



Press Clips

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FROM THE OC REGISTER**Injury to Garrett Richards dampens Angels' comeback victory over Mariners**

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — Another injury for Garrett Richards spoiled what should have been a satisfying night for the Angels.

The Angels' 9-3 victory over the Seattle Mariners on Tuesday night was marred by the Angels' talented but oft-injured right-hander leaving the game with what the team described as right forearm irritation.

It is an ominous description that is sometimes associated with what turn out to be serious injuries. Richards will undergo an MRI exam on Wednesday.

Richards was not available for comment after the game. He is expected to speak to the media after getting the results of his tests.

"It's tough," Kole Calhoun said. "Just hoping for good news tomorrow. He's been battling for the better half of a couple years. Hopefully, everything comes back alright."

Richards, 30, missed most of the 2016 season with a damaged ulnar collateral ligament. He underwent stem-cell therapy and platelet-rich plasma injections that healed his ligament enough for him to pitch the following season without undergoing Tommy John surgery.

He was healthy in the spring of 2017, but then pitched just once before developing a biceps nerve issue that cost him most of that season. He and the Angels have insisted that the nerve issue was unrelated to his UCL. Richards returned to pitch last September.

Richards had been healthy this year until missing three weeks with hamstring tightness in June. He was pitching his second game since returning from that on Tuesday night.

After allowing a three-run homer to Mitch Haniger on his seventh pitch of the game, Richards showed no signs of trouble as he retired eight of the next nine hitters.

With Nelson Cruz at the plate in the third, Richards suddenly saw his fastball velocity drop from 95-96 mph to 92 mph. Catcher Martín Maldonado came to the mound and summoned trainer Adam Nevala and Manager Mike Scioscia. They spent just a few moments talking to Richards before he left the game, with a disgusted look on his face.

"You could tell the ball wasn't coming out of his hand the way we know it can," Scioscia said. "The velocity dropped and the crispness wasn't there."

Losing Richards now presents multiple issues for the Angels.

With a 3.66 ERA, Richards is one of their best starters when he's healthy. They will be hard-pressed to replace him as they try to climb back into the playoff chase.

If they remained far out of the race and decided to sell, Richards was the most attractive trade chip among their impending free agents. Now, trading him before the July 31 deadline is likely off the table.

The loss of Richards cast a cloud over an otherwise impressive night for the rest of the Angels. They had their most productive offensive game since they last scored nine runs on June 4.

The top two hitters in the Angels' order – Calhoun and Andrelton Simmons – each had three hits.

“Kole and Simba set the tone for sure,” Scioscia said. “The guys in the middle of the order had plenty of opportunities and the whole lineup was really effective and efficient.”

Down 3-0 in the first, they had back-to-back singles to lead to a run. In the second, Calhoun's grounder drove in one and Simmons' infield hit then tied it 3-3.

In the fourth, Calhoun scored on Simmons' double to put the Angels ahead 4-3. They padded the lead on an Albert Pujols two-run homer later in the inning, and an Ian Kinsler RBI single.

Calhoun then belted a solo homer in the fifth inning. It was his fifth homer in 20 games since coming off the disabled list. He's hitting .273 over that span, an upgrade from the .145 average he had when he went on the DL.

“It's great to see Kole back,” Scioscia said. “He's got that little swagger back. A great night for him tonight. We're trying to rework some things offensively and Kole and Simba are going to be important for us. I think it's a great sign when you see those two guys doing what they did tonight.”

While the hitters got the Angels a lead, a string of Angels relievers held down the Mariners after Richards' early exit. Noé Ramírez, Cam Bedrosian, José Álvarez, Hansel Robles and Taylor Cole collaborated on the final 19 outs, without allowing a run.

Angels relievers, maligned for much of the past month, have posted a 2.63 ERA since June 29.

“We've had our share of bullpen games that aren't by design,” Scioscia said. “We've had a lot of times these guys have come in in the second, third, fourth inning and kept us in the game. All those guys came in and did a great job.”

Alexander: Angels shortstop Andrelton Simmons needs more fans to #VoteSimba

By Jim Alexander

ANAHEIM — Maybe Andrelton Simmons needs a more cutthroat campaign manager.

The Angels shortstop is having a wonderful season, one good enough to get him into the five-man All-Star Final Vote, which closes Wednesday at 1 p.m. PT. Simmons' misfortune is that he plays a position that, at least in the American League, is exceeded in its importance by its sheer glut of talent.

Baltimore's (for now) Manny Machado and Cleveland's Francisco Lindor made the AL's initial roster. Seattle's Jean Segura, who also qualified for the Final Vote, is fourth in the league in hitting. The Astros' Carlos Correa should probably be in that elite conversation as well, but he has been sidelined with back stiffness.

As for that Final Vote? Simmons, eighth in the AL in hitting and first in the majors in strikeout rate (one every 21.93 plate appearances) going into Tuesday night's game with Seattle, has some serious catching up to do. Segura led the AL voting as of Tuesday afternoon, followed by Boston's Andrew Benintendi, the Yankees' Giancarlo Stanton, the Twins' Eddie Rosario and Simmons.

Maybe performance helps. Simmons was 3 for 5 with a double, a run scored and two RBI, as well as his usual dazzling defense, in the Angels' 9-3 victory over the Mariners. And a devoted fan tweeted this midway through the game:

So if this is going to happen, it's going to have to happen from the ground up.

For what it's worth, the Mariners were wearing "SendSegura" T-shirts as they boarded their plane to SoCal, and their organization is waging a spirited campaign. The Red Sox social media team posted pictures of Benintendi on their team plane taking a nap beneath the hashtag "#VoteBenny."

Yankees players taped funny videos talking up Stanton's campaign, while their organization teamed up with the Dodgers, with the Yanks also promoting Max Muncy and the Dodgers pumping up Stanton.

(Hold it: Why didn't the Dodgers and Angels combine *their* voting blocs? For the Dodgers to go in with the Yankees feels like the Lakers and Celtics collaborating. There's too much history there, and it just doesn't feel right.)

Such combined efforts are becoming more popular. The Dodgers and Royals got both Justin Turner and Mike Moustakas elected last year, with both teams promoting both third basemen.

This year, the Twins, with Rosario, and the Brewers, with first baseman (and NL home run leader) Jesus Aguilar, have joined forces. The Angels have done likewise with the Nationals, the host of next Tuesday's All-Star Game, who are trying to get their shortstop, Trea Turner, on the roster.

Beyond that? The Angels gave away autographed baseballs, bobbleheads and even game tickets on Twitter to those who could post a screenshot showing they voted for Simmons and Turner. They painted "VOTE SIMBA" on the mound before Sunday night's ESPN game against the Dodgers, which represented a 2-1/2-hour campaign infomercial (it was a quick game).

Mike Trout and Tyler Skaggs stumped for Simmons on their Twitter pages. And the Angels posted a 10-second clip from Shohei Ohtani, endorsing Simmons in Japanese. (Maybe the Asian returns will be coming in late.)

But where's the campaign ad featuring splashy video of Simmons' defensive highlights and offensive outbursts? Or does this call, instead, for negative ads aimed at the other guys?

"Yeah," Simmons said with a laugh, trying out a line: " 'They eat past their bedtime. They shouldn't go.' "

On second thought, I don't think Simba will be going negative.

"Whatever the fans want to see most, that's who they vote for," he said. "It's their decision, so I respect that. I mean, it's a show for the people.

"Maybe I should try campaigning hard myself, but it's hard for me. But I know I have a lot of people pulling forme, a lot of people trying to help me out. Everybody's telling me they're voting for me, which is really, really cool.

"I wasn't playing (to make) the All-Star Game. But at the end when you see you're up there with a few other candidates, it's pretty special. That means you did pretty good work so far."

The acknowledgment that he's an elite shortstop beyond the ranks of those who see him every day might be satisfaction enough. It might have to be.

"If I thought it was that important for Simba, where his ego was going to be so bruised if he wasn't selected to the All-Star Game, I think I'd have a more passionate speech," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said when asked how he'd stump for his shortstop. "But that's the beauty of Simba. You know he wants to play, he wants to win. He's not going to be affected if he's slighted. ... He's playing at an incredible level. So you know there's no speeches really necessary. I think his play speaks for itself."

Ah, well, maybe the people in Atlanta, who got Freddie Freeman and Nick Markakis into the NL's starting lineup, will do a solid for a former Brave between now and the time voting ends.

"If there's Braves fans out there that still want to see me in the All-Star Game, feel free to vote," he said.

He's Andrelton Simmons, and I'm guessing he'd approve this message.

Why the Angels' Mike Trout never competes in the Home Run Derby

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — The Home Run Derby participants will be announced on Wednesday and Mike Trout will not be among them again.

Trout, who will be playing in his sixth All-Star Game, has annually rejected the opportunity, but why?

Concerned with injury? Altering his swing?

"I don't know about any of that," Trout said Tuesday. "I'd rather just have that night with my family, spend time with them. ... I just want to relax and enjoy the day. Just watch it. ... I just never had any interest in doing it."

Besides, he added: "It looks tiring."

WHAT ABOUT SKAGGS?

Tyler Skaggs threw a second bullpen session in three days and did some fielding drills on Tuesday, passing almost all the tests required for him to return to the Angels' rotation on Thursday.

Skaggs will have missed one start on the disabled list with tightness in his hamstring area, after having an earlier start pushed back a few days.

Around all that, he's fashioned a 2.64 ERA, which ranks eighth in the American League.

Could he sneak into the All-Star Game?

Skaggs was not among the five starting pitchers picked by American League players in voting. One of them, Justin Verlander, was already replaced because he's pitching on Sunday. He was replaced by Trevor Bauer, who is also scheduled to pitch on Sunday, so he'll be replaced also.

Blake Snell, who leads the league with a 2.09 ERA, is also a candidate to be an injury replacement. Assuming Snell gets one spot, Skaggs would need another pitcher to become unavailable. James Paxton and Charlie Morton would also be candidates.

"I think (Skaggs) has thrown the ball as well as anybody we've seen throw the ball against us," Manager Mike Scioscia said. "He's been very consistent. He's pitched well when he hasn't had his best stuff. He's been very consistent pitching at a high level. There's been no doubt that he's worthy of All-Star consideration."

ALSO

Andrelton Simmons was fifth in voting among the five candidates up for election for the last spot on the AL All-Star team as of Tuesday afternoon. Seattle shortstop Jean Segura was leading. Online voting concludes on Wednesday at 1 p.m. ...

Nick Tropeano (shoulder), who threw five scoreless innings on 53 pitches in a rehab outing on Saturday, will make another rehab outing on Friday at Class-A Inland Empire. "I guess they want me to throw a no-hitter this time," Skaggs said. "I feel like I'm ready to go, but I understand." ...

Jim Johnson (back) is going to need at least one more rehab outing, Scioscia said. Johnson pitched an inning on Sunday. ...

The Angels recalled outfielder Michael Hermosillo, giving them a true outfielder on the bench. They had been going with Jefry Marte and David Fletcher as their backup outfielders for a few days. Hermosillo took the roster spot of pitcher Deck McGuire, who isn't needed to start if Skaggs is coming back. ...

Jahmai Jones, one of the Angels' top prospects, was promoted from Class-A Inland Empire to Double-A Mobile (Ala.). Jones, who was converted this year from outfield to second base, hit .235 with a .721 OPS at Inland Empire.

UP NEXT

Angels (Jaime Barría, 5-5, 3.39) vs. Marco Gonzales (9-5, 3.64), Wednesday, 7 p.m., Fox Sports West, KLAA (830 AM)

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

Angels beat Mariners, but see ace Garrett Richards exit early

By Jeff Miller

The Angels' strained, inflamed season reached a new depth of absurdity Tuesday when their latest injury hurt not only them but perhaps another team.

Starting pitcher Garrett Richards was forced to exit in the middle of a third inning at-bat in a game the Angels eventually would win, 9-3, over Seattle.

The team announced that Richards has "right forearm irritation" with an MRI scheduled for Wednesday.

"You could just see the ball wasn't coming out...of his hand the way we know it can," manager Mike Scioscia said. "We'll let the medical staff give us direction. He'll have a study done and we'll see what's going on."

Richards was limited to six starts the past two seasons because of a damaged ulnar collateral ligament and biceps nerve irritation in his right arm.

He avoided ligament replacement surgery by undergoing the sort of stem-cell therapy the Angels are now using to treat Shohei Ohtani's sprained UCL.

When healthy - which hasn't been a reality since 2015 - Richards might be the Angels' best starter.

General manager Billy Eppler, while never using the word "ace," has explained that Richards possesses that type of ability. Scioscia repeatedly has called the right-hander "the lead dog."

The Angels' shrinking chances of reemerging in the American League wild card race hinge on many things, including Richards' performance. They likely aren't going anywhere without him.

If they accept what appears to be their mounting fate and decide to become sellers at the trade deadline, an intact Richards would be a prime piece to move. He's a free agent after this season.

Now, everything is suspended while awaiting the next medical update, Richards' value as both an Angel and a former Angel in question.

Tyler Skaggs could return Thursday for the Angels, Nick Tropeano not quite yet

By Jeff Miller

Tyler Skaggs took another step toward rejoining the Angels rotation Tuesday and so did Nick Tropeano, though Tropeano will be rejoining the rotation of the Inland Empire 66ers first.

"I guess they want me to throw a no-hitter this time out," the right-hander said, jokingly.

Tropeano pitched five scoreless innings with four strikeouts and gave up two hits with Inland Empire against Stockton on Saturday.

He needed only 52 pitches to get those 15 outs, the Angels hoping to increase his pitch count to 70-75 when he pitches for the 66ers on Friday.

Tropeano (shoulder) and Skaggs (muscle strain) threw bullpen sessions before the Angels played Seattle, each reporting good results.

The Angels intend to have Skaggs come off the disabled list and start Thursday in the series finale against the Mariners.

Tropeano had hoped his next game would come for the Angels, too, this weekend at Dodger Stadium. Instead, he has to settle for another Class-A rehabilitation appearance.

"I feel like I'm ready to go," Tropeano said, before adding of the Angels' thinking, "I understand it completely."

This is the second stint on the DL for Tropeano because of a shoulder problem that recently was diagnosed as bursitis.

"All you can do is strengthen it, rest, ice," he said. "It's frustrating, but I'm fine now."

For a team decimated by injury, the Angels are slowly returning to health, that is, pending Garrett Richards' status.

The right-hander, who spent time on the DL recently because of a hamstring issue, was forced to leave the game Tuesday in the third inning in the middle of a Nelson Cruz at-bat.

The Angels' rotation has been hit particularly hard, a fact obvious in a variety of ways, not the least of which is statistically.

Only the starters for the Miami Marlins and Tampa Bay Rays have secured fewer outs per game than the Angels' starters, and the Rays this season routinely have been starting relievers tasked with pitching only an inning or two.

The Angels are receiving an average of 15.7 outs from their rotation, which equates to barely five innings.

Manager Mike Scioscia suggested something closer to six innings would make a significant difference.

"That doesn't sound like a lot," he said, "but it's like one extra [relief] pitcher, which puts more stress on your bullpen."

The Marlins and Rays are also the only teams whose relievers have thrown more pitches than the Angels' relievers have.

"We've used an extraordinary amount of bullpen appearances," Scioscia said.

Short hops

The Angels recalled outfielder Michael Herмосillo from triple-A Salt Lake and optioned pitcher Deck McGuire. ... Reliever Jim Johnson (lumbar strain) will make another minor league rehab appearance. He gave up two runs in his first inning Sunday for Inland Empire. ... Jahmai Jones, one of the Angels' top-five prospects, was promoted to double-A Mobile. A former outfielder, Jones was moved to second base this season.

FROM ANGELS.COM

Angels' offense heats up in win over Mariners

Pujols, Calhoun homer as Halos take series opener

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- **Albert Pujols** and **Kole Calhoun** homered to help the Angels erase an early three-run deficit and emerge with a 9-3 win over the Mariners in Tuesday's series opener at Angel Stadium.

Mitch Haniger launched a three-run shot off right-hander **Garrett Richards** to give the Mariners a 3-0 lead just three batters into the game, but the Angels got one run back on **Justin Upton**'s RBI single in the bottom of the first and then tied it with another pair of runs in the second. Pujols' two-run homer highlighted a four-run fourth that put the Angels ahead, 7-3, and Calhoun padded the lead with a solo shot in the fifth.

The come-from-behind win helped erase some of the sting from losing Richards, who departed his start in the third inning with **right forearm irritation**. Richards, who might be the Angels' most valuable trade chip at the July 31 non-waiver Trade Deadline, is scheduled to undergo an MRI on Wednesday. Richards missed most of the 2016 season with a partially torn ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow, though he avoided Tommy John surgery by undergoing stem-cell therapy.

"It's tough," Calhoun said. "We're just kind of hoping for good news tomorrow. He's been battling for the better half of a couple years. Hopefully, everything comes back all right."

Richards' injury comes during a pivotal stretch for the Angels, who pulled within 10 games of the Mariners for the second American League Wild Card spot with Tuesday's win. They have five more games against Seattle in Anaheim this month, giving them a chance to gain some ground in the race and revive their playoff hopes, but that climb will be all the more difficult if Richards misses considerable time.

Noe Ramirez, Cam Bedrosian, Jose Alvarez, Hansel Robles and Taylor Cole combined to pitch 6 1/3 scoreless innings in relief of Richards, giving the Angels' bats a chance to rally. Calhoun, **Andrelton Simmons** and **Mike Trout** combined to go 8-for-13 with four runs, a double, four RBIs and two walks at the top of the lineup to set the table for the productive evening at the plate.

"We need to pressure teams on the offensive side and take a little pressure off our starting pitchers," manager Mike Scioscia said. "Even though we got behind today, we were able to do that. I think Kole and Simba set the tone, for sure. The guys in the middle of the order had plenty of opportunities. The whole lineup was really effective and efficient."

The Angels' resilience was tested early on Tuesday, as **Dee Gordon** and **Jean Segura** led off the game with back-to-back singles before Haniger hammered a first-pitch slider from Richards to left field for a three-run homer.

The Angels got on the board in the bottom of the first on three singles from Calhoun, Simmons and Upton and then tied it with two more runs in the second. After **Luis Valbuena** reached on an error by Gordon, **Martin Maldonado** ripped a double to left field to put runners on second and third with no outs. Calhoun cut the deficit to 3-2 with a run-scoring groundout, and Simmons brought in the tying run with an infield single that deflected off the glove of Mariners right-hander **Mike Leake**.

Simmons, a **Final Vote candidate**, went 3-for-5 with two RBIs and also made an impressive play in the hole to throw out Segura in the third. Segura, who is also on the Final Vote ballot, currently leads the American League tally, while **Simmons ranks fifth**.

Richards retired the first two batters he faced in the third, but he missed badly on a first-pitch slider to **Nelson Cruz** and then fired two fastballs that were clocked at 92.2 and 92.8 mph, a tick below his 96.4 average this season. Team trainer Adam Nevala and Scioscia came out to check on Richards, who departed the game after a brief discussion on the mound and was replaced by Ramirez, who earned his fourth win of the season after working 1 1/3 scoreless innings.

"You could just see that the ball just wasn't coming out of his hand the way we know it can," Scioscia said of Richards. "Obviously, we'll just let the medical staff give us direction. He'll have a study done tomorrow. We'll see what's going on."

The Angels produced the go-ahead run in the fourth after Calhoun singled and scored on Simmons' RBI double to left field. Leake nearly escaped further damage after inducing a double play from Upton, but Pujols then delivered a two-run home run that pushed the Angels' lead to 6-3. Pujols deposited an 0-1 knucklecurve into Seattle's bullpen in left field for his 14th home run of the season and the 628th of his career. He is two home runs away from tying Ken Griffey Jr. for sixth on the all-time list.

After **Shohei Ohtani** reached on another error by Gordon to keep the inning alive, **Ian Kinsler** capitalized by lining an RBI single to left field to make it 7-3.

Calhoun added another insurance run with a solo shot off reliever **Nick Rumbelow** in the fifth. Calhoun crushed a hanging slider to center field for his sixth home run of the year. He is now batting .273 with five home runs and 11 RBIs since returning from the disabled list on June 18.

"It's great to see Kole back," Scioscia said. "He's got that little swagger back. He feels good. Great night for him tonight."

UP NEXT

Right-hander **Jaime Barria** (5-5, 3.39 ERA) will battle left-hander **Marco Gonzales** (9-5, 3.64 ERA) on Wednesday as the Angels and Mariners continue their three-game series at 7:07 p.m. PT at Angel Stadium. In two starts against Seattle this season, Barria is 0-2 with a 3.48 ERA. He will be seeking his first winning decision since June 1.

Richards leaves with right forearm irritation

Right-hander scheduled to have MRI on Wednesday

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- The Angels **rallied to defeat** the Mariners, 9-3, on Tuesday, but the night was sullied by an early exit from right-hander **Garrett Richards**.

Richards departed his start in the third inning with right forearm irritation and is scheduled to undergo an MRI on Wednesday. It's troubling news for Richards, who missed most of the 2016 season with a partially torn ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow, but avoided Tommy John surgery by undergoing stem-cell therapy.

"It's tough," right fielder **Kole Calhoun** said. "We're just kind of hoping for good news tomorrow. He's been battling for the better half of a couple years. Hopefully everything comes back all right."

Richards, 30, retired the first two batters he faced to start the third, but he missed badly with a first-pitch slider to **Nelson Cruz** and then fired two fastballs that were clocked at 92.2 and 92.8 mph, a notable drop from his 96.4 mph average this season. Team trainer Adam Nevala and manager Mike Scioscia came out to check on Richards, and he exited the game after a brief discussion on the mound.

"You could just see that the ball just wasn't coming out of his hand the way we know it can," Scioscia said. "Obviously, we'll just let the medical staff give us direction. He'll have a study done tomorrow. We'll see what's going on."

Richards gave up three runs on four hits -- including a three-run home run to **Mitch Haniger** in the first inning -- over 2 2/3 innings. It was his second start since returning from the disabled list. He missed three weeks after sustaining a left hamstring strain last month.

While Richards has struggled with injuries over the last few years, he is one of the most talented pitchers on the Angels' pitching staff when healthy. The club's slim playoff hopes will likely shrink even further if he misses considerable time.

Richards, who will be a free agent at the end of the season, might be the Angels' most attractive asset if they decide to sell at the July 31 non-waiver Trade Deadline, particularly given the paucity of quality starting pitchers available this summer. Richards might be able to bolster his value with a few strong starts this month, but that's if he's healthy enough to be on the mound.

Skaggs on track to start vs. Seattle on Thursday

After landing on DL July 4, lefty throws bullpen Tuesday

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- A right adductor strain forced left-hander **Tyler Skaggs** to miss his scheduled start in Seattle last week, but he is on track to get another shot against the Mariners.

Skaggs, who landed on the disabled list on July 4 (retroactive to July 1), threw a bullpen on Tuesday and is likely to return to the rotation to face the Mariners in Thursday's series finale at Angel Stadium.

"We're hoping, but you want to read it and evaluate it and make sure that his workout didn't set him back," manager Mike Scioscia said. "We anticipate him being fine."

Skaggs, 26, has been enjoying a breakout season, going 6-5 with a 2.64 ERA in 92 innings. Scioscia said he felt Skaggs had pitched well enough to garner All-Star consideration, but he was left off the American League roster that was announced Sunday. **Mike Trout** is currently the only player set to represent the Angels at the All-Star Game presented by Mastercard at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C., on July 17, though **Andrelton Simmons** is one of five Final Vote candidates.

"I think he's throwing the ball as well as anybody we've seen throw the ball against us," Scioscia said of Skaggs. "He's been very consistent. He's pitched well when he hasn't had his best stuff. He's been very consistent pitching at a high level, and there's no doubt that he's worthy of All-Star consideration."

Right-hander **Nick Tropeano**'s return to the Angels' rotation will have to wait until after the All-Star break. He is scheduled to make another rehab outing with Class A Advanced Inland Empire on Friday. Tropeano, who has been on the disabled list since June 15 with right shoulder inflammation, tossed five scoreless innings on 52 pitches in his first rehab start on July 7.

"Nick's good," Scioscia said. "He's going to get another outing on Friday and try to stretch out his pitch count a little bit. We'll see how he responds, and then we'll see if he can be folded in after the break. We'll take it one step at a time with Nick, but he needs a little more work."

Simmons lagging in Final Vote standings

The latest Final Vote update released Tuesday revealed that Simmons is in fifth place among the

American League contenders, trailing **Jean Segura**, **Andrew Benintendi**, **Giancarlo Stanton** and **Eddie Rosario**. Voting is open until Wednesday at 1 p.m. PT.

"It will be a slight if he's not selected to the All-Star Game," Scioscia said. "I mean, he's playing at an incredible level. No speech is really necessary. I think his play speaks for itself. He's an All-Star in all of our minds and hearts."

Worth noting

- The Angels recalled outfielder **Michael Hermosillo** and optioned right-hander **Deck McGuire** to Triple-A Salt Lake on Tuesday. Hermosillo will replace the injured **Chris Young** as the Angels' fourth outfielder.
- Right-hander **Jim Johnson** (lumbar strain) gave up two runs on three hits in one inning in his first rehab outing with Class A Advanced Inland Empire on Sunday. Scioscia said he will pitch in another Minor League game in the next couple of days.
- Another top Angels prospect is on the move. Second baseman Jahmai Jones was promoted to Double-A Mobile on Tuesday after batting .235 with a .721 OPS, 10 doubles, five triples, eight home runs, 35 RBIs and 13 stolen bases in 75 games with Class A Advanced Inland Empire. Jones, 20, is ranked the **Angels' No. 3 prospect**, according to MLB Pipeline.

Angels fans hypnotized the camera with Mike Trout's face everywhere thanks to Trout Shirt Night

By Andrew Mearns

The Angels held a promotion for their 9-3 win at home against the Mariners on Tuesday. It seemed simple enough at first: Trout Shirt Night. These weren't your ordinary T-shirt promotions, though.

Instead of a simple Angels jersey with Trout's name and number on the back, the Angels gave away plain white shirts that had Trout's player headshot on them. That made for an extremely unsettling scene when the camera caught groups of people throughout the crowd wearing the exact same shirt:

Mesmerizing.

Trout's gaze surrounded him. It must have been like playing in front of funhouse mirrors.

Well, dancing funhouse mirrors, perhaps:

Trout's face is moving in every direction!

He was even in the background when Justin Upton went to catch a foul ball in stands:

We certainly understand the Angels' idea to get as many Trouts in their ballpark as possible, but this is next-level.

Regardless, Trout would probably appreciate all the ... unusual support.

We think.

FROM THE ATHLETIC

How does one of baseball's elite middle infields evaluate its own defense?

By Fabian Ardaya

With defense, it's easy to forget a player's value until you need him the most. Few players, if any, have reinforced that more than the Angels middle infield of Andrelton Simmons and Ian Kinsler.

With a runner on first, one out in a one-run game in the ninth inning on Sunday against the Dodgers, Angels closer Justin Anderson had no place to put Cody Bellinger on a 3-2 count. He went for a slider low in the zone, hoping to induce a swing and miss or soft contact.

He got neither. Instead, he got a grounder smoked at 106.7 mph off Bellinger's bat, in most cases destined for a hole that would extend the inning. Instead, it was Kinsler, perfectly placed, who fielded the tough hop cleanly, quickly readjusted his feet, fired a clean throw to Simmons, whose arm easily nabbed the quick Bellinger at first base. Game over.

"We're not almost leading the league in double plays as a fluke," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Our pitchers, when some guy gets on, if they get that ground ball, we can turn a double play at an incredible rate. You look at the guys in the middle — look at Andrelton, look at Ian — and they're as good as there is in terms of their positions. It's helped our pitching staff a lot."

Scioscia's right. The Angels entered play on Tuesday having turned 95 double plays, the second most in baseball and most in the American League. They rank second in baseball, just behind the Mariners, in Double Play Runs Saved, meaning their ability to turn double plays is effective both in volume and in run prevention as a whole.

It's easy to see why. After all, Simmons and Kinsler have a combined four Gold Gloves (and a Platinum Glove) for a reason. The productivity of the pair, and of the Angels' defensive infield as a whole, is by design, with the Angels bringing in Kinsler via trade and adding Zack Cozart, himself an accomplished defensive shortstop, in free agency as a piece to play third base and second as well. That, along with 2017 Gold Glove winner Martín Maldonado behind the plate, was expected to cover up for some of the drop-off with Albert Pujols, Jefry Marte and Luis Valbuena rotating at first base.

Cozart is hurt, Maldonado's elite framing value has dropped below average, and the Pujols-Marte-Valbuena combination has gone about as expected, but Simmons and Kinsler have been elite. Mark Simon included the pair as part of his "Defensive All-Stars" list for good reason, with Simmons and Kinsler responsible for 11 and eight Defensive Runs Saved, respectively.

“Number one, he’s very experienced,” Simmons said of Kinsler. “He can make the difficult plays or halfway-difficult plays look routine without any hesitation. It’s routine for him. Number two, he’s always a step ahead ... I hate to say this, but he’s the best second basemen I’ve played with.”

“It doesn’t matter how you grade him; he’s just head and shoulders above everyone else,” Kinsler said of Simmons. “It takes really good instincts to play the middle infield, and he’s got that. His reaction time to balls hit in his area is exceptional, and his gait just allows him to cover a lot of space quickly. And then his release when he gets to the ball, he always seems to be balanced when he throws, under control when he throws. And then he’s got a super-strong arm. He’s the best I’ve seen.”

The two have long been among the game’s best. But why is it that Simmons and Kinsler grade out so well?

“I have zero clue,” Simmons said. “I just try to make every play possible. I don’t know.”

“No idea,” Kinsler added. “However they come up with it, I guess I’m good at that. I don’t know how they equate range factor, don’t know how they equate defensive WAR. All the things that go into it, I don’t know the equation. I’m not really sure, but I’m doing something right in their system, whatever that system is. I try not to take a play off defensively.”

That raises a fair question. Unlike hitting, which puts just about every player on a relatively fair playing field and can churn out numbers that are easily comparable and consumable, defense is in an eternal battle against the eye test. Sure, the premise is simple—either you can hit, or you can’t, and sure, either you can make a play on defense, or you can’t—the external factors are multiplied.

“There’s a lot of variables that make it hard to quantify just in numbers,” Simmons said. “I think you do need the eye test element, too.”

Each player starts in about the same spot when they’re batting, and given essentially the same task and responsibility. Defense adds in variables, from positioning, to shifts, to park conditions and more. It makes it difficult for some players to fully trust a concrete number such as DRS or Ultimate Zone Rating. And unlike batting, in which it’s easy to digest some of basic formulas like batting average or on-base plus slugging percentage and see where even more advanced metrics like OPS+ and wRC+ come from there, it’s not easy to see what the formula is for a defensive metric.

“I think there’s a lot of different variables,” Kinsler said. “There’s a lot of different things that go into a defensive play, whether it’s the infield you’re playing on, the infield grass, the dirt, how wet it is, how thick the grass is, the speed of the runner, where you’re playing him as far as a shift, how many steps to your right and how many steps to your left, how hard the ball’s hit, what hop you’re getting. There’s just a lot of different things that can go on on defense.

“There’s a lot of things that go into making a play that I don’t think analytics can really equate. There’s really no way to determine that. I mean, are they going to go out and measure the grass and the thickness of it, for every ballpark, or how much the guy watered the dirt that day? Dekeing a runner on a fly ball to right field and getting a double play out of it—does the infielder get any credit for that? I think they’re getting better at it, but it’s very difficult.”

So, how do some of the game's best evaluate their own defensive performance?

"It's just about the plays I think I should make, and whether or not I make them," Simmons said. In many cases, it's that simple. There are plays that are routine for the average player, and ones that are routine for Simmons in his own mind. He knows he has a strong enough arm, enough burst to get good jumps on balls, so he evaluates his range and ability to make plays based off that. He attempts plays he doesn't feel others could make, which he said leads to some errors. Simply put, his ceiling is higher than the average defender, and he feels his floor is, too.

"I feel like I should make a lot of plays, so I always feel like I'm underachieving, slightly," Simmons said. "That's how I feel, like every play I should make or someone should make. That play should be made, whether it's me or somebody else."

Kinsler's defensive prowess is in part due to his experience, and his ability to find himself in the right spot. From there, for him, it's all about jumps. With each pitch, he tests his jump to make sure he can react in time to the ball, and to be able to read off the bat where it's headed, the spin, and how it's going to hop. He doesn't look at advanced metrics for his defensive numbers, in part because he doesn't have a clear idea on how they're evaluated. For him, it's about just making the plays that need to be made. In a perfect world, he said, there would be a means to evaluate a player's other intangibles, from tagging proficiency to how he positions himself and transferring a relay throw, to how he dekes out runners. The underlying facets of defensive skill are still not a concrete part of how people evaluate defense; it's something that can be seen, not calculated.

"I don't think it takes any analytics to show that Andrelton Simmons is as good as there is," Scioscia said.

Both Simmons and Kinsler noted the advancements in defensive metrics. Simmons said the baseline for how to evaluate one defender against another should be simple. If an average player can make that play, how often can that player do the same thing?

At its heart, that's UZR, which compares a fielder's ability to reach a set number of zones to field a ball as opposed to the "average" player, putting into effect a small list of factors: range, errors and, varying between outfielders and infielders, their arm or ability to turn a double play. Using UZR, Simmons and Kinsler are responsible for 8.7 and 6.1 runs saved, respectively.

Much like UZR, DRS evaluates a defensive player to an average set of guidelines, measuring how many runs a defender saved through a variety of factors, including the ability to turn a double play, to prevent steals, to field bunts, use their arm, rob home runs and, simply, converting batted balls into outs. Since Simmons arrived with the Angels in 2016, only Mookie Betts (68) has more DRS than Simmons' 61. Over that same span with the Tigers and Angels, Kinsler's 26 DRS are most among second basemen.

Is there a perfect metric when it comes to evaluating defense?

"It's very difficult for somebody to prove to somebody else, that one guy's a better defender than the other, when neither has really watched the guy play, when they're just basically going off of numbers," Kinsler said. "I just think instincts are just way too much into the defensive side of the ball, and you can't put a number on instincts ... I think there's just so many different things that go into it. I mean, I just don't know how they equate a play where there's a guy on first, and there's one out, and it's a very

difficult play for a middle infielder and he decides to go to second and gets the out, bang-bang. And then the next guy gets a hit where it would've scored the guy had he just decided to go to first and get the easier out. I don't know how they equate that. I just think that your eyes have to help you more defensively, knowing what's going and defensively, what the situation is."

"It takes both sides I think to actually be able to know how good somebody is," Simmons said. "You can see somebody today and feel they perfectly did everything right, and then you look at the numbers, and he had so many errors. You know a guy is capable of doing certain things, but also has a lot of mistakes in him. I don't know; it's a very touchy, very difficult subject."

FROM MLB.COM

AL shortstops on historic hitting tear

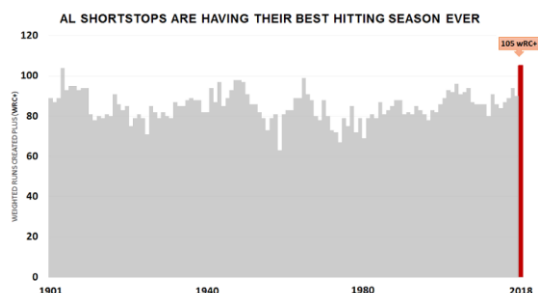
105 wRC+ would be the highest offensive mark for SS on record

By Mike Petriello

When the initial **All-Star Game rosters were announced** on Sunday, **Francisco Lindor** and **Manny Machado** were selected as the American League shortstops. Neither was surprising; Lindor is the best all-around shortstop in the game, and Machado is having what looks like the best offensive season of his already stellar career.

Now realize the quality of the shortstops who *didn't* make it. **Andrelton Simmons** is probably **baseball's best defender** and is crushing the ball (.307/.369/.436) this year, while **Jean Segura** (.330/.358/.470) is putting up his third straight strong year. The best they could do was make the ballot for the **Camping World MLB All-Star Final Vote**. **Didi Gregorius** was **April's AL Player of the Month**, but he wasn't even in the conversation. Neither was **Carlos Correa**. Nor was **Xander Bogaerts** (.277/.351/.512), who has been one of baseball's most improved hitters.

The depth of talent at the position is so good and so strong that it's tempting to wonder how this group stacks up historically. As it turns out: It's not just a good group. It is, so far, the **best offensive season** by AL shortstops in history.



How can we possibly measure that? Traditional stats like batting average don't do the job, because walks are important and hitting for power matters. (This year's .265 would be **tied for 35th**.) Even better metrics like on-base percentage or **wOBA** aren't good enough, because they don't do a good enough job of accounting for changes throughout history, and that's important. A home run was worth more in 1947, when only 15 players had 20 dingers, than it was in 2017, when a record 117 players did.

For that, we turn to an advanced metric called **Weighted Runs Created Plus**, or wRC+, which measures how a hitter performs with the league average that year, with park effects accounted for. It's simple to use, because it sets 100 as the league average each year, so you can say things like Dante Bichette's .331/.357/.509 in 1998 Coors Field was about as valuable as Mickey Stanley's .259/.311/.364 at Tiger Stadium in 1968's "Year of the Pitcher" -- both had a 103 wRC+, or three percent above league average for that year.

So when we say that AL shortstops this year have a 105 wRC+, what we're saying is that as a group, they're hitting five percent better than league average. That alone is a big deal, because shortstop is traditionally not a high-offense position; it's only the second time that shortstops in either league have hit better than the league average.

Top offensive performance by shortstops from 1901 to present

105 wRC+ -- AL, 2018
 104 wRC+ -- AL, 1904
 99 wRC+ -- NL, 1908
 99 wRC+ -- AL, 1964

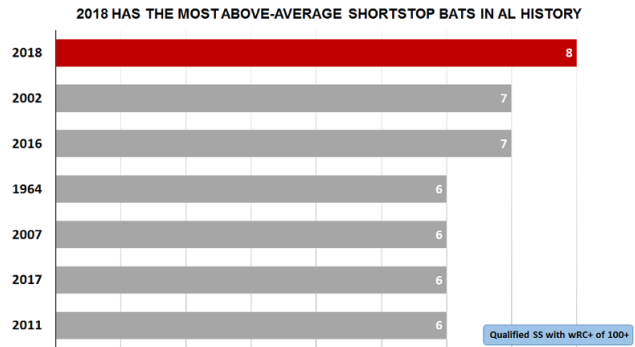
As you'd expect, one good player can't elevate an entire league by himself. **Mike Trout** didn't single-handedly make last year's AL center fielders historically notable, for example. It takes a group effort, and that's what we're seeing. Right now, **eight qualified AL shortstops** have been league-average hitters this year, and it'll only take a hot few days from Chicago's **Tim Anderson** (.245/.304/.414, 97 wRC+) to make it nine.

AL shortstops with above-average bats, 2018

152 wRC+ Lindor (.298/.374/.565)
 149 wRC+ Machado (.309/.379/.555)
 134 wRC+ Bogaerts (.277/.351/.512)
 130 wRC+ Segura (.330/.358/.470)
 129 wRC+ Correa (.268/.352/.480)
 126 wRC+ Simmons (.307/.369/.436)
 107 wRC+ Gregorius (.255/.320/.455)
 106 wRC+ **Jurickson Profar** (.247/.328/.441)

(The multipositional **Daniel Robertson**, who has spent about half of his time at shortstop, has a strong .268/.394/.412 line, a 132 wRC+, but he has not yet played enough to qualify.)

The AL has eight shortstops hitting at or above the league-average line of 100 wRC+ -- the most in league history, and tied with the 2007 National Leaguers of **Hanley Ramirez**, Jimmy Rollins and **Troy Tulowitzki** for the most in Major League history.



Now, there's one thing that's making this performance all the more incredible, and it's not that it's happening in the absence of **Elvis Andrus**, who had strong seasons in 2016 and '17 before missing most of this year with a fractured elbow. It's that it's happening in the face of one of the *worst* offensive seasons of all time.

That's what's happening right now in Kansas City, where **Alcides Escobar** is hitting .195/.243/.275, a 38 wRC+ that's 72 percent worse than league average. Dating back to 1901, there have been nearly 1,800 qualified seasons from a shortstop, and that 38 wRC+ is tied for the **the fifth worst on record**, and is the lowest since Billy Hunter's 29 wRC+ for the 1953 St. Louis Browns. (This is another good example of how wRC+ makes it easy to compare across eras.)

Escobar might not get enough playing time the remainder of the year to continue to be "qualified," **as he's losing time to Adalberto Mondesi**, but that only helps the case of his shortstop colleagues to set a historic mark. Fewer Escobar plate appearances would be an offensive improvement simply by default.

So if this group does end up having the best collective hitting performance by shortstops, what else can they shoot for? How about simply "best shortstops ever?" In order to do that, we'd need to bring defense and baserunning back in, but other than Machado, each of these guys have positive defensive metrics, too.

If we look at **Wins Above Replacement**, 2018's AL shortstops are worth 33.4 WAR, the **19th most since 1901**. Despite the fact that we're still a week away from the All-Star Game, the season is more than halfway over, with about 55 percent of games having been played so far.

Still, the all-time record is in sight, **as the list is topped** by the 45.2 WAR from the 2002 AL crew led by Alex Rodriguez, Derek Jeter and Nomar Garciaparra, and the 44 WAR from the 2016 group featuring many of the same stars we're watching today.

There's a long way to go to get to that point. But we expected this group of shortstops to be good, and then Machado slid over from third, Bogaerts had a huge rebound from 2017, Simmons hit like he never has before, and Anderson and Profar started to deliver on their prospect promise. This was always going to be a great group of shortstops, and it's been even better than that. Enjoy shortstops who are hitting better than league average. We haven't seen it in more than a century.

FROM MiLB.COM

Toolshed: Futures Game tale of the tape

Measuring up how U.S., World rosters compare by positions

By Sam Dykstra

It is still a game after all.

The Futures Game is one of the most fun days on the Minor League calendar because it places some of baseball's best prospects -- regardless of age or Minor League level -- on the same field at the same time. An 18-year-old shortstop (**Luis Garcia**) from Class A Advanced can be on the same roster as a 23-year-old catcher from Triple-A with 11 games of Major League experience already (**Francisco Mejia**), on a team being managed by a 10-time All-Star and three-time World Series champion (David Ortiz).

This is an exhibition game between the U.S. and World teams set for Sunday at Nationals Park. But there will be a winner, and if there's going to be a winner, there's going to be a favorite and an underdog. The U.S. holds a 12-7 advantage in the all-time series, dating back to the first Futures Game at Fenway Park in 1999, and has won seven of the last eight, including a **7-6 victory** last year at Marlins Park. Should this batch of Americans be favored to make it eight of nine? Or does the World squad have the roster it'll take to win its second Futures Game since 2010? Let's break down both rosters position group by position group.

Catchers

This was a pretty clear advantage for the World Team, even before **No. 66 overall prospect Sean Murphy** was taken off the U.S. roster with a pinkie finger injury.

The World has each of MLB.com's top two catching prospects in Mejia and **Keibert Ruiz**. Mejia is participating in his third Futures Game and is heading to Washington with a hot bat. After struggling with Triple-A Columbus in April and May, MLB.com's No. 15 overall prospect is hitting .397 with a 1.040 OPS in 32 games since June 1. Ruiz is holding his own as a 19-year-old at Double-A and might actually welcome no longer being the youngest player on the field. The Venezuela native has also drawn raves for his improvement behind the plate, and he'll put that to the test handling a rotating group of World pitchers. Both Mejia and Ruiz are switch-hitters, which will help Ortiz construct his lineup. Add in the overall ability of 19-year-old Cubs prospect **Miguel Amaya** -- who is showing more pop than ever with 11 homers for Class A South Bend and is also throwing out 33 percent of attempted basestealers -- and this is as well-rounded a group of backstops as could be found in the Minors. Even if Mejia, who has played 27 games in the outfield this season, moves to the grass, the World will still be covered behind the plate. (That's unlikely, however, with Mejia being listed on the roster at catcher.)

Don't get it wrong; there's a lot to like in **Danny Jansen** and Murphy's replacement in **Andrew Knizner**. The two certainly have the advantage in experience; both the Blue Jays and Cardinals prospect have played at Triple-A this season and would be knocking on the door of the Majors if not for crowded rosters. Jansen, who has a .411 OBP for Triple-A Buffalo, is in the conversation with Mejia for being the best overall offensive catching prospect in the game, and Knizner continues to show a strong hit tool

while growing into a defensive asset after transitioning from third base in college at NC State. But when it comes to ceiling, the World backstops have a slightly deeper set of skills to impact the proceedings in the capital. **Advantage: World**

Infielders

There are some fun storylines on the World side in this department. Padres prospects **Fernando Tatis Jr.** -- at No. 3 overall on MLB.com's list, the highest-ranked prospect involved this year -- and **Luis Urias** could team up together at shortstop and second base, giving San Diego fans a much-needed optimistic look at the Major League future on the dirt. Garcia will become the first Futures Game participant born in the new millennium and will do so in front of his hometown fans in Washington. Mets shortstop **Andres Gimenez**, already a solid defender, has improved his profile by showing increased power as a teenager at the Class A Advanced level. Astros first baseman **Yordan Alvarez** will provide plenty of pop of his own, if he can keep the ball in the air like he has on his way to Triple-A.

But there's just no beating the U.S. depth here. For those following the World Cup in Russia, this is an infield depth chart that could rival France's on the soccer pitch. The U.S. infield alone claims seven different Top 100 prospects -- **Peter Alonso, Bo Bichette, Ke'Bryan Hayes, Keston Hiura, Carter Kieboom, Ryan Mountcastle** and **Brendan Rodgers**. Three of those (Bichette, Kieboom, Rodgers) primarily play at shortstop, though Bichette and Rodgers have some experience at second and third. Every single one of those players has proven to be a solid hitter at the Double-A or higher, and while it would make for a right-handed heavy group, those seven alone would make for a killer lineup with plus hit tools all around and some serious thump from the likes of Alonso and Rodgers. The only non-top-100 U.S. infielder is **Nathaniel Lowe**, who happens to own a 1.008 OPS this season. Even when U.S. manager **Torii Hunter** makes the inevitable in-game moves to, say, swap Kieboom with Bichette or Hayes with Mountcastle, there won't be a significant drop off in skill level, just a different skill set. **Advantage: U.S.**

Outfielders

Similar deal here. Hunter, a nine-time Gold Glove winner as an outfielder himself, will have an embarrassment of riches on the grass Sunday. Top Angels prospect **Jo Adell** has shown signs of becoming a potential five-tool star as he's climbed to Class A Advanced, where he's hitting .306 with a .936 OPS, in his first full season. **Alex Kirilloff** and **Taylor Trammell**, both of whom were high picks in 2016, will bring power and speed, respectively, to the U.S. lineup. Fellow 2016 first-rounder **Kyle Lewis** has had issues staying healthy in the Mariners system, but on his day, he can show off the power and a good arm that made him stand out during his time at Mercer. Furthermore, **Buddy Reed** has become a bit of a power-speed threat with 12 homers and 33 steals for Class A Advanced Lake Elsinore to make him San Diego's third representative in Washington.

The World side has more outfielders -- seven to the U.S.'s five -- but that doesn't quite mean more talent here. **Yusniel Diaz, Leody Taveras, Jesus Sanchez** and **Heliot Ramos** make up the Top 100 bunch here, and in a vacuum, that would be quite the impressive group. Take any three of those four, and the outfield would be plenty covered defensively. But on the offensive side, Taveras and Ramos have yet to figure out Class A Advanced and Class A respectively, and though they are each young for their levels, expecting them to figure out even tougher Futures Game arms in an exhibition is quite the ask. **Randy Arozarena** is the veteran of the group at age 23, **Seuly Matias** brings power as the Minor League leader in home runs and **Luis Alexander Basabe** has showed five-tool potential in a loaded White Sox system.

But there are simply more questions marks here, and the U.S. has too many exclamation points. **Advantage: U.S.**

Pitchers

This might depend on how much you like **Jesus Luzardo**. MLB.com's No. 20 overall prospect is no doubt having a successful season in which he's climbed to Double-A at age 20 and has posted a 2.30 ERA with 99 strikeouts in 78 1/3 innings across two levels. He may have some sort of revenge on the brain as well, as he'll play in Nationals Park for the first time ever since Washington dealt him to Oakland last year. (The Nats won't feel too bad. **Sean Doolittle**, who they got in return, is also an All-Star in 2018.) But, alas, Luzardo, who was born in Peru to Venezuelan parents, is the only Top 100 arm of the bunch on the World side. **Jorge Guzman**, **Yoan Lopez** and **Kieran Lovegrove** could each pack plenty of heat in shorter Futures Game stints, but overall, this is not a particularly deep group.

By comparison, the U.S. side could get to the middle or even late innings before conceivably handing the ball off to a non-top-100 arm. **Dylan Cease**, **Hunter Greene**, **Mitch Keller**, **Matt Manning**, **Justus Sheffield** and **Kyle Wright** each feature among MLB.com's Top 100, and any one of those seven could conceivably go multiple innings Sunday, as 2017 Futures Game MVP **Brent Honeywell** did a year ago. Of those six, only Greene and Manning -- first-rounders in 2017 and 2016, respectively -- have yet to see at least Double-A, so this shouldn't be a specifically intimidated group either. Outside those bigger names, **Dakota Hudson** has a 2.42 ERA at Triple-A, and **C.D. Pelham** should give Hunter a scary left-handed relief option, given his size at 6-foot-6 and his ability to throw in the upper-90s. With 10 hurlers on the roster and each looking for playing time, Hunter could play with some fun matchups all afternoon, counteracting right-handed bats with hard throwers like Greene, Cease and Keller while counterbalancing lefties with Sheffield and Pelham when he sees fit. The World was already fighting an uphill battle with their bats, but the international prospects won't have to face their American infield and outfield counterparts one on one. They will have to face these U.S. arms, however, and that could prove to be an even more difficult task. **Advantage: U.S.**

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Angels overcome injury to Richards, beat Mariners 9-3

By Jill Painter Lopez

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — After a big game with the bats, the Los Angeles Angels went home worried about one of their most important arms.

Kole Calhoun and Andrelton Simmons each had three of Los Angeles' 15 hits Tuesday night, but starting pitcher Garrett Richards left in the third inning of a 9-3 victory over the Seattle Mariners because of irritation in his right forearm.

Richards has been plagued by injuries during his career and this was just his second start since coming off the disabled list after being sidelined by a left hamstring strain. He is scheduled to have an MRI on Wednesday.

"It's tough. Just hoping for good news," Calhoun said. "He's been battling for the better half of a couple years. Hopefully, everything comes back all right."

Calhoun and Albert Pujols both homered for the Angels, who have won three of four. Calhoun and Simmons each had two RBIs.

Simmons, seeking his first All-Star appearance as one of five candidates in online balloting for the final AL spot, hit a go-ahead double in a four-run fourth.

Seattle All-Star Mitch Haniger hit a three-run homer in the first for a 3-0 lead against Richards, who allowed three consecutive hits to begin the game. He exited in the third while pitching to Nelson Cruz.

Richards' velocity was down. After a 92 mph pitch, a trainer and Angels manager Mike Scioscia went to the mound, and the right-hander quickly walked off the field.

"Pregame warmups, in talking to (pitching coach Charles Nagy), he was a little erratic," Scioscia said. "Velocity looked good and his slider was good. His command was a little off. I think you can see that after he got through the first inning, the second inning was OK, but the third inning the velocity dropped and the quickness wasn't there."

Richards gave up three runs and four hits in 2 2/3 innings. Noe Ramirez (4-3), Cam Bedrosian, Jose Alvarez, Hansel Robles and Taylor Cole combined to pitch 6 1/3 shutout innings in relief.

"We've had our share of bullpen games that aren't by design," Scioscia said. "We've had a lot of times where these guys have come in the second, third or fourth inning and kept us in the game. All those guys came in and did a great job. I think Taylor Cole at the end gave us two innings to give some other guys a night off and that's helped a lot."

Mariners starter Mike Leake (8-6) allowed seven runs — five earned — and 11 hits in four innings. Seattle has lost three of four.

"He's not locating," manager Scott Servais said. "That's his game. You got a feeling they were on his pitches, and he didn't have enough to slow them down. He's faced them back-to-back outings, and they had a good read on what he's trying to do. He's a big part of what we're doing in the first half and we just have to get him back on track."

LONG BALL GOES A LONG WAY

The Angels have hit 16 home runs against Seattle, their most versus any opponent this season.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Mariners: RHP Felix Hernandez (sore back) was placed on the 10-day disabled list and is expected back in the rotation after the All-Star break. He had not been doing any side work between starts because of his back issues.

Angels: LHP Tyler Skaggs (right adductor strain) threw a bullpen and the Angels hope he can start Thursday. ... RHP Nick Tropeano (right shoulder inflammation) is scheduled to make another rehab start Friday at Class A Inland Empire.

UP NEXT

Mariners: LHP Marco Gonzales (9-5, 3.64 ERA) has gone at least six innings in 12 of his last 14 starts. He's 1-0 with a 3.91 ERA in five career starts against the Angels.

Angels: RHP Jaime Barria (5-5, 3.39) is seeking his first win since June 1. He allowed two runs and five hits over 5 1/3 innings in Seattle during his last start, a loss.

FROM NBC SPORTS

Garrett Richards to undergo an MRI

By Craig Calcaterra

Angels starter **Garrett Richards** left last night's start against the Mariners after experiencing right forearm irritation, accompanied by a significant loss in velocity. That's a pretty scary combo, so the Angels are not taking any chances with him: he'll undergo an MRI today.

In addition to being a solid starter, whose performance is essential to the Angels' getting back into playoff contention, Richards is probably the team's biggest trade chip in the event it is decided that contention isn't happening. On a personal level it's Richards' free agent walk year, so a serious injury would be disastrous for him and the Angels on a number of levels. Not that injuries are new to him: Richards was limited to six starts the past two seasons because of a damaged ulnar collateral ligament and a biceps issue. He avoided Tommy John surgery by getting stem-cell therapy, but the notion that Richards, while good when healthy, is a workhorse left town a long time ago.

Entering play last night Richards had a 3.42 ERA and 86 strikeouts in 15 starts over 73.2 innings. Whether there will be any more play for him this year will be known after the MRI.

FROM MLB TRADE RUMORS

Garrett Richards To Undergo MRI For Forearm Injury

By Steve Adams

The Angels announced tonight that right-hander **Garrett Richards** exited tonight's start due to irritation in his right forearm. He'll undergo an MRI tomorrow to further evaluate the injury.

It's the latest in a seemingly ceaseless line of injuries to an Angels pitching staff that has struggled to stay healthy over the past several seasons. Richards himself only recently returned from a hamstring injury and was making just his second start since being reinstated from the disabled list.

Any serious injury to Richards would be impactful to the Angels on multiple levels. First and foremost, he's among the team's most talented options in the rotation and is in the midst of a solid season, having pitched to a 3.68 ERA with 10.3 K/9, 3.9 BB/9, 1.3 HR/9 and a 49.3 percent ground-ball rate through 76 1/3 innings.

Beyond that, the Angels are buried 14.5 games back in the American League West and are a similarly daunting 11 games back from an American League Wild Card spot (though they're poised to move up a game in those standings with a late lead over Seattle at present). If the team can't put together a significant winning streak in the coming weeks, GM Billy Eppler and his lieutenants may very well be forced to sell off some short-term assets and begin looking toward 2019. Richards would be among the team's best trade chips with the deadline looming, but this latest injury calls even that possibility into question.

FROM THE DESERT SUN

Could the Angels follow the Yankees and turn to an announcer as their next manager?

By Pete Donovan

*There were three managerial moves in the off-season that resonated throughout the game. Aaron Boone replaced Joe Girardi in New York with the Yankees; Alex Cora replaced John Farrell in Boston; and Dave Martinez replaced the popular Dusty Baker in Washington. All three teams were in the playoffs in 2017 so there was considerable pressure on the rookie skippers.

Boone and Cora have been resounding successes as the Yankees and Red Sox own the two best records in the American League. But Martinez has seen the Nationals fall on hard times. They won only nine times in June and have listlessly drifted through the National League East, a division they were solidly favored to win.

Boone's success is particularly noteworthy as he came directly from the broadcast booth to the dugout. He had no managerial experience and no major league coaching experience.

The Angels might take a book from the Yankees and look at Jose Mota, the multi-talented broadcaster/interpreter, currently employed by the club. Exceptionally popular, the 52-year-old Mota is a Cal State Fullerton alum who won a national championship there under the legendary Augie Garrido. Is it enough of a resume?

*Much of the blame for the Angels' poor season has fallen on the bullpen, which routinely turns wins into losses, but two other glaring stats have been equally as bad: Leadoff hitters have the worst on-base percentage in the majors (.280) and No. 3 hitter Justin Upton has the worst batting average (.160) with runners in scoring position.

*The Dodgers' remarkable ability to uncover hidden gems (Justin Turner in 2014, Andrew Toles in 2016, Chris Taylor last year) has continued with Max Muncy, who leads the team with 20 home runs.

*The Dodgers' depth is more than impressive. Yasiel Puig goes down with an oblique strain, Toles is called up from the minors and gets two hits and a walk in his first game (Monday night).

*The Orioles asking price for Manny Machado is too high for the Dodgers. Baltimore is said to want a young starting pitcher like Walker Buehler or Ross Stripling. The Dodgers have wisely turned them down. Walker, a first-round pick in 2015, is only 23. Stripling leads the Dodgers in wins, ERA and strikeouts.

*Why aren't the Angels calling up Taylor Ward? The former Shadow Hills High star, now playing third base, is hitting .379 in AAA Salt Lake City and he has an OPS (on-base plus slugging percentage) over 1,000 (only Mike Trout is over 1,000 on the current Angels).

*The Angels' top prospect is 19-year-old outfielder Jo Adell who has been selected to play in the annual Futures Game. Baseball America describes him like this: "He has big power, elite speed and a cannon arm."

*Looks like the Yu Darvish signing with the Cubs was the worst off-season free-agent deal. He's making \$25 million and has one win. The Cubs owe him another \$111 million through 2023. Ouch!

*Robinson Cano will get some Hall of Fame consideration when he retires, but his team, the Seattle Mariners, has been playing much better without him. They were five games above .500 when Cano was suspended in June. They are now 23 games above .500 and headed for their first playoff appearance since 1981.

The Mariners have won a remarkable 26 games by one run, are undefeated (8-0) in extra innings and have only a 20-run differential. Lucky or good?

Cano returns the middle of next month.

FROM USA TODAY

MLB's Home Run Derby: Five players we'd like to see in the event

By Scott Boeck

Max Muncy, the Los Angeles Dodgers rookie, is the first player to confirm he will participate in Monday's Home Run Derby.

Nationals star Bryce Harper, MLB's ambassador for next week's All-Star Game in Washington, also plans to participate in the slugging showcase at Nationals Park.

Beyond Muncy and Harper, slots remain open ahead of Wednesday's lineup announcement. Yankee sluggers Giancarlo Stanton and Aaron Judge have already stated they won't be returning for a rematch. MVP candidates Mookie Betts of the Boston Red Sox and Mike Trout of the Los Angeles Angels have said they have no interest.

Who does that leave? Here are five players we would like to see join Harper, Muncy in Monday's showcase:

J.D. Martinez, Red Sox – The two-time All-Star slugged his major league-leading 28th home run on Monday to increase his lead over Aaron Judge and Mike Trout by three. His 28 homers before the break are the third most in Red Sox history, trailing David Ortiz (31 in 2006) and Carl Yastrzemski (29 in 1969). And if we include his 29 homers he hit with the Arizona Diamondbacks last season, Martinez has 59 over his last 148 games.

Khris Davis, Athletics – Davis doesn't get the recognition like his peers, but the outfielder has slugged 106 homers since 2016, second only to Giancarlo Stanton's 108. With 21 homers at the break, he is on pace for his third consecutive 40-homer season.

Mike Trout, Angels – Why not? He's the best player in baseball, and while he's not obligated to participate, a slew of former MVPs have done so in the past decade. Stanton, Judge, Harper, Albert Pujols, Kris Bryant, Anthony Rizzo, Josh Donaldson, Manny Machado and Robinson Cano have all jumped into the Derby in recent years. Getting baseball's LeBron in it would add immeasurable cachet.

Jose Altuve, Astros – A four-time Silver Slugger, he hit seven homers in the postseason during Houston's World Series run and 24 each of the past two seasons. He'd be the underdog, but would add a relatable element fans would soak up.

Scooter Gennett, Reds – The first-time All-Star has sneaky power and once hit four home runs in a game. He slugged a career-high 27 in 2017 and is on pace to surpass that mark this season.

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Baseball's 3,000 hits milestone may soon become a thing of the past

By Adam Kilgore

On May 4, in the fifth inning of a game at Safeco Field against the Seattle Mariners, Albert Pujols flared a single into right field, a common act freighted with uncommon meaning. Los Angeles Angels teammates streamed from the visitors' dugout and mobbed him in the infield, a celebration of his 3,000th hit. The game stopped, in a visiting park, to recognize Pujols.

The milestone continued a relative spate of 3,000th hits. Each of the past four seasons — starting with Alex Rodriguez in 2015, followed by Ichiro Suzuki, Adrian Beltre and Pujols — have seen a player reach the plateau, the first time in MLB history that players reached 3,000 hits in four consecutive years.

The 3,000th has become an annual sight. It will not remain so for long.

The hit, for so long a simple standard of batting prowess and the game's primary point of action, has taken a beating. The dominant trends in how the game is played in Major League Baseball — an emphasis on power and patience, infield shifts on defense, high-octane relief pitchers, exploding strikeout totals — have both devalued and decreased hits. The leagues recorded 2,762 more hits — and 2,967 more singles — a decade ago than last season. This year, MLB hitters have nearly 500 more strikeouts than hits.

The increase in whiffs and plummeting of hits has raised questions about the game's future, convincing the league office to discuss limiting shifts or altering how teams are permitted to deploy relief pitchers. The trends also invite the possibility of a generational wrinkle: Will the changes in approach by — and evaluation of — hitters lead to the endangerment of the 3,000-hit career, in the same way the evolution of pitching made the 300-win pitcher extinct? And will the meaning of 3,000 hits evolve with the game?

For certain, there will not be a fifth consecutive season with a 3,000th hit next year. Miguel Cabrera, the sub-3,000 active leader, sits 324 hits away. Cabrera seems like a safe bet to reach 3,000, but it's no lock after the way his 2018 season ended, with surgery to repair a torn biceps. He has five years remaining on his contract with the Detroit Tigers after this season, and his skills as a hitter are so sublime that they will likely be willing to play him even as age erodes them. But he is 35 with the mileage of a player even older, and will be coming off a significant injury.

After Cabrera, the closest to 3,000 hits is Robinson Cano. He needs 583 hits to reach 3,000 and the Mariners have him under contract through 2023, but like Cabrera, his situation is murkier than simple math. Cano, 35, was suspended 80 games this season for using performance-enhancing drugs. Unlike most aging stars, the suspension may rob him of the goodwill needed to allow him to hang on to a roster spot long enough to reach 3,000, and it's unknown how much pharmacology helped his production in the first place.

If Cabrera and Cano cannot reach 3,000, then the wait could be long. Nick Markakis is next up, with 2,145 hits. He's having his best offensive season at age 34, having already compiled a National League-leading 93 hits. He is one of MLB's most durable players, and his defense is good enough to keep him in the lineup even if his offensive skills decline.

Bill James, the godfather of baseball's modern statistical analysis, used Markakis as an example to counter the notion that 3,000-hit careers are in trouble.

"We're kind of at a moment when most of the stars of the game are younger, and not yet in position to be seen as 3,000-hit candidates," James wrote in an email. "But the conditions of the game are such that even a relatively modest talent like Markakis ... Nick Markakis is a good player, but not what we usually think of as a 3,000-hit type player . . . but the conditions of the game now are SO favorable toward 3,000-hit campaigns that even a player like that remains alive as a 3,000-hit candidate until late in his career. Conditions for a 3,000-hit career have rarely or never been as favorable as they are now."

But for Markakis to reach 3,000, he would also have to reverse another emerging trend: the squeezing out of the late-30s veteran hitter. If Markakis averages 171 hits — his average over the past five seasons — over his next five years, he'd reach 3,000 in his age-39 season. A free agent this winter, Markakis would likely need to sign two more contracts to make it. The second deal no longer seems a given after this winter revealed a new, extreme unwillingness among front offices to sign veteran hitters.

Superstars from a different generation benefited from a different outlook toward mega-contracts for veterans. Pujols, 38, might have struggled to find work this offseason had he been a free agent after producing a .672 OPS and minus-1.8 WAR (according to Baseball-Reference.com's calculations) in 2017. Instead, he is in the middle of a 10-year, \$240 million deal that runs through 2021, leaving the Angels with little choice but to try to salvage their investment. The Angels paid for past performance when they signed Pujols, and the contract he earned from his peak left no doubt he'd reach 3,000 hits. Those kind of deals, combined with improved conditioning and medical care, created the conditions for four of baseball's 32 3,000th hits to happen in the past four seasons.

"The different salary structure in baseball will have tended to keep star performers on the field longer," MLB official historian John Thorn said.

Thorn predicted "you may hit a lag" with 3,000-hit players, "but I think the long-term trend is for another burst of 3,000-hit players" despite the modern forces working against the hit.

Jose Altuve, 28, is 1,648 hits away, and if he stays on his 204-hits-per-season pace from the past five years, he'd reach 3,000 at age 36, in the middle of the 2026 season. Mike Trout, just 26, already has 1,126 hits. At his current superhuman rate, he may find a way to reach 3,000 by, like, next August. Elvis Andrus, Eric Hosmer, Freddie Freeman and Giancarlo Stanton have all reached 1,000 hits before age 30.

By the time those players are nearing 3,000 hits, though, the way we look at the milestone may have changed. For pitchers, 300 wins used to be an automatic ticket to Cooperstown. Now, as modern analytics have revealed the win statistic as empty, wins matter less to Hall of Fame cases, and 300 wins is viewed as an impossibility, anyway.

Even the 3,000-hit mark has evolved over baseball's long history. Thorn pointed out that Sam Rice retired, in 1934, just 13 hits short of 3,000, mainly because nobody viewed 3,000 as a magical number until at least the 1940s.

If front offices value walks and on-base percentage so much, it stands to reason historical evaluations will start to align. "It is possible we should look at some point instead to hits plus walks," Thorn said. "If we're going to do counting measures, if we're going to count stats, maybe we should count walks and hits instead."

Baseball-Reference's times on base stat, which includes hit by pitches, would give far more credit to players outside the 3,000-hit club. Ted Williams fell more than 300 hits shy, but only 12 men reached base more often. Barry Bonds needed less than 100 hits for 3,000, but only Pete Rose reached base more than him.

"We measure things more cleverly now," Thorn said. "Not only more intricately, but also more smartly."

For now and the foreseeable future, the number 3,000 still holds a special allure, the power to halt the game itself. It's difficult to see that changing, but then baseball has a way of changing slowly at first, and then suddenly, all at once.

FROM FOR THE WIN/USA TODAY

Who you should pick for All-Star Final Vote based on each team's pitch

By Michelle R. Martinelli

While the MLB All-Star Game rosters are nearly set for next week's midsummer classic, fans can still vote one more player onto each league's team.

The Final Vote keeps the door open for one of five National and American League players to still make the roster, and the **voting is open until 4 p.m. ET on Wednesday**. The leaderboard was released by MLB on Tuesday, and here's what it looks like.

Now, we could make arguments for why you should vote for each player based on stats, recent performances, the team they represent, yada, yada, yada. Or we could help you figure out who to vote for based on respective team's pitches, which seems like way more fun. So here goes.

National League

1. WWE AND DAD JOKES FOR BRANDON BELT

The San Francisco Giants easily win this one with Hunter Pence and Derek Holland's outrageously hilarious WWE-style performance while they argue for their first baseman to make the All-Star roster. Plus, we here at For The Win are **huge fans of dad jokes**, and this one is pretty great.

2. DOUGHNUTS AND FATHEADS FOR JESÚS AGUILAR

The Milwaukee Brewers gave out "Sweet Jesús" doughnuts to fans who voted for Aguilar on Tuesday, and they've turned this into a true campaign with fatheads, posters, t-shirts and signs for your front lawn reading, "We believe in Jesús". But really, you had us at doughnuts.

3. TICKETS FOR TREA TURNER

Several Washington Nationals players have made their pitches for their team's speedy shortstop, but slugger Bryce Harper has gone as far as bribing fans with All-Star Game tickets. That's a pretty tempting offer.

4. MAGIC FOR MAX MUNCY

If Magic Johnson asks for a favor, how can you say no to him?

5. BASEBALL THINGS FOR MATT CARPENTER

If you want to get all technical about it, this is, in fact, a baseball vote for a spot on a baseball roster. So I guess baseball highlights work as an argument. But are they as good as doughnuts?

American League

1. *BENNIE AND THE JETS* FOR ANDREW BENINTENDI

Boston Red Sox's Brock Holt has so much love for Benintendi that he became the Final Vote campaign manager. He's made internet videos, photobombed a Benintendi interview with a fathead and even changed his walk-up song to Elton John's *Bennie and the Jets*. That's love.

2. *LION KING* FOR ANDRELTON SIMMONS

We are so here for all the *Lion King* references for the Los Angeles Angels shortstop. Plus, it led to Mike Trout attempting to sing the opening lines of one of the movie's most famous songs.

3. ROSES FOR EDDIE ROSARIO

Cue all **The Bachelorette references** because that's how the Minnesota Twins are playing this one. If you're a fan of the show and Becca, this is an easy sell.

4. JEANS AND GIFS FOR JEAN SEGURA

There are so many puns being made about the Seattle Mariners infielder's first name, and the team is taking advantage. But we're also enjoying the jeans on jeans on jeans. And if this GIF doesn't make you love the Seattle Mariners infielder, nothing will.

5. NO SHIRTS FOR GIANCARLO STANTON

The New York Yankees basically just got their players to rally behind Stanton, which is fine, I guess.