



Press Clips

(August 7, 2018)

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FROM THE OC REGISTER**Nick Tropeano's early exit dampens Angels' victory over Tigers**

By J.P. Hoornstra

ANAHEIM — The Angels beat a poor Detroit Tigers baseball team Monday. Eric Young Jr. and Andrelton Simmons each hit home runs and made diving catches in the field. Light-hitting third baseman Kaleb Cowart hit a pair of doubles. Their 6-2 victory achieved what last week's 1-5 road trip did not: it made the game look fun.

The Angels' joy, never unfettered, was confronted with a familiar villain. Starting pitcher Nick Tropeano faced one batter above the minimum for five innings, then was removed because of stiffness in his right shoulder.

Officially, Tropeano missed 31 games this season with inflammation in the same shoulder. Yet even before he landed on the disabled list in June, Tropeano said he had not pitched at full health all season. Any recurrence of the injury would be discouraging; after Tropeano made arguably his best start in two months, he could scarcely concoct a more heartbreaking exit.

"It was more precautionary," Tropeano said, "to take me out now and play it by ear."

Tropeano (5-6) is one of nine Angels starting pitchers who have missed time with injuries this season. Matt Shoemaker, Garrett Richards and JC Ramirez have all spent more time on the DL than the Angels' active roster, or will have by the end of the season. The Angels' 56-58 record is largely a testament to time spent in the trainers' room.

Manager Mike Scioscia said Tropeano isn't scheduled for an MRI exam on his shoulder. The pitcher said he would rest for two days, then try to go about his normal routine in preparation for his next scheduled start Sunday against the Oakland A's.

"I don't think we're going to assume it's a DL stint or anything like that," Tropeano said. "Right now it just felt stiff."

The announced crowd of 34,073 at Angel Stadium had not seen the Angels win at home since July 28. They had not won on a Monday since June 4.

The score was tied 1-1 when Simmons' seventh home run of the season, a two-run shot against Tigers starter Matt Boyd (6-2), gave the Angels the lead for good in the third inning. Young's first home run of the season, a solo blast in the fifth inning, extended the lead to 4-1.

Other than a solo home run by Nicholas Castellanos, Tropeano did not allow a hit. The right-hander struck out four Detroit hitters while walking just one, and he needed only 62 pitches to get through five innings.

Tropeano said he first felt tightness in his shoulder after the first inning. It was not until after the fifth inning, however, that he was asked to describe how he felt in the Angels' dugout. Perhaps the radar gun

provided a clue: Tropeano's fastball topped out in the 92-93 mph range in each of his four starts after returning from the disabled list; Monday it never exceeded 91.

"I just felt like my stuff wasn't as effective because I felt tight," Tropeano said. "When that's the case, I'm coming back from (Tommy John surgery), so we're kind of worried about the elbow, if you're compensating, stuff like that."

Despite the injury, Tropeano dominated the Tigers' lineup, lowering his earned-run average to 4.74. Detroit has lost four consecutive games to fall to 47-66.

Noe Ramirez took over in the sixth inning, faced four batters, and did not record an out. The right-hander issued two walks and a single to load the bases for Jose Iglesias, who dumped a line drive a few feet in front of Young in center field.

Iglesias settled for a single as James McCann scored Detroit's second run. The bases were still loaded with nobody out when Scioscia summoned Cam Bedrosian from the bullpen.

Bedrosian escaped the quagmire by striking out Castellanos with a 93-mph fastball down the middle, then getting Jeimer Candelario to hit into an inning-ending double play.

"For him to get out of the inning with no more damage really set us up well," Scioscia said of Bedrosian.

The Angels padded their lead with two runs in the seventh inning. Jose Briceño singled and went to third base on a double by Cowart. Young's sacrifice fly allowed both runners to tag up and advance, driving in Briceño. Iglesias, the Tigers' shortstop, dove to prevent a ground ball by David Fletcher from reaching the outfield, but he did not prevent Cowart from scoring the Angels' sixth run.

Hansel Robles and Justin Anderson combined to pitch the final three innings without allowing a run.

Young and Simmons were teammates in Atlanta in 2015, then were reunited with the Angels last year. Sunday night they sat in the same row on the flight home from Cleveland. Their lockers sit side-by-side in the Angels' clubhouse, too.

The two men are close enough off the field that Simmons could tease Young about playing copycat on the field.

"We feed off each other," Young said.

"He's just trying to show off," Simmons said, jokingly. "No, but his diving play was way better. His homer was a little farther than mine, where the big boys hit it."

Angels' Shohei Ohtani throwing off a mound ... with a towel

By J.P. Hoornstra

ANAHEIM — Shohei Ohtani had a visitor Monday: Kazuyuki Shirai, his coach on the Nippon Ham Fighters.

Shirai picked a good day to visit. Ohtani, who has not pitched since June 6 because of a sprained ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow, took a small step toward returning as a pitcher, making some dry throws off the bullpen mound while holding a towel in his right hand. It was his first mound activity of any sort since receiving an injection of platelet-rich plasma and stem cells on June 7.

Scioscia said the purpose of the drill was to re-acclimate Ohtani to the slope of the pitcher's mound. Ohtani hasn't had any setbacks in his long-toss program, in which he's progressed to 120 feet.

Ohtani hasn't set a target date for throwing a baseball off the mound, Scioscia said.

Barring any setbacks, it remains possible Ohtani could return to pitch in September.

Before the injury, Ohtani went 4-1 with a 3.10 ERA and 61 strikeouts over 49-1/3 innings. The 24-year-old rookie spent a month on the disabled list before returning to the active roster as a left-handed hitter on July 3. Ohtani is batting .271 with an .869 OPS, 11 home runs and 29 RBIs in 60 games this season.

Mike Trout receives cortisone injection, Angels hoping he'll return this weekend

By J.P. Hoornstra

ANAHEIM — Mike Trout missed his sixth straight game Monday. Now, at least, the Angels will not postpone the suspense of his return a mere 24 hours.

Trout received a cortisone injection after reporting soreness in his right wrist. Recovering from the shot will require a couple days' rest before he can resume baseball activities. Since the Angels do not play Thursday, the likely best-case scenario would see Trout return sometime during a three-game series against the Oakland A's beginning Friday.

Manager Mike Scioscia said he did not anticipate Trout needing the 10-day disabled list.

"All the tests he had point to some interesting information that has to run its course," Scioscia said. "His injection will help that happen. We anticipate him getting into baseball activities in a couple days and see how he feels from there."

Trout initially suffered the injury Wednesday, when he jammed his wrist bracing himself against the dirt on a feet-first slide in the first inning against the Tampa Bay Rays. He finished out that game as the Angels' designated hitter and hasn't played since.

If Trout had been placed on the 10-day DL the next day, the earliest he could have returned would be Sunday. Since DL stints can only be backdated a maximum of three days, any DL stint would now force Trout to miss a minimum of one week from the date he's deactivated.

Scioscia, however, defended the decision to keep Trout on the active roster.

“If you can get Mike Trout to play from the seventh to the 10th day (from the date of the injury), I think you’d like to, right? We’re going to let it run its course and when he’s 100 percent he’ll play,” Scioscia said.

Trout has a .309 batting average, 30 home runs and 60 RBIs in 109 games this season.

FERNANDEZ RETURNS

For the third time this season, the Angels brought up Jose Fernandez from Triple-A Salt Lake. Pitcher Deck McGuire was optioned to Salt Lake, one day after he was the losing pitcher in the Angels’ 3-1 loss in Cleveland.

A veteran of eight seasons in Cuba’s top league, Fernandez had nine hits, including two doubles, in his first 36 major league at-bats this season. The 30-year-old was batting .334 in 79 games with Salt Lake.

ALSO

Rene Rivera said he will begin a rehab assignment with Class-A Inland Empire on Tuesday. The 35-year-old catcher hasn’t played since undergoing knee surgery in May. Rivera anticipated needing “maybe five” rehab games to return to the major league roster. ... Pitcher Matt Shoemaker threw his first bullpen since he was sidelined by a nerve issue in April. ... In response to a question about reports that he will not manage the Angels beyond this season, Scioscia said “nothing’s changed” since he denied the reports Sunday.

UP NEXT

Angels (LHP Andrew Heaney, 6-7, 3.75 ERA) vs. Detroit Tigers (RHP Jacob Turner, 0-0, 15.88 ERA), Tuesday, 7 p.m., Fox Sports West

Alexander: ‘Poppycock?’ Mike Scioscia’s dismissal of reports about his Angels future wasn’t a denial

By Jim Alexander

Whatever happens from here, in one sense Mike Scioscia has already beaten the odds.

It was Pat Riley, years ago, who posited that a head coach or a manager had a finite shelf life, maybe five to seven years max. After a while, he noted, players had heard the same stuff, delivered in the same way, for so long that they stopped paying attention.

So to survive as a major league manager for 19 seasons, and to be in a position to depart on your own terms? That’s impressive, whatever else you might think of Scioscia’s managing (and a vocal and critical segment of Angel fans has plenty to say about that, as noted below).

As we know now, two reports this weekend by national baseball writers – Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic and Bob Nightengale of USA Today – indicated Scioscia would walk away from the Angels at the end of this season, the final year of the 10-year extension he signed in January 2009.

It is important to note that Scioscia, in dismissing the reports this weekend, did not flatly deny them, although his description might have sent many people under 30 scrambling to find a definition of the word “poppycock.”

“Nothing has changed since October,” he told a media scrum before Sunday’s game in Cleveland.

In other words, it was mutually decided then that rather than seeking another extension, he would finish out his contract this season, and then sit down with General Manager Billy Eppler, owner Arte Moreno and club president John Carpino to determine his future course.

That is still the plan, and it’s a sizable distance from *“the reports are erroneous and I’m coming back.”* More likely, stepping away after this season is indeed the plan, or at least under serious consideration, but Scioscia would prefer to avoid any sort of farewell tour if he can. And that would be absolutely in character.

Curiously enough, just hours after the Rosenthal story broke, the Angels made some organizational adjustments: Salt Lake manager Keith Johnson joined the big league coaching staff, and special assistant Eric Chavez – one of those on Eppler’s staff considered a future manager – took over the Triple-A club.

Does this not sound like an organization preparing for its future?

Scioscia will be remembered as the guy who managed the Angels to their first (and to date only) World Series championship in 2002, launching a run of success that would include five division titles in the 2000s and another in 2014 (compared to the three the franchise won in 42 pre-Scioscia seasons).

His 1,625 managerial victories, entering Monday night’s homestand opener with Detroit, are 18th on the all-time list and second among active managers behind the Giants’ Bruce Bochy.

But his teams haven’t won a postseason game since 2009, getting swept by Kansas City in 2014 after compiling an MLB-best 98 wins in the regular season. The Angels were under .500 the last two seasons, though they were in the wild card race for a while last year before finishing 80-82. They entered Monday 55-58 and effectively out of the division and wild-card races.

A good portion of the fan base seems ready for a new voice. Here’s a sample just from correspondence sent to me earlier this season:

“... It is time for Mike Scioscia to step aside. I do not mean to be fired, just promoted and taken off the field, maybe President of Baseball Operations or something similar.

“The Angels will never win with him managing, although the team has excellent talent. Injuries are part of the game and all teams deal with them. For some reason, Scioscia wants to pull pitchers in the sixth or seventh inning, no matter how well they are doing. He has lost countless games over the years doing this. His pitchers will find a groove, and then he pulls them and the long relievers blow the game, over

and over. The Angels never (bunt) and advance runners for their big guns, but hit into countless double plays and blow scoring opportunities.

“Mr. Moreno deserves better, as do Albert (Pujols) and (Mike) Trout. (The) Angels have the talent to win, and should ...”

– Steve Keller

“ ... Trout truly is a phenomenal baseball player, on a bad team, led by a loser manager, Mike Scioscia, who should have been fired many years ago ... The losing falls squarely upon Scioscia. He’s terrible, and he has to go now.”

– William Stremel

“Does Scoscia ever show any emotion or get mad with the players? They all look like (they’re) downcast. Good reason to I guess.”

– Reg Fennell

And then there is social media, where Scioscia tends to get treated like a piñata under normal circumstances. Here are some of the kinder reactions.

Of course, it never helps when a good portion of your pitching staff is often on the disabled list by August, be it from some sort of organizational failings or just lousy luck.

(Incidentally, before the Angels won their World Series the word was that the franchise was cursed because the ballpark was built on a Native American burial ground. Given all that has transpired since, is there reason to suspect the team is still cursed, and that they won in '02 in part because Scott Spiezio sold his soul to Mr. Applegate – kids, look up “Damn Yankees” – before Game 6 against the Giants?)

The public debate over Scioscia’s effectiveness, as is the case with most managers, revolves around in-game strategy, bullpen usage, and more recently use of metrics. Fans usually pay little attention to the “managing” part – keeping 25 men on the same page day after day.

Or as Scioscia says frequently, turning the page. He does tend to fall back on certain go-to cliches regularly.

Do guys play hard for him? The ones who don’t usually don’t stick around long.

Has the game passed him by? I don’t see it. The narrative that he’s anti-metrics, which supposedly explained his relationship with former GM Jerry DiPoto, is significantly overblown. Scioscia’s Angels shift as much as anybody. And when he takes out starting pitchers in the fifth or sixth inning ... well, look around baseball and show me a current manager who doesn’t.

When Scioscia does depart, he will leave two legacies. One is obvious, symbolized by that huge red “2002 WORLD CHAMPIONS” banner hanging from the flagpole in left-center at Angel Stadium.

The other? Influenced by his playing days with the Dodgers, Scioscia's team adopted a distinctive, aggressive style of play and taught it organization-wide. That was an Angels' first.

It would be nice if, when the time comes, Scioscia provides enough notice that the ballclub could give him the on-field ceremony that he deserves. But knowing him, don't count on it.

FROM LOS ANGELES TIMES

Mike Scioscia's future is still trending topic as Angels defeat Tigers 6-2

By Jeff Miller

The first curveball of the day was thrown nearly four hours before the game, by a catcher, one who hasn't appeared in the big leagues in more than a quarter-century.

If Mike Scioscia is indeed approaching retirement, he's headed there wearing a smile.

Or maybe Monday that was a smirk.

Asked to comment on reports that he will step aside as Angels manager after the season, Scioscia stared back at a young reporter and said, unblinking, "What question's that? I haven't heard anything."

When the impressionable inquirer persisted, so did Scioscia, claiming, "Who said that? I'm serious. You're hitting me blindsided here."

After a brief pause for effect, Scioscia finally allowed the squirming kid to exhale by explaining, "Same answer I talked about yesterday goes for today."

The exchange was entertaining and good natured. The fact that the questions were coming from an intern at a local television station made the whole thing all the more humorous.

In his 19th season, Scioscia simply dominated an overmatched student trying to find his way.

Similarly, Scioscia's teetering status overshadowed most of what happened later in the Angels' 6-2 victory over the fading Detroit Tigers.

Nick Tropeano smothered the Tigers over five innings, giving up only a solo homer before abruptly exiting because of what the Angels later described as shoulder tightness.

The right-hander has battled issues with his shoulder most of the season and twice has been put on the disabled list, most recently because of bursitis.

"I'm pushing for a no-DL thing," said Tropeano, who acknowledged he felt stiffness as early as warmups.

He called the decision to leave the game “precautionary” and said he hoped to be able to make his next scheduled start Sunday.

The Angels returned to Anaheim after losing six of their previous seven games, recently traded away two starters and had little hope that their final 49 games would grow in significance.

The situation with Scioscia blew up over the weekend with the first of two reports that he is in his last weeks in a job he was hired to fill in November 1999.

On Sunday, as the Angels were wrapping up a trip in Cleveland, Scioscia used the words “poppycock” and “insanity” to dismiss the accounts, neither of which was surprising given that his contract is about to run out.

Scioscia went on to explain that no decision has been made, adding that uncertainty about his future won't be an issue for the Angels over the balance of this season.

Meanwhile, his players are still charged with trying to win games, regardless of the relevance.

The Angels were definitely moving in that direction Monday after an RBI double by Kaleb Cowart and homers by Andrelton Simmons and Eric Young Jr. gave them a 4-1 lead.

The runs were more than sufficient support for Tropeano, who allowed only one other baserunner after giving up a home run to Nick Castellanos in the first inning.

In the sixth, however, reliever Noe Ramirez faced four batters and retired none as the Tigers closed to within two runs.

Cam Bedrosian then entered to strike out Castellanos and get Jeimer Candelario to ground into a double play to keep the score 4-2, a stellar escape that required only 10 pitches.

After that, Hansel Robles and Justin Anderson secured the final nine outs as the Angels added two insurance runs, capping the victory almost as fittingly as Scioscia did his pregame exchange.

When he was finished messing with the young reporter, Scioscia offered his compliments and extended his fist, the two of them playfully bumping knuckles.

Angels outfielder Mike Trout receives cortisone shot in latest attempt to heal wrist

By Jeff Miller

Instead of the Angels' inconsistent offense receiving a badly needed shot of **Mike Trout** on Monday, it was Trout who received the injection.

He was treated with cortisone in the latest attempt to heal his sore right wrist and later missed his fifth consecutive game.

The Angels are hoping to avoid having to place Trout on the disabled list, a move that would sideline him through the weekend. Team officials say, without any setbacks, he might be able to return Friday.

“All the tests he’s had point to just some inflammation,” manager **Mike Scioscia** said. “That has to run its course. This injection will help that.”

Trout was injured Wednesday sliding into third base in a game against Tampa Bay. He initially said he probably would miss only a couple days, but the symptoms have lingered.

Eric Young Jr. started in Trout’s place in center field in the opener of a three-game series against Detroit. He hit his first homer of the season and made a diving catch in deep center field to end the eighth.

Rivera rehabbing

Catcher **Rene Rivera**, who has been out since mid-May with a right knee injury, said he’ll begin a rehabilitation assignment Tuesday.

Rivera hasn’t played since May 16 because of a torn meniscus, an ailment that required surgery. The Angels’ original timetable had him missing four to six weeks.

“Bodies are different and heal different,” Rivera said. “We wanted to get all the soreness out.... We don’t want to deal with this anymore.”

Without Rivera and having traded veteran Martin Maldonado in late July, the Angels have been going with rookie catchers **Jose Briceno** and **Francisco Arcia**.

At 35 and in his 10th big-league season, Rivera said he has been enjoying the chance to share his experience.

“I’ve always been the guy who wanted to help the young kids,” he said. “It’s good to know you have the opportunity to help them. Next chapter of my career, maybe I’ll be a coach or manager. We’ll see.”

More injury updates

Matt Shoemaker (forearm surgery) threw his first bullpen session Monday and reported no problems.

Shohei Ohtani (ulnar collateral ligament sprain) also stepped on the mound, though he didn’t throw a baseball from there. He was limited to going through his pitching motion to begin the process of re-acclimating.

“He’s made a lot of progress, no setbacks,” Scioscia said of Ohtani. “This is absolutely moving in the right direction. We’re confident in that.”

If they can continue without interruption, Shoemaker and Ohtani are expected to pitch again this season.

Short hops

Infielder **Jose Fernandez** was recalled from triple-A Salt Lake and pitcher **Deck McGuire** was optioned down.... **Jacob Turner**, a No. 1 draft pick in 2009 who has pitched for five teams, will start Tuesday for the Tigers. He's replacing **Mike Fiers**, who was traded Monday to Oakland.

FROM ANGELS.COM

Simba and Young HR, flash leather to top Tigers

Tropeano leaves after 5 sharp innings due to shoulder tightness

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- **Andrelton Simmons** and **Eric Young Jr.** homered to power the Angels to a 6-2 win over the Tigers in Monday's series opener at Angel Stadium, though the night was dampened by **Nick Tropeano's** early exit with right shoulder tightness.

Tropeano cruised through five innings of one-hit ball and retired the final eight batters he faced before being abruptly lifted with his pitch count at 62. The 27-year-old said he began to experience stiffness in his shoulder during his pregame warmups and tried to push through it before disclosing the ailment to the team.

"He was grinding it early," manager Mike Scioscia said. "It got a little looser, but it just seemed like he wasn't able to finish his pitches as the game went on. Obviously, we didn't want to extend it and put him at risk. He just battled his way through five innings."

Tropeano has already endured two stints on the disabled list because of shoulder issues this season, the second of which caused him to miss 31 games, but he said he's optimistic that he'll be able to avoid missing time this time around. He's planning on taking the next two days off to see if the discomfort will subside enough to allow him to make his next scheduled start against the A's on Sunday.

"Obviously, this was something I was battling, so they wanted to take precautionary [measures] and pull me right then and there," Tropeano said. "We're going to take it day by day. I don't think we're going to assume it's a DL stint or anything like that. Right now it just felt stiff, felt limited. I think we're just going to be playing it by ear over the next couple days."

Buoyed by home runs from Simmons and Young, Tropeano turned a 4-1 lead over to the Angels' bullpen in the sixth and immediately saw it imperiled. **Noe Ramirez** replaced Tropeano and allowed all four

batters he faced to reach base. The Tigers loaded the bases on a single and a pair of walks before **Jose Iglesias** lined an RBI single to center field to cut the Angels' lead to 4-2.

With the bases still loaded and no outs, Scioscia opted to pull Ramirez in favor of **Cam Bedrosian**, who struck out **Nicholas Castellanos** looking and then induced a 4-6-3 inning-ending double play from **Jeimer Candelario** to extricate himself from the jam and preserve the Angels' lead.

"Big situation, big time in the game," Scioscia said. "They had the tying run on second at that point, It was getting late enough in the game where runs are obviously going to swing the game one way or the other. For him to get out of that inning with no more damage really set us up well."

Monday's win comes on the heels of the Angels' (56-58) disappointing 1-5 road trip to Tampa and Cleveland, a stretch that was made all the more difficult after **Mike Trout** sustained a right wrist contusion on Wednesday. **Trout sat out his fifth consecutive game on Monday**, but the Angels received a key lift from the bottom half of their lineup, as Simmons, **Jose Briceno**, **Kaleb Cowart** and Young combined to go 7-for-12 with two homers and five RBIs.

"It was good," said Simmons, who went 2-for-3 with two RBIs. "We had a tough road trip, missing Mike a little bit. We talked about it. We needed the big bats. We needed to hit a couple homers to fill in for Mike."

Castellanos gave the Tigers an early 1-0 lead by homering to right field in the first inning, but the Angels tied it on Cowart's RBI double off Detroit left-hander **Matthew Boyd** in the second.

After Simmons and Briceno strung together back-to-back singles with two outs, Cowart lined a 1-2 fastball over the head of left fielder **Victor Reyes**, plating Simmons from third. Cowart had entered Monday just 2-for-22 (.091) in 10 games with the Angels this season.

In the fourth, Simmons launched a two-run homer off Boyd to snap the 1-1 tie and give the Angels their first lead of the night. **Albert Pujols** led off the inning with a single to center field, and two batters later Simmons whacked a 2-0 fastball to left field for his seventh home run of the season and a 3-1 lead. It was Simmons' first home run since July 3.

Young, who has been starting in center field in Trout's absence, extended the Angels' lead by leading off the fifth with his first home run of the season. Young crushed a 3-1 fastball from Boyd, depositing it 423 feet into the rock formation in center field to make it 4-1.

"Anytime I get a chance to suit up and go out there and play in a Major League game, you want to take advantage of any opportunity," Young said. "You don't know how long you're blessed to play this game, and every time you go out there you want to give it everything you've got."

The Angels added their final two runs in the seventh after Briceno singled and Cowart doubled to set up Young's sacrifice fly and **David Fletcher**'s run-scoring groundout.

"I think we pressured them a lot," Scioscia said. "I think it was great to see the guys at the bottom [of the lineup] do what they did. We needed it tonight, for sure."

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

In addition to their home runs, Simmons and Young seemingly tried to outdo each other by making a pair of impressive diving plays in the eighth. **James McCann** led off the inning by blistering a 102-mph liner toward left field, but Simmons made a brilliant leaping catch to snag the ball for the first out. Iglesias later sent a deep drive to center field, but Young made a sensational diving catch at the warning track for the final out of the inning.

"We've been playing together since the Braves days, so we have a pretty good relationship," Young said. "It's always fun coming to work with him."

Added Simmons: "His diving play was way better. And his homer was a little further than mine."

UP NEXT

Left-hander **Andrew Heaney** (6-7, 3.75 ERA) will start opposite right-hander **Jacob Turner** on Tuesday as the Angels and Tigers continue their three-game series at 7:07 p.m. PT at Angel Stadium. Heaney faced the Tigers on May 31 in Detroit and was charged with the loss after giving up five runs over five innings. He is 6-2 with a 2.44 ERA in 10 starts at Angel Stadium this season.

Ohtani throwing ... but with a towel

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- **Shohei Ohtani's** return to the mound continues to progress smoothly.

Ohtani, who has not pitched since June 6 because of a sprained ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow, has advanced to throwing from 120 feet "with effort," manager Mike Scioscia said. Ohtani was also spotted in the bullpen on Monday performing dry throws off the mound with a towel in his right hand.

It marked his first mound work since receiving stem-cell and platelet-rich plasma injections in his right elbow on June 7.

"There's still some long toss that he has to get after," Scioscia said. "He's made a lot of progress, no setbacks. He'll continue to be evaluated, but this is absolutely moving in the right direction. We're very confident in that."

Scioscia added that Ohtani is moving closer to throwing off the mound, though the Angels have not settled on a specific day yet. Ohtani is expected to perform some drills to reacquaint himself with the slope of the mound before being cleared to throw a bullpen. Barring any setbacks, Ohtani could potentially return to pitch in September.

Prior to the elbow injury, Ohtani went 4-1 with a 3.10 ERA and 61 strikeouts over 49 1/3 innings for the Angels. He spent a month on the disabled list before returning exclusively as a left-handed hitter on July 3. Ohtani, 24, is batting .271 with an .869 OPS, 11 home runs and 29 RBIs in 60 games this season.

Celebrate Mike Trout's birthday with his first career hit: A run-scoring bunt

By Matt Monagan

When you think of Mike Trout, who turns 27 today, you probably think of an all-powerful baseball god. A man who hits dingers so high they could break the sky, a gravity-defying outfielder who robs fly balls from becoming homers, a three-time MVP who's already an all-time great.

So, if asked how Trout got his very first Major League hit seven years ago as a 19-year-old, you might think "a home run that's still traveling today" or a "laser-beam triple that set the outfield grass on fire as it ripped through our feeble atmosphere."

But no, it was ... A BUNT.

A run-scoring bunt, to be exact.

It was the second game of Trout's career and he finished 1-for-3 on the day with two runs. His first dinger would come two weeks later against submarine-throwing Mark Worrell in Baltimore.

Since that game, Trout has only bunted seven other times -- none since 2012 -- and gotten hits twice. So yes, he even bunts at an exceptional .375 clip. Here's hoping he lays one down again soon for the small, yet proud, "Never Dinger, Hit Bunts" crowd.

Trout gets cortisone shot, remains day to day

Scioscia says Angels hope star center fielder will return Friday

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- **Mike Trout** received a cortisone injection to help quell the inflammation in his ailing right wrist on Monday and remains day to day, the Angels announced. Trout was out of the lineup for the fifth consecutive game, but manager Mike Scioscia said the club is hoping the star center fielder will be able to return to action on Friday against the A's.

"I think all the tests that he had point to just some inflammation that has to run its course," Scioscia said before Monday's series opener against the Tigers. "His injection will help that to happen. We anticipate him getting into baseball activities in a couple days and seeing how he feels for Friday."

Trout jammed his wrist on an awkward feet-first slide into third base on Wednesday in Tampa. While Trout has been able to field and throw without many issues, he's still struggling to fully extend through his swing without feeling the injury.

Though the ailment has taken longer to heal than expected, Scioscia said the Angels still believe Trout will avoid the disabled list. Since DL stints can only be backdated by three days, Trout would not be eligible to return until Aug. 13 if he were placed on the 10-day DL on Monday.

"If you can get Mike Trout to play on the seventh day instead of the 10th day, I think you'd want to, right?" Scioscia said. "We're just going to let it run its course, and when it's 100 percent, he'll play."

Trout is expected to refrain from baseball activities over the next couple of days to allow the cortisone injection to take hold in his wrist. The treatment will likely prevent Trout from playing against the Tigers on his 27th birthday on Tuesday.

Rivera update

Catcher **Rene Rivera**, who hasn't played since May 16 after undergoing surgery to repair a torn meniscus in his right knee, said that he is slated to begin a rehab assignment with Class A Advanced Inland Empire on Tuesday.

Rivera was initially projected to miss four to six weeks, but his rehab hit a snag after he experienced renewed soreness in his surgically repaired knee. The 35-year-old veteran received a platelet-rich plasma injection and resumed baseball activities last week.

"This is my first time experiencing this," said Rivera, who had never been on the disabled list prior to this injury. "Being home, I want to play. Watching these guys play, give everything they have every night and being at home, not being able to do anything, makes me feel bad. I'm happy now that at least I can feel that I can play, Hopefully, these rehab games go well, and I can join the team soon."

Rivera estimated that he'll need about five games before he's ready to come off the DL, though he said that the Angels have yet to given him an official timetable.

"It's going to obviously be a couple," Scioscia said. "Naturally, you want to get some at-bats to see some velocity, but he's got to get up there and catch deep into games too and then have a little recovery, so it's more than one game, for sure."

Rivera will likely be eased back into the primary catching role for the Angels once he is activated. The Angels have been using rookies **Jose Briceno** and **Francisco Arcia** to fill the void behind the plate after trading starter **Martin Maldonado** to the Astros.

Worth noting

- Right-hander **Matt Shoemaker** threw a bullpen session on Monday for the first time since undergoing forearm surgery on May 29. Shoemaker made only one start for the Angels this season before landing on the DL on April 3.

"It went well, but we'll kind of read it afterward," Scioscia said. "That's as big as anything we're talking about, so we'll see how he came out of it and how he feels moving forward. Hopefully, he'll repeat it in a couple days."

- The Angels called up infielder Jose Miguel Fernandez on Monday and optioned right-hander **Deck McGuire** to Triple-A Salt Lake. Scioscia said they decided to bring up Fernandez because they wanted an extra bench option as they wait for Trout's wrist to heal.

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**Simmons, Young lead Halos past Tigers 6-2 with bat and glove**

By Greg Beacham

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Andrelton Simmons homered and made more than one spectacular defensive play. Eric Young Jr. homered and made a phenomenal play with his glove as well.

The Angels' star shortstop was more than willing to cede the spotlight to his journeyman teammate after a revitalizing win for Los Angeles.

Simmons hit a two-run homer and dazzled in the field to lead the Angels to a 6-2 victory over the Detroit Tigers on Monday night.

Young hit his first homer of the season, drove in two runs and made a diving catch in deep center field to end the eighth inning for the Angels, who won for just the second time in eight games.

"He was just trying to show off," Simmons said with a laugh. "He was telling me he was following suit. But no, his diving play was way better, and his homer was a little farther than mine. Where the big boys hit it."

Simmons stepped up with two key hits and two runs while Mike Trout missed his fifth consecutive game with a sore right wrist for the Angels. The two-time AL MVP's injury absence is the second-longest of his big-league career, surpassed only by the 39 games he missed last season with a torn thumb ligament.

The Angels know they'll struggle to score without their offensive centerpiece, but Simmons was determined to do something about it.

"We had a tough road trip, missing Mike a little bit," Simmons said. "We talked about it. We needed the big bats, needed to hit a couple of homers to fill in for Mike."

Not everything went well for the Angels in the opener of a six-game homestand: Nick Tropeano (5-6) pitched five innings of one-hit ball and retired 12 of his final 13 batters before heading to the clubhouse after just 62 pitches with shoulder tightness. The right-hander has struggled with shoulder problems for most of this season after missing the 2017 campaign for Tommy John surgery, including a 31-game stint on the disabled list that ended July 21.

"There was just some stiffness, and when that's the case coming back from T.J., you're worried about the elbow if it's overcompensating," Tropeano said. "We're just going to play it by ear for the next few days."

Nicholas Castellanos hit a first-inning homer, but the Tigers managed just three hits as their offensive slump continued. Detroit has scored just three runs over 39 innings while losing the first four games of its California road trip.

“It’s the same story,” Detroit manager Ron Gardenhire said. “We’re not pushing enough runs across. We had some opportunities, and it didn’t happen.”

Matthew Boyd (6-10) pitched six-hit ball into the sixth inning, but took his sixth loss in nine starts overall.

Kaleb Cowart ended his lengthy slump and tied it with an RBI double in the second inning before Simmons put the Angels ahead in the fourth with his seventh homer. Young added a solo shot to deep center in the fifth for his first big-league homer since last October.

BIG JAM

After Tropeano’s abrupt departure, Angels reliever Noe Ramirez allowed four straight baserunners, culminating in Jose Iglesias’ RBI single. Cam Bedrosian took over and escaped the bases-loaded, no-outs jam with a strikeout and a hard-hit grounder by Jeimer Candelario that was turned into a double play by Simmons’ superb throw in the pivot .

“It’s a frustrating thing for (Candelario) because he hit it right on the screws, but it was right at (second baseman David Fletcher),” Gardenhire said. “That’s all you can do as a hitter.”

Simmons made another impressive defensive play in the eighth, diving to snag James McCann’s liner.

TROUT’S OUCH

Trout got a cortisone injection in his wrist Monday, likely ruling him out for this series — including the game on his 27th birthday Tuesday. Manager Mike Scioscia is hopeful Trout will feel good for the Angels’ weekend series against Oakland after an off day Thursday.

OHTANI’S ARM

Shohei Ohtani went 0 for 2 with two walks as the Angels’ designated hitter, equaling the number of walks he drew in his previous 16 games combined.

But Ohtani’s recovery from his sprained elbow ligament is progressing more quickly than the Angels hoped, Scioscia said. Ohtani is throwing from 120 feet. The club still has no timetable for getting its two-way rookie sensation back on the mound, but it is likely to be sooner than the club initially expected internally.

UP NEXT

Tigers: Jacob Turner makes his season debut in Mike Fiers’ rotation spot after being recalled from Triple-A Toledo in the wake of Fiers’ trade to Oakland . Turner is a former top Tigers prospect who was traded in 2012, but returned on a minor-league deal this year.

Angels: Andrew Heaney (6-7, 3.75 ERA) makes his second career start against the Tigers after taking a loss May 31 in Detroit. He’s a rare constant in the Halos’ tumultuous rotation, setting career highs already with 20 starts and 122 1/3 innings pitched.

Trout gets cortisone injection in sore wrist, sits out again

By Greg Beacham

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Mike Trout received a cortisone injection in his sore right wrist Monday, and the Los Angeles Angels are hopeful their superstar center fielder can return to their lineup on the weekend.

The two-time AL MVP wasn't in the Angels' starting lineup for the fifth consecutive game when they opened a six-game homestand against Detroit.

Manager Mike Scioscia said Trout won't play in at least their next two games, including the Angels' game on his birthday Tuesday. After a day off Thursday, the Angels are hopeful Trout will feel good enough to return Friday when they open a series against Oakland.

"I think that all the tests he had point to just some inflammation, and that has to run its course, and his injection will help that to happen," Scioscia said. "We anticipate him getting to baseball activities in a couple of days, and see how he feels for Friday."

Trout hasn't played since Aug. 1, when he hurt his wrist during a feet-first slide into third base in Tampa Bay. He skipped the last four games of the Angels' road trip, and he had an injection upon the team's return to Orange County.

Barring a major change, Trout will be out for at least seven games. That will be the second-longest injury absence of his seven full big-league seasons, surpassed only by his 39-game absence last season after he tore a ligament in his left thumb in a headfirst slide.

Scioscia doesn't think the Angels are likely to retroactively place Trout on the disabled list, a move that would make him ineligible until Sunday.

"I think if you can get Mike Trout to play from the seventh day instead of the 10th day, I think you'd want to," Scioscia said. "So we're just going to let it run its course, and when it's 100 percent, he'll play."

The injury will deprive Angels fans of what's become an annual treat: Seeing Trout do incredible things on his birthday.

Trout's 27th birthday is Tuesday, and he has a history of throwing celebrations for himself: He has homered on his birthday four times in his first six full big-league seasons. He did it at the Big A last season, homering and also getting his 1,000th career hit on his 26th birthday.

Ohtani's elbow recovery is encouraging to Scioscia, Angels

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Shohei Ohtani is making progress more quickly than expected in his quest to return to the mound for the Los Angeles Angels.

The two-way rookie sensation has incurred no setbacks while throwing regularly in the outfield in recent days, manager Mike Scioscia said Monday. He is currently throwing from 120 feet.

Scioscia says Ohtani is “probably closer to getting on the mound than we thought last week.”

The Angels have put no timeline on the recovery of Ohtani, who hasn’t pitched since June after spraining an elbow ligament.

Ohtani was in the Angels’ lineup batting fifth as their designated hitter when they opened a six-game homestand against Detroit. He produced his first multi-homer game in the majors last week in

FROM THE ATHLETIC

History Watch: Five unheard-of baseball feats that we could see in the 2018 season

By Jayson Stark

July is for trade rumors. August is for history.

For years now, that’s been our motto. We recommend it highly.

You can only overdose on J.A. Happ trade rumors for so long, you know. Then it’s time to take a nap, clear your head and remember something way more important:

There’s a season going on out there. For a few special players in our midst, history is hanging in the balance, and you probably never even noticed.

So join with us now as we hone in on those players through this special August presentation of our History Watch – and give you something to occupy your attention now that you no longer have to devote every waking second to checking Ken Rosenthal’s Twitter feed.

CAN’T CATCH THE TROUT

Apparently, Mike Trout is pretty good at baseball. What the heck, you’ve probably caught on, but it never gets old to remind you of that. Because he’s pretty good at baseball, it’s impossible to do one of these August History Watch columns unless you start with him.

The tough part is that just about everything Trout does in Anaheim at this point is historic, potentially historic or possibly even ridiculously historic. So there are roughly 87 ways to look at what could make this year *especially* ridiculously historic for him – assuming he can will his sore wrist to heal up ASAP. But how about this:

He's on a path to lead his league in Wins Above Replacement (baseball-reference version) for the *fifth* time.

Now perhaps you're curious about what other position players have led their league in Wins Above Replacement five times. Not shockingly, it's a cool list:

Babe Ruth 10
Willie Mays 9
Ted Williams 6
Rogers Hornsby 6
Barry Bonds 6
Mickey Mantle 5
Albert Pujols 5
Alex Rodriguez 5

OK, definitely heard of them. But now here's the ridiculously historic part. Today is Trout's 27th birthday. But since it's August, this is still considered his age-26 season. So how many position players in history have led their league in WAR five times by this age?

None, of course.

Who does that? Only this guy does that. In fact, just four position players have ever even led their league in WAR three times by their age-26 season:

Mantle 4
Mays 3
Hornsby 3
Stan Musial 3

Definitely heard of them, too. So Mike, keep icing that wrist. Us Mike Trout historians need something to do this fall!

NO WAY, JOSÉ

All that Trout-ian history aside, the American League MVP race gets more fascinating by the day. And that brings us to José Ramírez – yet another dude with a chance to do something that would seem impossible for most humans we know:

He could lead the American League in homers...but also extra-base hits...and also stolen bases...all in the same season.

Wait. Seriously? Yep. In real life. Ramírez currently leads the AL outright in extra-base hits (with 65). And he's tied for the lead in homers (with J.D. Martinez, at 33) and steals (with Dee Gordon, at 26). Want to know how rare this would be? Of course you do.

— Guys who led their league in extra-base hits and steals in the same season (live-ball era): Just Alfonso Soriano in 2002, Stuffy Stirnweiss in 1945 and Chuck Klein in 1932.

— Guys who did that in the dead-ball era: Honus Wagner (four times) and Ty Cobb (twice).

— And, finally, guys who led in homers and steals in the same season (any era): Klein in 1932, Cobb in 1909 and Joltin' Jimmy Sheckard in 1903.

But now comes the important stuff. When you ask who has led in all three of those exotic departments in the same year, only one of those names is still standing. That would be Klein in '32. That was 86 years ago, if you're not subtracting along with us at home.

Ah, but Chuck Klein did it in Philadelphia, for the Baker Bowl Phillies. And José Ramírez works in Cleveland. So...

Who has pulled this off in the history of American League, you ask? *Nobody has done that*, we reply!

That's nobody. As in ever. Sure, it helps Ramírez's stolen-base quest that he isn't going to have to swipe 50, let alone 100, to lead the league in steals. But Klein (20 SB in 1932) wasn't exactly Rickey Henderson, either. So the heck with the old-fashioned triple crown. This is the triple crown we should all be watching over the next eight weeks.

A JOB FOR A CARPENTER

It's always been a stupendous idea to have the home-run champ and a great leadoff hitter on the same team. Just usually, they're not the same person.

But then Matt Carpenter came along.

The Cardinals' sweet-swinging No. 1 man surged into a tie with Nolan Arenado for the NL lead in homers over the weekend with 29. And that got us to wondering:

Has any leadoff man in modern history ever won a home-run title?

Guess what? That answer, shockingly, is: Nope!

Rickey Henderson never did it. Alfonso Soriano never did it. Charlie Blackmon never did it. Pete Rose and Ichiro never did it. In fact, almost no one has even come close.

The most games started in the leadoff hole by any home run champ since 1900? That would be a whopping 22 games, by Dwight Evans in 1981, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. And Carpenter is going to lead off in well over 100 games if he stays healthy (and at the top of the order).

Meanwhile, if you're looking for close calls, that won't take long, either. Once you get past the dead-ball era almost a century ago, exactly one player has even finished *second* in his league in home runs while leading off in at least half his team's games. That would be Brady Anderson in 1996, the year he stunned America (and himself) by hitting 50.

But Mark McGwire whopped 52 homers that year. And now we're especially glad he did, because it means that, unbeknownst to most of civilization, Carpenter has put himself in perfect position to do something no one has ever done. And he's primed to pull this off.

He leads the National League in homers since May 1, since June 1 and since July 1. So what about this feels fluky?

The correct answer is: None of this. So eat your heart out, Rickey!

JOEY VOTTO, ON-BASE MACHINE

In Cincinnati, some things never change. They still believe Pete Rose was wronged by Bart Giamatti. The Bengals are still trying to figure out how to defend Joe Montana. And Joey Votto just reached base. Again.

We can't say for sure if Votto was born on base. But let's just say he doesn't need a GPS to find his way on base. It's all he does. Every stinking year.

He's on pace to reach base 297 times this year. After 324 last year. And 294 the year before that. And 314 the year before that. And, well, you get the idea

If he gets to 300 again this season, it would be the fourth time he's done that. And did you know that just 11 other men in history can say they've gotten on base via hit, walk or HBP 300+ times in four different seasons?

It's true. You can look it up. Except we already did. Eight of them are Hall of Famers (Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Ted Williams, Wade Boggs, Stan Musial, Jimmie Foxx, Jeff Bagwell and Rogers Hornsby). Todd Helton hasn't reached the ballot yet. And the other two are Rose and Barry Bonds, who got detoured on their own road to Cooperstown by stuff we don't need to get into this week.

But for Joey Votto, this is an every-year phenomenon. If he can stay out of the way of fastballs boring in on his knees and keep reaching base at his current clip, that would make 1,230 times on base over the last four seasons. And the list of hitters who have gotten on base that many times or more over any four-year period is a great one:

PLAYER	YEARS	TIMES ON BASE
Barry Bonds	2001-04	1365
Ted Williams	1946-49	1354
Lou Gehrig	1934-37	1307
Wade Boggs	1985-88	1301
Babe Ruth	1921-24	1291
Jeff Bagwell	1996-99	1240

Todd Helton	2000-03	1231
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(Source: Lee Sinins' Complete Baseball Encyclopedia)

It feels sometimes as if we take Joey Votto for granted. It's about time we stopped that. So here at August History Watch World Headquarters, we're just doing our part.

NOLAN KEEPS ROLLIN'

If Nolan Arenado wins another home run title and another Gold Glove, he's going to join three luminaries named Willie Mays, Mike Schmidt and Ken Griffey Jr. in the 3+-HR Title/6+-Gold Glove Club. And that's a beautiful little piece of trivia unto itself.

But that's not what loyal tweeter Nick Gaetano (@YeahClickClack) wants us to write about this week. He must be one of those old-school tweeters because he wants us to mention that the Rockies' spectacular third baseman has a shot at driving in 130 runs.

And why is that notable? No, not because somebody is still excited about RBIs, but because if that happens, it would be the *fourth* consecutive year in which Arenado knocks in 130 or more. So no matter what you think RBIs tell us about him, baseball, life in Colorado or the fate of humankind, that's still an amazing feat, because he'd join this group:

Ruth 7 (1926-32)

Gehrig 5 (1930-34)

Griffey 4 (1996-99)

Sammy Sosa 4 (1998-2001)

Ryan Howard 4 (2006-09)

That's all the men in history who have ever done this. And you can dump on RBIs all you want, but A) somebody has to drive in these runs, and B) Arenado owns a .336 career average with runners in scoring position, a figure topped by just Tony Gwynn and Rod Carew over the last 45 seasons, according to Stats LLC.

But now the more realistic news: Arenado would need to drive in 49 runs in the Rockies' last 50 games to get to 130. And that's a lot to ask. But let's say he even gets to 120. Ready for a list of all the men in history with 120+ RBIs and Gold Gloves in four straight seasons?

Ken Griffey Jr.

[You've reached the end of this list]

So for all you retro RBI fans out there, this tidbit is for you. But for the rest of the planet, we offer this bit of worldly philosophizing:

Even if we know now that RBIs don't mean what they used to in this sport, you'd be wrong to conclude they're meaningless. And that's especially true when the man driving in the runs is Nolan Arenado, a fellow who continually does his part to keep us August History Watchers in business. What could possibly be more meaningful than that?

Rosenthal: Managers on the move?; Mets need to make a decision; mystery man for Red Sox; more notes

By Ken Rosenthal

And you thought we had action on the managerial merry-go-round last off-season, when three postseason qualifiers were among the six teams to make changes.

This off-season might be just as lively and perhaps downright hairy, considering the large number of teams likely to ponder changes and the potential for one or more October surprises.

The Toronto Blue Jays seem destined to move on from John Gibbons. The Los Angeles Angels likely will need to replace Mike Scioscia, who — as I reported on Saturday — is expected to step down.

The Cincinnati Reds and St. Louis Cardinals face decisions on their respective interims, Jim Riggleman and Mike Shildt. The Baltimore Orioles must determine whether to offer Buck Showalter another contract. Ditto for the Los Angeles Dodgers with Dave Roberts, though such a move would appear *fait accompli*.

The strong post-All Star performances of several of the Rangers' younger players would appear to enhance the chances of Jeff Banister returning for at least the remaining year on his contract. Mickey Callaway is expected to stay with the New York Mets, according to Newsday. Dave Martinez, another embattled first-year manager, might be less secure if the Washington Nationals fail to make the postseason.

The wild card for every club pondering a change is the possibility of hiring an established manager who is out of work. Joe Girardi, John Farrell, Mike Matheny and Dusty Baker all are available. Showalter, Gibbons and Scioscia might join them, though USA Today reported that Scioscia plans to retire.

Teams rarely hesitate to change players, coaches and managers when intriguing options emerge; the Chicago Cubs dumped Rick Renteria, now with the White Sox, for Joe Maddon. Teams also created a new layer of uncertainty last off-season by demonstrating a postseason berth does not guarantee job security.

If the Cubs flop in the playoffs, would they consider a move to Girardi — a former Cub, Northwestern graduate and Illinois native — when Maddon still has one year and \$5 million left on his contract?

Maddon helped the Cubs end their 108-year championship drought with a victory in the 2016 World Series and has led the team to three straight appearances in the NLCS. But only one principle seems to apply as the managerial merry-go-round starts to spin again.

Anything goes.

The postseason format: time for change?

Powerful teams that end up in the wild-card game often hear the familiar refrain: *If you don't like it, win your division*. One team executive, though, points out the flaw in that argument, saying all divisions are not created equal.

No, the executive is not from the Yankees, who are on a 101-win pace yet seem destined for the wild-card game. His point is simply that the Cleveland Indians hold an advantage over teams from the AL East and West largely due to geography. The Indians play in the AL Central, where every other club is retooling at some level.

The Indians face the easiest schedule in the AL, according to Elias. The contenders in the West, meanwhile, actually have it tougher than those in the East. The Red Sox face the fourth easiest schedule, the Yankees the fifth easiest. The Seattle Mariners, Houston Astros and Oakland Athletics face the fifth, seventh and eighth most difficult, respectively.

One solution to the imbalance, the exec says, would be to seed the postseason qualifiers by record regardless of where they finish in their divisions. The adjustment would force the Indians to try to win as many games as possible rather than coast to the AL Central title. It also would prevent a repeat of what happened in the NL in 2015, when the Pittsburgh Pirates and Chicago Cubs played in the wild-card game after winning 98 and 97 games, respectively. The Cubs won that game, then got swept in the NLCS by the New York Mets, who won seven fewer games during the regular season yet had home-field advantage for the series.

The exec had another idea that would offer incentive to out-of-contention teams to stay intact at the deadline and keep pushing in August and September: Award a draft pick to any team that fails to reach the postseason yet finishes over .500 for the season. The draft pick would provide compensation to teams that declined to trade veterans for prospects at the non-waiver deadline.

Message to Mets: make a decision

During the off-season, I wrote Mets fans should reserve judgment before accusing their team of not spending money. The Mets then invested \$88 million in Jay Bruce, Todd Frazier, Anthony Swarzak and Jason Vargas, bringing their two-year total in free agency to \$224.7 million, second only to the Cubs.

No matter — the Mets did not spend particularly well.

The non-waiver deadline offered another test for the club, an opportunity to retool quickly by trading right-hander Jacob deGrom and/or Noah Syndergaard in a market starved for quality starting pitching. The Mets passed, moving only potential free-agent reliever Jeury Familia and infielder Asdrúbal Cabrera. And while the club showed a certain logic by holding off on more dramatic moves until a new general manager is in place, it will be out of excuses this off-season.

If the Mets want to build around deGrom, Syndergaard and Co., then they will need to reinforce their bullpen and upgrade at catcher, center field and possibly first base, while determining whether Amed Rosario and Jeff McNeil are the answers at short and second, respectively. Such a plan would require a significant plunge into the free-agent market, not the patchwork job the club attempted last off-season.

If the Mets are disinclined to take on such risk — a position that would not be unreasonable — then they will need to commit to rebuilding by trading some combination of deGrom, Syndergaard and righty Zack Wheeler, among others. Such a plan would require a strong, forward-thinking GM operating with minimal interference from ownership — a departure from how sources describe the team's current style.

The choices are clear. The Mets need to pick one or the other, and stop going halfway.

Hidden motive for Pirates?

A rival executive had a theory on why the Pirates were uncharacteristically aggressive at the deadline: The team, facing declining attendance at PNC Park, had to spark their fan base.

The Pirates' average home attendance has been in free fall, dropping from 30,847 in 2015 to 18,550 this season, according to baseball-reference.com. The current average would be the team's lowest since 1996, the year after the last players' strike ended.

If the Pirates added right-hander Chris Archer and reliever Keone Kela for business as well as baseball reasons, it would demonstrate the power of a disgruntled fan base to effect change. Team president Frank Coonelly, however, said the team's eroding attendance was not a factor in its decision-making.

"Our trades at the deadline reflect our strong belief in our core group of players and desire to improve the club for this 2018 stretch run and for the next several years," Coonelly told *The Athletic*. "The increased depth of talent that we have accumulated without our system made this direction possible at this time.

"As always, (owner) Bob Nutting was actively engaged in our process and has been driven by a strong desire to bring a World Series champion back to Pittsburgh."

Why Billy remains in Cincy

ESPN's Buster Olney and MLB.com's Mike Petriello were among the media members who suggested the Cincinnati Reds trade center fielder Billy Hamilton before the deadline, saying his speed could make him an asset for a contender both as a defender and base-runner.

Valid points, except for one thing:

In January 2017, Reds owner Bob Castellini said, "I hope Billy Hamilton is with us forever." According to sources, Castellini's affection for Hamilton remains a factor for the Reds in trade discussions, though a deal before the deadline was not out of the question.

The Reds had other reasons for keeping Hamilton — they did not want to part with another outfielder after trading Adam DuVall and losing Scott Schebler to a shoulder injury and Jesse Winker to season-ending shoulder surgery. Team officials say Castellini would approve the trade of Hamilton for an appropriate return. But considering that Castellini seems to over-value Hamilton, who is batting just .226 with a .601 OPS this season, it's fair to ask what type of return would satisfy the owner.

In any case, the window to move Hamilton likely is gone. The Reds will need to decide this off-season whether they want to keep him for his final year of arbitration and give him a raise from his current \$4.6 million, or make him a free agent by declining to tender him a contract.

Mystery man emerges for Red Sox

Right-hander Ryan Brasier made his debut for the Red Sox on July 9, nearly five years after his last major-league appearance for the Los Angeles Angels.

Turning to his players in the dugout, Sox manager Alex Cora cracked, "I know you don't know who this guy is. He was our closer in spring training. You were gone at that time."

Cora was referring to the tendency of established major-leaguers to leave the park once they are removed from spring training exhibitions, rather than wait until the games are over. But quickly, the Sox players saw what Cora had told them: *This guy is good.*

Brasier, who turns 31 on Aug. 26, threw a scoreless ninth in a 5-0 victory over Texas in his debut, then stunned his teammates by touching 100 mph the next night. In 11 appearances, Brasier has held opponents to a .483 OPS, averaging 97.2 mph with his fastball while also throwing an effective slider. While he appears to be benefiting from some batted-ball luck, Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said Brasier was almost like a deadline acquisition for his bullpen.

So, how did the Sox find him?

Brasier, the Angels' sixth-round pick in 2007, made seven major-league appearances in '13, but otherwise kicked around the minors before spending last season with Hiroshima in Japan. He still was without work in January when he visited Arizona to attend a friend's bachelor party and took time out to throw a bullpen session for about a half-dozen interested clubs.

Special assignment scout Steve Peck represented the Sox, liked what he saw and recommended Brasier to vice-president of pro scouting Gus Quattlebaum, who signed the pitcher to a minor-league contract. The Sox were the only team to show serious interest, Brasier said, and still they did not complete the deal until March 11.

As Brasier waited — "sitting on my couch," as he put it — he pondered retirement, not wanting to join an independent league. He is married with two young children and considered pitching in Mexico, but the Sox offered him a lifeline. Brasier quickly graduated from the minor-league side to major-league games in spring training and has not stopped impressing the team since.

Around the horn

*The San Diego Padres saved more than \$750,000 by allowing right-handers Tyson Ross and Jordan Lyles to leave on waiver claims on Sunday, not to mention the \$200,000 Ross will earn for each start between 20 and 29 (he currently is at 22).

The departures of Ross and Lyles will create opportunities for younger pitchers, with manager Andy Green saying the team was "one big step closer to the future." Still, the Pads have now parted with four

major-league pitchers of varying qualities, including lefty reliever Brad Hand and righty Adam Cimber, and received only catching prospect Francisco Mejía in return.

Mejía might not remain at catcher, but the Padres are banking on his offensive potential. Ross and Lyles had only limited trade value, so perhaps the team did well simply to move their salaries. The Pads, though, had the worst record in the NL even with the four pitchers who are now gone. Without them, their season might turn even uglier.

*The Athletics did not exactly take a financial plunge with their recent acquisitions, but their trades for relievers Jeurys Familia and Shawn Kelley and right-handed starter Mike Fiers amounted to approximately \$5 million in additional salary for 2018, according to a source.

The A's opened the season with a major-league low \$65.9 million payroll. The players' union filed a grievance to MLB in February, claiming the A's, Pirates, Miami Marlins were not spending their revenue-sharing money in the fashion mandated by the collective-bargaining agreement.

*Sitting in the visitor's dugout before Friday night's game at Fenway Park, Yankees first basemen Greg Bird and Luke Voit wondered aloud, "How many Hall of Famers have played here?"

It was a fascinating question, considering Fenway opened in 1912. And according to research by STATS LLC, the number of Hall of Famers to play at Fenway — 145 — is as impressive as you might think.

When I relayed the answer to Bird the next day, he asked the next logical question, "How many Hall of Famers are there total?" The answer, according to the Hall's website: 323 people have been elected to the Hall, including 226 former major-leaguers, 35 Negro league baseball players and executives, 22 managers, 10 umpires, and 30 pioneers, executives, and organizers.

Eric Young Jr. one-ups his way into the spotlight, but he's just 'having fun out there'

By Fabian Ardaya

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Eric Young Jr. has had a hard time avoiding seeing Andrelton Simmons over the last week or so.

The Angels selected Young's contract on July 27 from Triple-A Salt Lake, and as he walked into the home clubhouse at Angel Stadium, he found his locker wedged into the back corner, right next to Simmons. As the club flew back from Cleveland on Sunday night, Young laughed and posted on his Instagram story when he saw that he and Simmons were assigned to sit in the same row.

In Monday's 6-2 win over the Tigers, Simmons launched a two-run home run in the fourth inning. The next inning, Young knocked his own solo shot over the wall. In the eighth, Simmons broke to his right to make a leaping, diving grab and rob a base hit from shortstop. Three batters later, Young sprinted to his right to make a leaping, diving grab to rob an extra-base hit from center field.

“He’s just trying to show off,” Simmons said of Young. “That’s what he was telling me. He was following suit. His diving play was way better, and his homer went a little further than mine, the way the big boys hit it.”

“We feed off each other,” Young said. “It’s a good relationship.”

It’s a fun game of one-upmanship between a pair of friends. The two, who spent part of the 2015 season together as teammates on the Braves, are still close, even with their varying standings. Simmons, who is five years Young’s junior, is the established big leaguer, the Gold Glove winner and the borderline All-Star. Young is the journeyman who’s been thrust into action for the second consecutive year due to an injury to the game’s best player, Mike Trout.

Simmons should have plenty of opportunities to continue to have nights like Monday. Young knows chances like these aren’t as common. After all, he lived it — last season, in 47 games while Trout recovered from surgery to repair the ulnar collateral ligament in his left thumb, Young reeled off one of the best stretches of his career and posted a .754 OPS while matching his career high with four home runs. Once Trout came back, he was back in the minors until coming back up at the end of the season.

Young has a similar chance now, albeit in a smaller window. With Trout shelved until at least Friday against Oakland with a sore right wrist that required a cortisone shot on Monday, Young has a chance to solidify his grasp on at least a fourth-outfielder role through the stretch run.

Young, 33, is a known commodity. The son of a former player and longtime big league infielder, Eric Young Sr., he has bounced between five organizations in 10 years. He’s played more than 100 big league games in a season just twice.

“I’m not really worried about surprising anybody else,” Young Jr. said. “I’m just going out there and giving it everything I’ve got. I surprise myself sometimes, and I’m having a tremendous time playing the game I love and hopefully it shows.”

Simmons isn’t the same player Young saw in Atlanta. The glove and defensive wizardry remains, but he has added an offensive dimension. His .791 OPS is a career-high, having added to it in the fourth after taking Matthew Boyd deep on a 2-0 fastball down the left-field line to give the Angels the lead.

Young, he of a career slugging percentage of .334 entering play on Monday, has never been known for prodigious power. In the second inning, with a pair of runners on, his swing was all-out, just missing an inside fastball and flying out to end the threat. His next time up, he didn’t miss.

He drove Boyd’s 88.3-mph fastball on the outer half to the deepest part of the park, the ball jumping off his bat at 101.5 mph and traveling an estimated 423 feet off the rock formation in center, according to Stat Cast.

“He’s got some pop for a guy who’s not 6-foot-4 with a lot of extension,” Angels manager Mike Scioscia said of Young. “He’s strong. ... He didn’t miss it. He killed that ball.”

Simmons and Young are known for their gloves, not their bats. So much so, that the “average” seems very much not.

Tigers catcher James McCann led off the eighth with a lined shot towards the left side of the infield, lacing Hansel Robles' 1-0 fastball 102.1 mph. Simmons broke to his right, leaping to snare the ball for the out. According to Stat Cast, the ball McCann hit lands safely for a hit 78 percent of the time.

"It wasn't that difficult," Simmons said. "Just had to make sure, because at times a ball has a last movement. Just had to make sure I didn't miss that last cut. When they hit the ball really well, it does some weird stuff. It was pretty average, I think."

Sure, average.

Robles had another fastball smoked, this time by José Iglesias, three batters later. Iglesias' 100.2 mph shot appeared destined for the gap. Young broke to his right and, knowing the ball was approaching, leaped to snare the ball before he wouldn't be able to stop himself.

"It was hit pretty solid, and I knew the wall was close," Young said. "I've lost battles against the wall before, so I didn't want to make that mistake again. I definitely wanted to try to slow myself down as well as focus on the ball all the way into the glove. I did that, was able to make the jump, watch it into the glove and slow myself down before I got to the wall."

If Simmons is judging, Young won the day, for both the catch and the homer. For Young Jr., it's just another day, another opportunity to keep playing in the big leagues.

"Any time I get the chance to suit up and go out there and play a major league game, you want to take advantage of every opportunity," Young said. "You don't know how long you're blessed enough to play this game. You go out there, and give it everything you've got. Hopefully I'm showing that, going out there and still treating it like a kid's game and having fun out there."

TA30: The post-trade deadline MLB power rankings have the A's on the rise*

By Matthew Kory

So how'd that trade deadline grab you? It sure grabbed me! At exactly 4 p.m. last Tuesday I passed out on the sofa in a Twitter coma, covered in corn chips. Every team made a deal at or near the deadline except the Giants. How can you keep up with all that? Well, we here at *The Athletic* have you covered. Everything you need to know is below... assuming what you need to know is the current power rankings, and a bunch of jokes.

17. Los Angeles Angels (last week: 15)

Mike Scioscia was hired by GM Bill Stoneman in 1999. The next four Angels GMs have not been able to hire their own managers. According to *The Athletic's* Ken Rosenthal, the Angels might be in the market for a new manager next season — meaning Billy Eppler would be the first Angels GM to hire a manager since Bill Clinton was in office.

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

FROM MLB.COM

Which players will be on the same team in 2025?*

By Will Leitch

How long is seven years in baseball? MLB's 2011 leaders in games played (Prince Fielder), at-bats (Ichiro Suzuki), Wins Above Replacement (Cliff Lee), hits (Adrian Gonzalez and Michael Young) and stolen bases (Michael Bourn) are all out of baseball. Your top home-run hitter was **Jose Bautista**; your best position player by WAR (Baseball-Reference) was **Jacoby Ellsbury**. It was a long time ago. Seven years is a lifetime.

MLB teams are always obsessed with team control over players, about having them wrapped up and secured on their club for as long as possible. But here's a fun factoid: Of the top 30 hitters by WAR (FanGraphs) in 2011, only eight are still with the same team now as they were then. (And two of those, **Matt Kemp** and **Jose Reyes**, played for other teams in between then and now before returning to the Dodgers and Mets, respectively.) Among the top 30 pitchers, there are only four. Continuity is, in many ways, an illusion.

Thus, this week at The Thirty, we flash forward seven years, to 2025, and attempt to predict, for each MLB team, the player most likely to still be playing for their current team in that season. Some players are simply signed for that long; the Phillies signed **Scott Kingery** potentially through '26 before this season even though he hadn't made his MLB debut yet. Some players are rookies or prospects who are the foundation of everything their team is trying to do over the next decade. And some are just icons who will end up with a statue by the ballpark someday. Here's a look at the players you should expect to see in the same uniform for the next seven years.

AL WEST

Angels

Mike Trout, CF, age 26 (turns 27 on Tuesday)

Level: MLB

Put it this way: If Trout is not, the Angels might as well raze the place.

Astros

Jose Altuve, 2B, age 28

Level: MLB

Altuve's contract runs through 2024. No way the Astros are ever letting him wear another uniform. (He'll be 35 in '25.)

Athletics

Matt Chapman, 3B, age 25

Level: MLB

Unless they **Josh Donaldson** him before then. Chapman looks like a perfect A's building block.

Mariners

Mitch Haniger, RF, age 27

Level: MLB

The Mariners are disturbingly old -- you boys better make the playoffs this year -- but Haniger looks like the sort of guy to extend at a discount before he hits arbitration.

Rangers

Joey Gallo, INF/OF, age 24

Level: MLB

Similarly, with the Rangers in a period of transition, betting on Gallo figuring it out and becoming a more complete hitter doesn't seem like the worst idea. He'll be the same age in 2025 as **Paul Goldschmidt** and **J.D. Martinez** are now. (And yes, I was tempted to say **Bartolo Colon**.)

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

FROM ESPN.COM

How the shift has ruined Albert Pujols

By Alden Gonzalez

ANAHEIM, Calif. -- One line drive in particular still torments Albert Pujols. It was the first inning of a Friday evening game on May 4, and Seattle Mariners starting pitcher Mike Leake hung a two-strike slider over the plate. Pujols gave it his best swing, unleashing a 105 mph line drive toward shallow left field. Jean Segura, a shortstop, had positioned himself about 10 feet behind the infield dirt and caught it easily. He turned what would have been Pujols' 3,000th career hit into his 95th out in 126 at-bats this season.

Pujols tossed his helmet and stared in disbelief. His discontent would linger.

"I'm one of the victims," Pujols says now. "Just like so many others."

The recent proliferation of defensive shifts has made it exceedingly difficult for power hitters to turn batted balls into hits, prompting an infatuation with launch angles and breeding a widespread acceptance of strikeouts. Few have been victimized more than Pujols, the aging slugger who still makes frequent contact but no longer runs well.

From 2015 to 2018, Pujols has accumulated a whopping 403 hard-hit outs, putting balls in play that travel at least 95 mph. Nobody has more. His average exit velocity is 90.3 mph, ranked fourth among those with at least 1,700 batted balls during that stretch, according to Statcast. His batting average on balls in play is .245, tied for the lowest in the majors among qualified hitters during that time.

Pujols shrugs.

"What can you do, bro?"

This is not to say that Pujols remains an elite hitter. He walks too little, chases too often, and his bat speed probably isn't what it used to be. But the modern game is especially unforgiving to older hitters, and it has intensified the decline of arguably the greatest first baseman in baseball history.

Most Hard-Hit Outs Since 2015

Albert Pujols	403
Manny Machado	396
Kendrys Morales	389
Christian Yelich	367

Source: Statcast

Since joining the Los Angeles Angels on a 10-year, \$240 million contract in the winter of 2011, Pujols' career batting average has dropped an average of nearly four points per season. It was .328 when he left St. Louis, and it's .303 now -- his seventh summer in Southern California.

Teams have shifted on Pujols 38 percent of the time since 2016, the second most among right-handed hitters with at least 1,000 plate appearances. Against the shift, he is batting just .219, 26 points below the league average.

Many of the batted balls that were hits during the majority of his career -- for most of his life, really -- are now landing in opposing gloves, and Pujols has slowly progressed toward reluctant acceptance. He doesn't like the idea of changing his swing path to adopt more launch angle. He also doesn't believe changing his approach "to hit a weak ground ball to second base" would solve anything.

"I just had to learn how to live with it," he says. "It sometimes bothers me, but at the end of the day, hey, hang with it. It's something everybody goes through."

Pujols doesn't begrudge teams for maximizing a competitive advantage. Spray charts display hitter tendencies over large sample sizes and opposing defenses are foolish not to position themselves accordingly. Pujols understands that. He would be in favor of Major League Baseball eliminating shifts altogether, adding that fans would "see a lot of offense back again like it was before." But he is admittedly biased.

The only change he adamantly vouches for is a reasonable one: Second basemen who are positioned up the middle should not be allowed to disrupt a hitter's line of vision and keep them from identifying a pitcher's release point. It's happening far too often.

"It doesn't matter if he's standing over there," Pujols says. "Just don't stay in the path where the release of a pitcher is."

Thinking about that makes Pujols think about all the line drives he has lost up the middle -- guaranteed hits in the baseball game he once knew. He is asked what his batting average would look like if second basemen played their position traditionally and didn't shade toward center field.

"Between .290 and .300, for sure," Pujols says, who instead sports a .254/.290/.428 slash line "Look at the balls that I'm hitting up the middle, especially this year. Out of those 30 or 40 or 50 balls, give me 25 hits. Add those 25 hits to my .250 batting average, I'd be hitting like .290."

Those numbers seem a bit inflated. Spray charts from Baseball Savant show Pujols making 16 outs on line drives toward the middle of the field this season. Of those 16, only five appear to have been clear singles under a traditional alignment.

Regardless, the most important number surrounding Pujols is this one: \$87 million.

That is the amount of dollars owed to Pujols over the final three years of his contract, which lasts through 2021 and takes him all the way up to his age-41 season. His mind is set on playing through it, and he doesn't need to re-evaluate anything this offseason.

"When that time comes, it's not even going to wait until the offseason," Pujols says. "If I feel it during the season, I'm gone, dude. The day that I feel like I can't compete in this game anymore, it doesn't matter how much money I'm going to leave on the table. I'm done, bro. I've been blessed."

"One thing is to be out there and just stick around for the money. But to embarrass yourself, and not be able to compete -- dude, that's not me. I have accomplished so many things in this game that I could never even imagine. That drive of playing every day is still with me. I think it's always going to be with me. What's going to be tough, obviously, is your health."

Pujols recalls a recent conversation with David Ortiz, an All-Star in a 2016 season that wound up being his last. Ortiz hit .315 that year, with 38 home runs and 127 RBIs. But it took him too long to recover from the toll of each day. His body no longer responded the way he needed it to, which made the thought of walking away seem easy.

Pujols insists he isn't there yet. His lower body has been plagued by injuries, most notably plantar fasciitis. But a healthy offseason has led to 58 starts at first base -- already nearly twice as many as the previous two seasons combined -- and encouragement for the years ahead.

"I think next year is going to be even better," he says, "because now I know I'm able to get back in the gym and know what I need to do to get stronger, especially in my lower half. Because that's the first thing that goes. You talk to any of the players, your lower half is the first thing that goes as you age. And that's the thing that you have to maintain the most. I feel like I still can do this for three more years. And maybe more, who knows?"

Pujols grins upon saying that. Every once in a while, Angels third-base coach Dino Ebel will let Pujols know where he ranks among the leaders in hard-hit outs (he's tied for fourth with 78 this season). It keeps Pujols going, reaffirming an unrelenting belief that he can continue to survive in a game that is moving past him at a rapid rate. But he doesn't need the numbers.

"I feel it," Pujols says. "I know it."

Pujols already has reached 3,000 hits and surpassed 600 homers. By driving in 27 more runs, he'll reach 2,000 RBIs, a trio of accomplishments reached only by Hank Aaron and Alex Rodriguez.

"I heard somebody a couple years ago saying that RBIs are overrated," Pujols says. "I'm like, 'Are you freaking kidding me?' How do you freaking win games? I mean, it's scoring runs, driving guys in. You're going to tell me that RBIs are overrated? Are you, really?"

The devaluation of RBIs rankles him, as does the commonality of strikeouts.

"I can't believe guys, right now in this era in the game, and even the media, are OK with it, thinking that it's OK striking out," Pujols says, who has never struck out 100 times in a single season. "I'll never be OK with that."

Pujols is one of only eight players who have been active over the past 18 seasons, which means that few have experienced so much change in this sport. If everything aligns, he will play in three more of them, finishing out a contract that faced intense scrutiny from the onset.

Asked if he is concerned about the direction of his beloved game, Pujols lets out a hearty laugh.

"I'm just glad that I only have three more years left," Pujols says. "I'm just happy for that. In three more years, it'll be more crazy. Trust me. I'll be watching and you might see me coming around, and I'll be laughing at things."

Mike Trout by the numbers as No. 27 turns 27

Mike Trout turns 27 years old on Tuesday, but will we see him mark the occasion by taking the field when the Los Angeles Angels host the Detroit Tigers? Trout has missed five straight games with a wrist injury, but he has never missed a game on his birthday since he was drafted in 2009.

No. 27 fun facts

- Mike Trout has the sixth-highest WAR by any player to wear No. 27 and the second highest by any position player.
- Of the top nine such players, four played for the Angels while wearing No. 27: Trout, Don Sutton, Vladimir Guerrero and Kevin Appier.
- Trout isn't the only great active player wearing No. 27. Aaron Nola and Jose Altuve have each turned in 4.0-WAR seasons so far this year, with Trout at 7.8 WAR, Nola at 6.7 and Altuve at 4.3.
- Before these guys claimed No. 27, the number wasn't nearly as productive. The most WAR accumulated by a No. 27 in 2010, the last season before Trout reached the bigs, were from 35-year-old Scott Rolen (4.1) and 34-year-old Plácido Polanco (3.2).

- The average MLB sprint speed is 27 feet per second. Trout clocks in at 29.2 ft/s, 31st-fastest in MLB.
- Mike Trout's odd No. 27s: He had 27 hits in 2011, 27 doubles in 2012 and 27 home runs in 2013.

Putting age 27 into context

- Through Aug. 4, 84 rookies have played this season in their age-27 season or older.
- Through Aug. 4, Mike Trout has 61.9 career WAR with two months left this season. That is the sixth-highest WAR all time by a player through his age-26 season and second-highest among position players, behind only Ty Cobb. Pitchers with a higher WAR total through the same age were Walter Johnson (71.1), Kid Nichols (69.2), Amos Rusie (64.5) and Tommy Bond (61.9). Trout's mark also edged Mickey Mantle's career total through his age-26 season (61.4).
- That WAR is already the 111th highest in MLB history for position players. That is ahead of 76 Hall of Fame position players, including Jackie Robinson (61.4 WAR) and Harmon Killebrew (60.4).
- Looking at the all-time leaders in many major categories, Trout's career through his age-26 season stacks up very well against theirs. Among other things, he has hit more home runs through the age of 26 than all-time home run leader Barry Bonds and scored more runs through age 26 than all-time runs leader Rickey Henderson.

Trout Vs. All-Time Leaders Through Age-26 Seasons

TROUT	STAT	ALL-TIME LEADER
231	HR	Barry Bonds 142
1,155	Hits	Pete Rose 899
2,155	Total bases	Hank Aaron 2,305
774	Runs	Rickey Henderson 732
670	Walks	Barry Bonds 484

- Trout was taken with the 25th pick overall in the 2009 draft, and he's already the best 25th pick ever, with his 61.9 WAR eclipsing Chuck Knoblauch's 44.8. Trout is also the best Angels first-round pick, with his career mark topping Frank Tanana's 57.6 and Troy Glaus' 38.0 tally, the previous best among Angels first-round selections.

Birthday bashing

Trout has hit especially well on his birthday. In six birthday games, Trout is batting 7-for-23 (.304) with four home runs. The homers were hit in 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2017. Trout is the only player in MLB history to hit four birthday home runs prior to turning 27.

No setbacks in throwing for Shohei Ohtani, Mike Scioscia says

ANAHEIM, Calif. -- Shohei Ohtani is making progress more quickly than expected in his quest to return to the mound for the Los Angeles Angels.

Ohtani, the two-way rookie sensation, has incurred no setbacks while throwing regularly in the outfield in recent days, manager Mike Scioscia said Monday. He is currently throwing from 120 feet.

Scioscia says Ohtani is "probably closer to getting on the mound than we thought last week."

The Angels have put no timeline on the recovery of Ohtani, who hasn't pitched since June after spraining a ligament in his right (throwing) elbow.

Ohtani batted fifth as the Angels' designated hitter Monday and went 0-for-2 with two walks in a 6-2 win over the Detroit Tigers. The two walks equaled the number of walks he drew in his previous 16 games combined.

FROM CBS SPORTS

MLB hot seat rankings: Which manager is safe and who could potentially be on the way out?

Ranking every MLB manager by perceived job security heading into the final months of the season

By R.J. Anderson

Over the weekend, Los Angeles Angels manager Mike Scioscia used the word "poppycock." Though Scioscia's employment of the word was newsworthy in its own right, as it came in response to a report stating he intended to step down at season's end.

Whether or not Scioscia returns as Angels manager, we figured this would be a good time to survey the league and judge whether each manager was safe, gone, or on the hot seat. These aren't scientific, but we've listed the managers in order of safeness descending.

30. Alex Cora, Red Sox: Cora is in the first season of a three-year deal and has the Red Sox on pace to win 113 games. Shy of a criminal act, he's not going anywhere anytime soon.

29. A.J. Hinch, Astros: Hinch led the Astros to a World Series victory last fall. He could do it again this October. He's not going anywhere, even if everyone is still waiting for him to receive a long-term extension.

28. Dave Roberts, Dodgers: As with Hinch, Roberts would appear safe. His contract includes a club option for next season, but it seems likely that he'll receive an extension between now and next spring.

27. Terry Francona, Indians: Cleveland has already exercised its club options on Francona's contract for the 2019-20 seasons. He's as safe as any long-time veteran manager out there.

26. Gabe Kapler, Phillies: Kapler found himself questioned early and often to begin his rookie year as skipper. But to his credit he's learned from his mistakes and has the Phillies in serious contention for the playoffs.

25. Aaron Boone, Yankees: Yes, the Yankees have encountered some recent turbulence. No, Boone isn't going anywhere. The Yankees didn't fire Joe Girardi for Boone to dismiss him after a potential 100-win year.

24. Bruce Bochy, Giants: Bochy has just one year left on his contract and the Giants have made numerous tweaks to his coaching staff in recent falls. Still, he's a future Hall of Famer and if he's going to go out he's earned the right to go out on his own terms -- not on those imposed upon him.

23. Joe Maddon, Cubs: As with some other managers ahead of Maddon, he has one year remaining on his deal. Unlike them, he's already long in the tooth and thick in the wallet. His contract situation will be a minor storyline worth watching this winter -- if only to see how many years the Cubs tack on.

22. Torey Lovullo, Diamondbacks: Yet another manager likely to get a contract extension this winter. Remember that when Lovullo got the gig, there was talk the Diamondbacks might be in for a rebuild. Instead, they're nearing a second consecutive postseason appearance.

21. Craig Counsell, Brewers: Counsell has done a good job since taking over the Brewers back in May 2015. He's under contract through the 2020 season and with a postseason appearance he could move up the list.

20. Kevin Cash, Rays: Cash is sort of like the American League version of Counsell, in that his good work hasn't yet elevated him to a household name. Still, the only way he doesn't get an extension this winter is if he decides he'd rather take his iconoclastic ways elsewhere.

19. Scott Servais, Mariners: Unlike many of the names above, Servais already signed an extension -- a multi-year one just a few weeks ago. It's highly unlikely that the M's recent skid would cost him his job, but we're putting him here just in case things continue to go south in Seattle.

18. Bob Melvin, Athletics: Melvin's contract runs through next season, and there had been murmurs earlier in the season about Oakland considering wholesale changes heading into 2020. Should the A's hold onto their lead for the second wild card, that would seem to ensure those changes will not be made.

17. Bud Black, Rockies: The Rockies may not find themselves in the playoffs this year due to a leaky bullpen, but Black ought to return without question. It helps that he's under contract for up to two more seasons.

16. Davey Martinez, Nationals: Martinez has taken his bumps so far, but the Nationals seem to be turning things around. Besides, he has two more years on his contract and it wouldn't make sense to turn to yet another manager within a year of letting Dusty Baker walk.

15. Andy Green, Padres: The only thing separating Green from being recognized as a quality skipper is a playoff appearance. He's under contract through 2021 and should be safe regardless of record.

14. Clint Hurdle, Pirates: Hurdle signed an extension last year that runs through the 2021 season. The Pirates are coming off a splashy deadline with some playoff aspirations. Even if they don't make the playoffs there's no reason to think they'll make a change.

13. Brian Snitker, Braves: On results alone, Snitker deserves to remain Atlanta's manager. It's possible that Alex Anthopoulos decides he wants his own skipper, however. Based on how the clubhouse and the old guard in the organization view Snitker, it seems more likely that he'll be back.

12. Rick Renteria, White Sox: Ricky's boys are said to not quit. Renteria has a year left on his deal and deserves to stay at least one more year to help see Chicago's rebuild through.

11. Ron Gardenhire, Tigers: If the Tigers wanted a splashy or younger manager they would've went with one last fall. Gardenhire is all but certain to get another season.

10. Mickey Callaway, Mets: Reports have Callaway returning next season. He's this low because the Mets are volatile.

9. Paul Molitor, Twins: Here's where things start to get trickier. Molitor signed an extension last October after guiding the Twins to the playoffs. Minnesota has had a disappointing season, and the Twins front office would probably like to hire their own skipper at some point down the road. Molitor likely gets another year, but if the Twins are bad again he could be out the door before 2020.

8. John Gibbons, Blue Jays: Perpetually on the hot seat, Gibbons has one guaranteed year left on his deal. Mark Shapiro and Ross Atkins didn't hire Gibbons, and with a rebuild in progress it's worth wondering if they'll take this opportunity to change skippers before their youth movement arrives next summer.

7. Jeff Banister, Rangers: Clearly the Rangers have faith in Banister's boss, since Jon Daniels signed a multiyear deal earlier in the summer. Will Daniels exhibit the same belief in Banister? He has a club option for next year remaining on his contract, so we'll find out soon enough.

6. Don Mattingly, Marlins: The Marlins new ownership and front office might prefer to pick their own skipper. Mattingly has one year remaining on his contract, so the question is whether Miami would want to pay two managers for a season, or if they'll wait until next winter to make a change.

5. Jim Riggleman, Reds: Riggleman has done a nice job since taking over an interim basis following Bryan Price's dismissal. You can make the case he should have the label removed entirely. But until that happens, we're going to assume the Reds desire someone else as their next skipper.

4. Mike Scioscia, Angels: Maybe the report on Scioscia's future proves to be poppycock. For our money, it's never a good sign when a manager has to address his future in early August -- especially not when hours later the organization installs a successor candidate, in Eric Chavez, as Triple-A manager.

3. Ned Yost, Royals: Yost's deal will expire with the conclusion of the regular season. He's acknowledged in the past that he's unlikely to see the Royals' rebuild all the way through, and this would seem to be a sensible time for him to move into a figurehead role with the organization to whom he delivered a pair of pennants and a world title.

2. Buck Showalter, Orioles: Showalter's contract is up at season's end and the Orioles are dreadful. Depending on what the O's do with Dan Duquette, Showalter could well find himself in a front-office role.

1. Mike Shildt, Cardinals: Shildt ought to be a candidate for the Cardinals job. But until he's hired full time he's going to be viewed as the guy keeping the dugout bench warm for Joe Girardi.

Turner to make season debut for Tigers at Angels

Jacob Turner was the No. 1 prospect for the Detroit Tigers when he made his major league debut against the Los Angeles Angels seven years ago. He'll be wearing the same uniform and facing the same opponent Tuesday night, except his situation has grown much more precarious.

By STATS

Jacob Turner was the No. 1 prospect for the Detroit Tigers when he made his major league debut against the Los Angeles Angels seven years ago. He'll be wearing the same uniform and facing the same opponent Tuesday night, except his situation has grown much more precarious.

Turner is scheduled to make his season debut for the Tigers while also making his first start in more than a year. He'll try to keep the Tigers (47-66) in position to win the series, something they haven't accomplished at Angel Stadium since 2009.

The Angels (56-58) came into the series three games below .500 for the first time this season, but won the opener 6-2 on Monday night.

Turner, a 27-year-old right-hander, was recalled from Triple-A Toledo on Monday, shortly after starter Mike Fiers was traded to the Oakland Athletics. Turner was signed as a free agent in June, shortly after he was released by the Miami Marlins.

"Our hope is that he sticks," Detroit general manager Al Avila told Fox 2 Detroit on Monday.

Avila's predecessor, Dave Dombrowski, selected Turner with the No. 9 overall draft pick in 2009, 14 spots before the Angels took two-time AL most valuable player Mike Trout.

Turner made three starts each in 2011 and 2012 before he was traded to the Marlins midway through the 2012 season.

He made 55 appearances (45 starts) over the next 2 1/2 seasons with Miami and the Chicago Cubs, but only combined for an 9-19 record. He spent most of the 2016 season coming out of the bullpen for the White Sox, and then did more of the same last season for the Washington Nationals.

The Marlins gave him another shot this season, but after giving up eight runs in one inning out of the bullpen in a 20-1 loss to the Philadelphia Phillies, he was demoted to Triple-A New Orleans, and released six weeks later.

Turner started 11 games for Toledo, most recently throwing seven shutout innings on Thursday to lower his ERA to 4.01. He has 41 strikeouts and 20 walks in 58 1/3 innings.

"The Marlins let him go and we picked him up put him in rotation in Toledo," Avila told reporters Monday. "He's going to be evaluated like everybody else."

Turner's only other appearance at Angel Stadium came July 17, 2016, when the White Sox called him up as a spot starter in place of All-Star left-hander Chris Sale. In his first major league appearance since 2014, Turner gave up eight runs and seven hits over four innings of the 8-1 loss.

Overall, he's 0-3 against the Angels in his career with a 13.50 ERA in three starts covering 11 1/3 innings.

Angels first baseman Albert Pujols will undoubtedly be in the lineup. He's 4-for-4 in his career off Turner with three home runs and six RBIs. Trout likely won't play, however. He missed his fifth straight game Monday with a sore right wrist.

Angels left-hander Andrew Heaney (6-7, 3.75 ERA) is scheduled to make his 21st start of the season. He has 10 strikeouts and no walks in the past two games, but doesn't have a victory to show for it, leaving him a win short of his career-high seventh.

"Putting guys on without making them earn it is going to hurt you eventually," he told MLB.com after the game.

Heaney faced the Tigers on May 31 in Detroit and allowed five runs and eight hits in five innings of a 6-2 loss. It was his only appearance versus the Tigers.

FROM BLEACHER REPORT

LeBron's Great, but Mike Trout Is This Generation's Most Dominant Male Athlete

By Joon Lee

When people think about the most dominant team athletes in America, most sharpen their focus on one person: LeBron James. It's a clear and easy answer. The newly minted star of the Los Angeles Lakers ticks all of the boxes.

Recognizing his greatness doesn't take a trained eye. His athleticism stands above most of the pack in a sport predicated on agility, speed and leaping ability. Hell, he just looks bigger, stronger and faster than everyone, even at the age of 33. Acknowledging LeBron as the most dominant athlete in professional sports is like calling a Drake album too long. It's so widely accepted as fact that any conversation feels unnecessary.

But while James will certainly go down as the best basketball player of his generation, calling him the most dominant American male athlete diminishes the greatness of one much less newsworthy star: Mike Trout. His greatness is so enormous and consistent that most fail to recognize how much better than everyone else Trout is at hitting a baseball.

Ted Williams famously wrote that hitting a baseball consistently is the hardest thing to do in sports. Hitters have about only a quarter-second to decide whether to swing at an average major league fastball, according to Davin Coburn of Popular Mechanics. That Trout is so adept at it makes him the most dominant athlete in any sport. Michael Jordan, one of the greatest athletes to ever live, looked like a mere mortal when attempting to put the barrel on the ball during his brief minor league career.

In baseball, the MVP discussion revolves around Trout, with an assumption that he's perennially the most valuable player in the sport. Year after year, a challenger emerges. One year, it's Jose Altuve. The next, it's Josh Donaldson. Sometimes, it's Mookie Betts. People don't bat an eye when talking about Trout as a potential MVP candidate before the season. It's just fact.

There are, of course, flaws in this comparison. Value statistics in basketball tend to de-emphasize defense and strongly favor those with a high usage percentage. While both sports attempt to calculate the impact of a singular athlete on a team, you can't compare a baseball player's Wins Above Replacement (WAR) to a basketball player's. They do, however, provide a strong starting point to compare an athlete's impact to that of his peers, and the numbers strongly favor Trout's otherworldly greatness.

Since 2014, Trout has accumulated 41.7 WAR, according to FanGraphs, far and away the highest mark in the game. The challengers include pitchers Chris Sale (29.6 WAR), Clayton Kershaw (29.5 WAR) and position players Altuve (27.9 WAR), Donaldson (27.5 WAR) and Betts (27.0 WAR). When accounting for wins added, that makes Trout 29.0 percent more valuable than his closest contemporary and 33.1 percent more valuable than any other position player over the past four-plus seasons, even though he missed a month-and-a-half with a thumb injury in 2017.

Contextually, in the best five-year stretch of Babe Ruth's career (1920-1924), he posted 61.1 WAR, which was just 16.4 percent better than the second-best position player (Rogers Hornsby). And that came before Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier, an era with less competition.

Trout's greatness not only derives from his ability to hit moonshots, make leaping catches to rob homers and swipe bases, but from his ability to consistently and annually outpace his peers. The numbers speak for themselves. You can compare Trout to someone like Bryce Harper, but that's like comparing *Toy Story* to *Cars* in the pantheon of Pixar movies. They're in the same universe, but their greatness can't be compared. Since 2014, Trout nearly doubles Harper's WAR total (21.2). When considering talent and production, Trout has no peers among the current crop of baseball stars.

While basketball is a much more team-centric sport than baseball, a basketball lineup's success also often hinges heaviest on a singular star. Baseball is much more individualistic on a pitch-by-pitch basis, with the team's success determined by collective players' successes. James can drive repeatedly into the paint by himself to score, but the only way Trout can drive himself in is by smacking a pitch out of the ballpark.

By all value metrics, James has been among the best players in the NBA during the last five seasons, but he is by no means head and shoulders above the rest statistically, a claim Trout can make. According to Basketball Reference, Russell Westbrook places first among his peers since 2013-14, posting a total of 104.8 WAR (approximate value calculated by multiplying VORP by 2.7, per Basketball Reference) in the last five years. James, in comparison, comes in second with 101.8 WAR. The most widely accepted value statistic, player efficiency rating, places James (27.7) third in the last five years, behind Kevin Durant (28.0) and Anthony Davis (27.8).

Many of the strong feelings about James' dominance stem from his success in the postseason, which has produced three titles and eight straight trips to the NBA Finals. Trout, on the other hand, has only played once in the playoffs, getting one hit in a Kansas City Royals sweep of the Los Angeles Angels. Trout can only do so much by himself, even if he's disproportionately more impactful on a baseball field than any of his peers.

James' greatness is undeniable. From his raw athleticism to his explosiveness to the endless highlight reels, James is a one-of-a-kind athlete. But while he rises above the pack of current basketball stars, he does have contemporaries, most notably Kevin Durant. Trout does not have peers in this current crop of baseball stars, and there should be no doubt about the identity of the best male athlete of this generation. There won't be someone who even comes close, no Pacino to Trout's De Niro.

In Trout, we are watching one of the most dominant athletes in sports history.

The next step is getting people to care.

FROM THE SPORTING NEWS

AL MVP race: Mike Trout vs. Mookie Betts vs. Jose Ramirez in incredibly compelling contest

By Ryan Fagan

A couple of weeks ago, I tweeted a comparison of Mike Trout's 2014 season — when he won his first AL MVP award — and Trout's 2018 season. My point was to show how much Trout has improved by leaps and bounds, even after winning the top yearly award.

Somehow, Red Sox fans took that tweet as a slight to Mookie Betts. Debates ensued.

Let's further those debates here, shall we? Obviously, so many things could change between now and the end of the season. This isn't a prediction of how the final order will be, just a look at how the race stacks up right now. Numbers, as always, courtesy of Baseball-Reference and FanGraphs.

1. Mike Trout, Angels

Necessary numbers: .309/.459/.624, 197 OPS+, 30 home runs, 21 stolen bases, 82 runs, 60 RBIs, 191 wRC+, .315 ISO, 7.8 bWAR, 7.6 fWAR

The case for Mike: Trout has firmly established himself as the best player in baseball, and if this wrist injury is truly a minor hiccup (he received a cortisone shot Monday and is listed as "day to day"), he could be on the way to posting the best season of his career. For a guy with two MVP awards and four seasons with a bWAR of 9.0 or higher, that's really saying something.

Of course, it needs to be said that 2018 Trout isn't competing against 2012-17 Trout for the 2018 AL MVP award. He's competing against a field of outstanding players having great years.

So ... he leads the majors in WAR — both by the Baseball-Reference and FanGraphs' calculations — and also leads the majors leagues in OPS, OPS+, on-base percentage, walks, times on base, intentional walks, wRC+ and wOBA. In the AL, he's top-five in batting average, slugging percentage, ISO, runs scored, total bases, home runs and stolen-base percentage.

Here's the tweet that sparked the "debate" in my mentions, by the way.

2. Mookie Betts, Red Sox

Necessary numbers: .342/.428/.652, 184 OPS+, 26 home runs, 21 stolen bases, 89 runs, 58 RBIs, 186 wRC+, .310 ISO, 7.1 bWAR, 6.7 fWAR

The case for Mookie: Betts finished second in the 2016 AL MVP voting, a handful of votes behind Trout. And here's the thing: Betts' production in 2018 dwarfs most of the numbers he put up that year. That sounds familiar, eh?

In 2016, Betts hit .318 with 31 homers, 26 stolen bases and an .897 OPS; this year he's at .342 with 26 homers, 21 stolen bases (already) and a 1.080 OPS. Any conversation that doesn't include Betts as one of baseball's best players is a conversation that should be adjusted quickly.

Let's discuss a talking point that Red Sox fans love to bring up. As they're quick to point out, Betts plays for baseball's best team. That means, they figure, Betts should get the advantage because the Angels would miss the playoffs with or without Trout, right? Look, I'm not going to claim to know the mindset of every single voter, but I can confidently tell you that even though "playoff bound" might have been a primary consideration in past generations, it's very low on the collective priority list (if it's there at all). I know that when I had a vote for the 2014 NL MVP award, a team's final place in the standings wasn't much more than an afterthought. This is the award that's supposed to honor the best player in the league, and dinging a player just because his teammates have struggled seems, well, silly. Hell, if anything, it's harder to put up good offensive numbers when the guys around you in the lineup are struggling, so maybe the Angels' issues should actually be a boost for Trout.

3. Jose Ramirez, Indians

Necessary numbers: .300/.410/.629, 172 OPS+, 33 home runs, 26 stolen bases, 78 runs, 83 RBIs, 174 wRC+, .329 ISO, 7.4 bWAR, 7.5 fWAR

The case for Jose: As The Athletic's Jayson Stark pointed out Tuesday morning, Ramirez has a chance to become the first player in AL history — and only the second in MLB history — to lead his league in home runs (tied for first), extra-base hits (alone in first) and stolen bases (tied for first). That's just incredible. And, just to keep this whole "this guy just keeps getting better" train moving, Ramirez finished third in the AL MVP voting last year, when he posted a 6.9 bWAR, 29 homers, 83 RBIs, 17 stolen bases and a .957 OPS in 152 games. Take a look at the previous paragraph and you can see that he's either eclipsed or tied those numbers already, in just 110 games. Incredible.

Other notables

Francisco Lindor, Indians: Any other year, a guy with 27 homers, 96 runs, 17 stolen bases and a 6.5 bWAR in early August just might be the favorite to win the MVP award. This year, Lindor is fourth in the running, at best. It's a tough year to be awesome.

Matt Chapman, A's: Bet you didn't know Chapman's bWAR is already up to 6.2 on the season. He's been very good at the plate — 15 homers, 137 OPS+ in 97 games — but where he's elite is with his glove. He's going to win multiple Gold Gloves, probably starting this year.

J.D. Martinez, Red Sox: You'd be hard-pressed to find any free agent who has had a better first year than Martinez has had with the Red Sox. He's tied for the MLB lead (with Jose Ramirez) with 33 homers and leads the bigs with 93 RBIs and 261 total bases, to go with a .324 average and 1.033 OPS. Think about this: We're in early August and Ramirez already has a 4.8 bWAR as a designated hitter. Know how many times legendary Boston DH David Ortiz had a full-season bWAR higher than 5.2 (a mark Martinez should easily pass)? Twice. That's it.

Chris Sale, Red Sox: He leads the AL with a 2.04 ERA and 2.07 FIP, and his strikeout numbers — 13.2 per nine innings — are downright stupid. There are plenty of AL starters having outstanding seasons (as many as seven or eight will receive top-three Cy Young votes) but Sale has been the best of the bunch so far.

Aaron Judge, Yankees: In a field this competitive, missing multiple weeks is a crushing blow to anyone's MVP chances. Judge has been pretty great, though.

Jose Altuve, Astros: Same thing goes for the 2017 AL MVP, if his knee injury keeps him out. He's been great again — .329 average, 141 OPS+ — but his power numbers are down a tiny bit and, yeah, the competition for the award is as intense as it's ever been.

FROM THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE**Bees manager Keith Johnson promoted to Angels' coaching staff; Eric Chavez will replace him in Salt Lake**

Keith Johnson's favorite task as manager of the Salt Lake Bees was informing players they were being promoted to the Los Angeles Angels. And now it has happened to him.

The Bees have lost their manager with a month remaining in the Pacific Coast League season, the Triple-A team announced Sunday. Johnson, 47, is joining the Angels' coaching staff in his specialty, working with infielders.

Eric Chavez, a 17-year major leaguer (including 13 seasons with Oakland) who has worked as a special assistant to Angels general manager Billy Eppler, will replace Johnson with the Bees. Chavez has never been a coach or manager.

The move comes amid a report from The Athletic that longtime Angels Manager Mike Scioscia would step down after the season. Scioscia told reporters Sunday the news was "poppycock," saying that "nothing's changed since October" regarding his job status or personal plans.

Yet the new job descriptions for Johnson and Chavez inevitably led to speculation that one of them is being groomed as Scioscia's successor.

Johnson has managed the Bees for most of seven years, in two stints. He spent the 2015 season as roving instructor in the Angels' minor league system.

Coaching third base was one of Johnson's usual duties with the Bees. He occasionally managed from the dugout and had Ray Olmedo coach third, as happened this weekend.

The Bees took a 60-52 record into Sunday's game at Omaha, trailing El Paso by 2½ games in their division of the PCL. Salt Lake will open a seven-game homestand Thursday vs. Tacoma, with El Paso coming to town for three games beginning Aug. 13. The PCL's regular season runs through Labor Day, Sept. 3.