers and 12 position players, much like most NL clubs.

But none of those other clubs have a swing man like Ohtani, who can do both.

In the 20 games he's been the DH, Ohtani has a slash line of .348/.392/.652 with five homers, 16 RBIs and a 1.044 OPS. His OPS+ is 181. The average is 100. Mike Trout, the Angels' best hitter, has a 1.071 OPS and a 186 OPS+.

Decked out in pink to honor breast cancer awareness on Mother's Day, Ohtani had a splendid afternoon on the mound Sunday against the Twins at Angel Stadium in a game Los Angeles won, 2-1, in the bottom of the ninth inning.

FROM THE SPORTING NEWS**Keynan Middleton injury update: Angels reliever to have MRI exam on elbow**

By Rob Hille

Angels reliever Keynan Middleton, the team's de facto closer before a 13-game stay on the DL, appears to be back on the shelf.

Middleton, 23, will undergo an MRI exam on Monday, MLB.com reported, after exiting Sunday's game against the Twins after only 12 pitches because of what manager Mike Scioscia described as right elbow discomfort.

"Fingers crossed," Scioscia told reporters, "hopefully it's just a mild setback."

The right-hander came off the DL on Thursday and pitched scoreless innings that day and Saturday. His fastball touched 97 mph Sunday before he was pulled with a 1-1 count on Eddie Rosario in the eighth inning.

He has six saves in 16 appearance with a 2.04 ERA and 16 strikeouts over 17 2/3 innings. In Middleton's previous stint on the DL, Cam Bedrosian and Jim Johnson recorded saves for the 24-16 Angels.

Shohei Ohtani makes history in latest dominant start for Angels

By Joseph D'Hippolito

ANAHEIM, Calif. — No pitcher in the American League's 118-year history — not Roger Clemens, not Whitey Ford, not Lefty Grove, not Walter Johnson — had achieved what the Angels' Shohei Ohtani did on Mother's Day.

The 23-year-old Japanese rookie became the first to accumulate at least 11 strikeouts in two of his first six career starts during the Angels' 2-1 win over the Twins. In addition, Ohtani's 43 strikeouts through his first six starts are the most ever by an Angels pitcher in that span.

Sunday was just the latest dominant performance from a player who has become one of the bigger stories in recent baseball history.

Ohtani finished with 11 strikeouts, one fewer than the career-high of 12 he established five weeks earlier against the Oakland Athletics. Between the second and the fourth innings, the right-hander struck out eight of the 10 Twins he faced — including five in succession.

In his first five innings, Ohtani neither permitted a runner to reach second base nor issued a walk. In his 6 1/3 innings, the rookie conceded just one run, two walks and three hits while throwing 103 pitches — the most he has thrown since coming to the United States — without getting the decision.

"That was a pretty phenomenal start, not a solid start," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said with laugh in response to a reporter's question. "His stuff was electric. He had both breaking balls working, his slider and his curve ball. His splitter was as good as we've seen it and I thought he made some really good pitches with his fastball. He elevated it when he needed to."

Twins second baseman Brian Dozier agreed with Scioscia's assessment of Ohtani's splitter.

"His split-finger was really good," Dozier said. "I use this term loosely but it's inconsistent being very good, meaning it's not the same action every time. Sometimes, it dives to the left; sometimes, to the right. But it's always down in the zone."

As the Twins' leadoff batter, Dozier witnessed how well Ohtani can make adjustments. After taking a 95 mph fastball for a ball to start the game, Dozier hit another 95 mph fastball for a single off third baseman Zack Cozart's glove. But in the top of the third inning, the second baseman struck out on a slider and two splitters ranging from 82 mph to 88 mph.

"He was pounding the strike zone," Angels catcher Martin Maldonado said. "He made adjustments pitch to pitch, inning to inning. He was throwing any pitch in any count and controlling counts. It's hard for a hitter to go up there and look for one pitch when you have four you can throw in any count."

For Maldonado, Ohtani's intelligence enhances his assortment of pitches.

"I always say he's really smart," Maldonado said. "He's always talking about what he wants to do, what pitches to throw, how he can attack the hitters different ways. I think that's the reason he's having success."

For Ohtani, preparation enhances his intelligence

"I feel like that's one of my biggest strengths, being able to mix in my four pitches with good balance and trying to keep the hitters off-balance," Ohtani said through an interpreter. "Of course, it depends on which team or which batter I'm facing. But I study the pre-game reports and try to mix in the pitches and try to keep them off-balance."

The rookie also impressed Scioscia with his poise in the top of the sixth. Dozier began the inning by receiving Ohtani's first walk, then took second base on a wild pitch and moved to third on Eduardo Escobar's groundout. But Ohtani defused the threat by striking out Eddie Rosario on four pitches ranging from 76 mph to 99 mph.

"Just his presence in a tight ball game is what Shohei is about," Scioscia said. "Shohei had to work hard to get every out. He used all his pitches. He probably had another handful in his back pocket but that was a stretch for him to go out there any more this afternoon."

When Ohtani walked Logan Morrison after a nine-pitch at bat with one out in the seventh, Scioscia pulled the rookie. Scattered boos accompanied the manager as he walked to the mound, followed by a standing ovation accompanying Ohtani's return to the dugout.

"We talked to Shohei after the sixth inning because he had to work hard to get out of the sixth," Scioscia said. "He said, 'I feel great. I feel fine.' So now, the only limitation is if he's starting to get to a fatigue point."

"You still might be throwing the ball hard but sometimes, you're going to lose command because you chase velocity. Sometimes, you're going to come out of your delivery a little bit to try to make pitches when you're tired. That's where you're stressing your arm and other parts (of your body) so you just want to be careful with that."

Ohtani believes he might have given Scioscia no choice, given the rookie's previous start in Seattle on May 6. After pitching six shutout innings, Ohtani allowed a single, a two-run home run and a four-pitch walk to three batters in the seventh before being relieved. The right-hander has already allowed four home runs in 32 2/3 innings.

"I've been getting hurt by the long ball, actually," Ohtani said through his interpreter. "Here in the States, anyone can hit a home run at any time. The way I ended up my last outing, giving up that home run and the walk, maybe he thought something like that was going to happen again. I need to earn that trust from him."

FROM KYODO NEWS

Baseball: Ohtani dominant in 6th start as Angels beat Twins 2-1

Japanese rookie sensation Shohei Ohtani continued to impress in his sixth major league start Sunday, racking up 11 strikeouts while pitching three-hit ball into the seventh inning as the Los Angeles Angels beat the Minnesota Twins 2-1.

Despite dominating on the mound, April's American League Rookie of the Month did not get the win at Angel Stadium, but his efforts were not wasted after Zack Cozart secured the victory with a walk-off single.

Ohtani left the game after giving up his second walk with one out in the seventh. He was denied the win after reliever Cam Bedrosian allowed the game-tying RBI single by Joe Mauer.

"I was disappointed (about being pulled out), the game-tying run was meant to happen," Ohtani said. "I couldn't get the win, but winning the game is what matters most. I struck out batters whenever possible while getting them to (ground out and fly out), so I did a good job of pitching aggressively."

In an entertaining duel with Twins rookie starter Fernando Romero, Ohtani threw a season-high 103 pitches on his way to reaching a franchise-record 43 strikeouts by a pitcher in his first six games.

The 23-year-old right-hander had his slider working and clocked 160 kilometers per hour with his fastball, striking out five consecutive batters at one point.

"It's really important to mix up my pitches depending on the batter I'm facing. The biggest strength of a pitcher is to be able to throw all four pitches," Ohtani said.

Manager Mike Scioscia lauded Ohtani for his "phenomenal" outing.

"His stuff was electric, and I think his presence in a tight ball game was what Shohei is about. He's going to go out there and make pitches. He used all his pitches and probably had another handful in his back pocket," Scioscia said, according to mlb.com.

The two-way phenom is set to return to the Angels' batting lineup, where he is averaging .348 as a designated hitter, when they host the Houston Astros for a series beginning Monday. The 24-16 Angels are one game back from the AL West-leading Astros.

FROM THE JAPAN TIMES

Shohei Ohtani strikes out 11 as Angels edge Twins on walk-off single

ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA – Shohei Ohtani had four pitches that were all doing terrible things to the Minnesota Twins. The two-way sensation got five consecutive strikeouts at one point while he pitched into the seventh inning of another dominant performance.

Although the Los Angeles Angels couldn't do enough against the Twins' own rookie pitching star to get a win for Ohtani, they made sure to end their series with a celebration anyway.

After Ohtani racked up 11 strikeouts while yielding only three singles, Zack Cozart delivered a walk-off RBI single in the Angels' 2-1 victory Sunday.

Ohtani again dazzled his home fans while throwing a season-high 103 pitches in his sixth start for the Angels. With his fastball hitting 99 mph (159 kph) and his off-speed pitches plummeting through the strike zone, the Japanese right-hander reached 43 strikeouts for the season, blowing past Bo Belinsky's franchise record for strikeouts in a pitcher's first six games.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia called Ohtani's performance "phenomenal. . . . He had both breaking balls working, his slider and his curveball. His splitter was as good as we've seen it, and he got some big outs with his fastball."

Yet Ohtani was denied his fourth win after he left to a standing ovation following Logan Morrison's nine-pitch walk in the seventh. Reliever Cam Bedrosian promptly allowed hits by his first two batters, including pinch hitter Joe Mauer's tying RBI single.

"I didn't feel fatigued at all, actually," Ohtani said through a translator. "I feel like I was able to mix in all of my pitches and keep the hitters off balance."

Ohtani was making his first daytime home start since he took a perfect game into the seventh inning of a brilliant one-hit, 12-strikeout performance against Oakland on April 8. The Twins managed two short singles early on, but Ohtani also struck out nine of 12 batters during the first four innings, including five in a row during the second and third.

"As advertised," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said after his club's first look at Ohtani. "He's got pitches. He could get the breaking ball over, and he got guys to chase it."

Morrison got two hits and that key walk against Ohtani while the rest of Minnesota's lineup struggled mightily. He was the only Twins starter who didn't strike out at least once.

Although neither got a decision, Fernando Romero joined Ohtani in an entertaining duel at the Big A.

Romero pitched five innings of four-hit ball in his third big-league start as the Twins finished their impressive 10-game road trip with seven wins, but also their major league-worst sixth walk-off defeat.

Romero allowed his first run in the fifth inning, ending his scoreless start to his career at 15 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings when Justin Upton beat out a potential double-play grounder in the fifth. But the Dominican right-hander otherwise excelled against the Angels' veteran lineup, striking out six while walking three.

"We battled, and you've just got to take the positive stuff into the next game," Romero said. "I felt so good."

Minnesota put four straight batters on base in the ninth inning, yet the Angels kept it tied.

Ehire Adrianza was thrown out at the plate by Mike Trout and Ian Kinsler while he attempted to score from first on Robbie Grossman's double.

"You just put the best throw on the bag that you can," said Kinsler of his relay throw to Martin Maldonado, who made a slick tag. "There's a lot of ways that can go wrong."

Blake Parker then got Brian Dozier to pop out with the bases loaded to end the ninth. Parker (1-1) got the win for throwing just one pitch.

Chris Young was hit by a pitch from Zach Duke (2-2) leading off the Angels' ninth. After Maldonado bunted Young to second, Cozart cracked his third hit of the day and his second game-ending hit of the season into left field, where Eddie Rosario couldn't field it cleanly for a throw to the plate.

Tigers 5, Mariners 4

In Detroit, Robinson Cano broke his right hand when hit by a pitch from left-hander Blaine Hardy in the third inning of Seattle's loss.

The Tigers, Jose Iglesias hit a game-ending single off Juan Nicasio (1-2), and Niko Goodrum homered and had three hits for Detroit.

Yankees 6, Athletics 2

In New York, Giancarlo Stanton went 4-for-4 with a home run and three RBIs in a game that started after a 2-hour, 45-minute rain delay.

Luis Severino (6-1) struck out seven in six innings as the Yankees won for the 19th time in 22 games to remain tied with rival Boston for the best record in the majors at 28-12.

Red Sox 5, Blue Jays 3

In Toronto, J.D. Martinez hit his 10th homer, a two-run drive in the first off Joe Biagini (0-2), and a run-scoring single against John Axford in the fifth.

Mookie Betts had two hits, two steals and slid into foul territory down the right-field line to catch Richard Urena's sinking liner in the fourth.

Orioles 17, Rays 1

In Baltimore, Joey Rickard had his first big league multihomer game and drove in four runs following his recall from the minor leagues, and the Orioles scored their most runs since an 18-2 win over Oakland on Aug. 16, 2015. Tampa Bay gave up its most runs since a 17-11 defeat at Toronto on Aug. 7, 2010.

Danny Valencia and Trey Mancini also homered for Baltimore, which has scored 58 runs in its last seven games. Valencia tied career highs with four hits and four RBIs.

Indians 11, Royals 2

In Cleveland, Corey Kluber (6-2) gave up two unearned runs in seven innings, scattering eight hits.

Yan Gomes had four hits, including a three-run homer. Jose Ramirez also hit a three-run shot and Michael Brantley had a two-run homer as the Indians had 15 hits.

Astros 6, Rangers 1

In Houston, Dallas Keuchel (3-5) allowed three hits in seven shutout innings, struck out eight and walked one.

Evan Gattis and Carlos Correa homered for the second straight game

White Sox 5, Cubs 3

In Chicago, Matt Davidson hit a solo homer and a tiebreaking sacrifice fly off Kyle Hendricks (3-3) to lift the White Sox.

Lucas Giolito (2-4) matched a career high with seven walks, tossed three wild pitches and hit a batter, but pitched two-hit ball for 5 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings in his first victory since April 26. Bruce Rondon got his first save as the White Sox (10-27) stopped a seven-game slide and became the last major league team to reach 10 wins.

Nationals 6, Diamondbacks 4

In Phoenix, Mark Reynolds homered twice in his first game with Washington, helping the Nationals complete a four-game sweep.

Reynolds had his contract selected from Triple-A Syracuse on Saturday. He homered off Zack Godley in the sixth inning, then broke a 4-4 tie with a two-run shot off Archie Bradley (0-1) in the eighth after the Diamondbacks rallied with a three-run seventh.

Reds 5, Dodgers 3

In Los Angeles, Eugenio Suarez and Joey Votto homered, and last-place Cincinnati swept a four-game series against the Dodgers for the first time since the Big Red Machine accomplished the feat in August 1976.

Luis Castillo (3-4) allowed three runs — two earned — and four hits in six innings with eight strikeouts. Raisel Iglesias got three straight outs for his seventh save.

Phillies 4, Mets 2

In Philadelphia, New York's Jacob deGrom was removed after a 45-pitch scoreless and hitless first inning as a precaution in his first start after a stint on the disabled list caused by a hyperextended right elbow.

Pinch hitter Nick Williams hit a go-ahead, three-run homer off Paul Seward (0-3) in the sixth.

Braves 4, Marlins 3

In Miami, Sean Newcomb (4-1) allowed one hit in six frames and stretched his scoreless streak to 20 innings. Brian Anderson's double in the second was the lone hit off the left-hander.

Arodys Vizcaino gave up a three-run pinch-hit homer to Justin Bour with one out in the ninth, then retired the next two batters for his seventh save.

Giants 5, Pirates 0

In Pittsburgh, Gorkys Hernandez homered off Ivan Nova (2-3) to spark a five-run sixth inning, Nick Hundley added a three-run drive against Richard Rodriguez and San Francisco stopped a season-high six game-losing streak.

Derek Holland (2-4) allowed four hits and five walks in 6½ innings.

Brewers 7, Rockies 3

In Denver, Freddy Peralta (1-0) took a no-hit bid into the sixth inning of his major league debut and set a Milwaukee rookie record with 13 strikeouts.

Peralta allowed one hit and two walks in 5⅔

Padres 5, Cardinals 3

In San Diego, Clayton Richard (2-5) matched his career high with 10 strikeouts in eight innings for his first win since April 9.

Brad Hand got his 11th save, allowing Harrison Bader's leadoff homer in the ninth, loading the bases with one out on two walks and a hit batter, then striking out Carson Kelly and Kolten Wong. Bader also had an RBI triple.