



Press Clips

(August 8, 2018)

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FROM THE OC REGISTER**Home runs by Shohei Ohtani, Justin Upton fuel Angels' rout of Tigers**

By J.P. Hoornstra

ANAHEIM — Ask any Angels player about the team's recent slump — one win in seven games when the week began — and he is likely to mention how much the team misses its best player. Mike Trout's sore right wrist was still wrapped in gauze one day after he received a cortisone injection, so he could not play on his 27th birthday.

Among his many achievements, Trout boasts a .304 career batting average on his birthday, with four home runs in six games. Without him, the middle of the lineup has been under more pressure than usual to find its power stroke.

It arrived quickly Tuesday. The Angels sent 11 men to the plate in the first inning of an 11-5 victory over the Detroit Tigers. They can sweep the three-game series from the Tigers, the fourth-place team in the American League Central, with a win Wednesday afternoon.

The Angels' last sweep was June 4-6 against the Kansas City Royals.

Shohei Ohtani hit a home run, his 12th this season, and later stole his fifth base. Justin Upton hit his 22nd home run before the announced crowd of 35,824 at Angel Stadium. Every Angels position player reached base at least once.

Three double plays, including two from the outfield, helped the Angels overcome a shaky start by Andrew Heaney. The left-hander allowed five runs in five innings but managed to even his record at 7-7.

"It's nice to not pitch all that well and get a win," Heaney said.

Upton, Ohtani, Kole Calhoun, Andrelton Simmons and Francisco Arcia each had two of the Angels' 13 hits.

Upton was so frustrated by one strikeout Monday, he slammed his bat on the ground and snapped it into two pieces over his knee. The veteran left fielder rebounded with a 2-for-5 performance out of the number-2 slot in the batting order. The opposite-field blast was his first home run of any kind since July 29.

"This guy works hard. He wants to achieve," Manager Mike Scioscia said of Upton. "He's trying to find a comfort level in the box. He hasn't been hitting the ball out of the park like we know he can."

Ohtani's homer was also hit to the opposite field, a 411-foot moonshot against Tigers starter Jacob Turner (0-1) that landed in the Angels' bullpen. That was the highlight of an inning featuring six hits and a lazy error by Tigers shortstop Jose Iglesias that allowed Albert Pujols to leg out a routine ground ball.

Before last week, Ohtani had not hit a home run to straight-away left field as an Angel. Now, two of his last three homers have been hit in that direction. Ohtani said through his interpreter that this isn't the result of a specific adjustment at the plate.

"I haven't really changed my approach," he said. "Back when I was in Japan, that was one of my strong points, going to the opposite field. ... Some of the hard-hit balls to the opposite field, there's a lot of coincidence involved."

Turner, summoned from the minor leagues earlier in the day, was charged with seven runs – five earned – in his only inning of work. The Tigers needed five relief pitchers to finish the game.

Eric Young Jr., who is holding down center field until Trout returns, made his second diving catch in as many days. This time he robbed James McCann on a sinking line drive in the right-center field gap, then threw out Ronny Rodriguez at first base to complete a double play in the sixth inning.

"At that point in time, a 7-5 game, it could have been a totally different game," Young said. "A big swing changed it back in our favor – getting the double play, getting out of the inning and keeping the game at 7-5."

The Angels scored three runs in the bottom of the sixth, on the two-run homer by Upton and a sacrifice fly by Simmons that scored Ohtani. At 10-5, the game was safely out of reach.

Iglesias and Nicholas Castellanos hit back-to-back singles against Heaney in the first inning. Iglesias scored on a ground-rule double by Jeimer Candelario that bounced into the field-level seats in left, giving Detroit an early 1-0 lead.

When Heaney threw a fastball over Arcia's head, Castellanos scampered home with the Tigers' second run. Yet after the bottom of the first inning, the Angels never trailed. Right-hander Jim Johnson and left-hander Jose Alvarez each threw a scoreless inning out of the bullpen.

Left-hander Williams Jerez, who was acquired from the Boston Red Sox in the Ian Kinsler trade, made his major league debut in the eighth inning. He finished the game with two scoreless frames, becoming the 30th different Angels pitcher to appear in a game this season – one shy of a club record.

The Tigers will send a left-handed pitcher to the mound in the series finale, Blaine Hardy. Ohtani has never faced Hardy before but he has struggled against southpaws, slugging just .246 compared to .635 against right-handers. This will present another challenge for the middle of the Angels' batting order, with Trout likely to miss his seventh consecutive game.

Before the game, Scioscia was asked to compare the 24-year-old Ohtani as a hitter to Trout as a 19-year-old rookie.

"They're comparable in how far they can hit a ball," Scioscia said. "Shohei will show more pull power at times, while Mike is more straightaway. Right now, where Shohei is, and where Mike was when he came up when he was 19, they're at different stages. Shohei has more experience because he played at a very high level in Japan. Mike had just played Triple-A ball and not even a full season."

“They both have that ‘wow’ factor, there’s no doubt about that.”

For new Angels coach Keith Johnson, surprise call-up was a major role reversal

By J.P. Hoornstra

ANAHEIM — Keith Johnson looked at his phone. Billy Eppler was calling. Johnson, the manager of the Angels’ top farm team in Salt Lake, knew that could only mean one thing: someone was getting called up to the majors.

Johnson wasn’t wrong.

“Little did I know it was going to be me this time,” he said. “It’s a moment I’ll never forget.”

On Sunday, the Angels made a surprising switch by adding Johnson to their major-league staff and replacing him with Eric Chavez, an assistant to Eppler. It was the first long-term managerial assignment for Chavez.

For Johnson, it was his second assignment to the Angels’ major league staff. He became the team’s player information coach in the wake of Jerry Dipoto’s resignation midway through the 2015 season. Johnson began that year as a roving infield instructor.

With the exception of 2015, Johnson had been the manager at Triple-A Salt Lake every season since 2011. Johnson knew his last major league assignment was temporary.

“This time has a pretty good feel to it,” he said. “Half my team’s up here. A lot of guys, it’s their first major league call-up, where in the past we had a club full of minor league free agents, up and down and whatnot. Definitely has a different feeling to it.”

The elephant in the room, of course, is what the switcheroo means for Chavez and Johnson beyond this season. Angels manager Mike Scioscia has spent part of the last three days downplaying reports that he plans to retire once his contract expires at the end of this season.

Chavez has been rumored as a potential successor, along with special assistant Brad Ausmus and bench coach Josh Paul. Perhaps now the Angels can also take a closer look at Johnson, 47, the epitome of an “organizational soldier” since his first coaching assignment in 2004.

That year, Johnson was the hitting coach of the Angels’ affiliate in the rookie-level Arizona League. The team featured a 17-year-old Martin Maldonado at catcher and future Angels reliever Jose Arredondo at shortstop. A 20-year-old Howie Kendrick passed through. Led by Casey Kotchman, Jeff Mathis and Ervin Santana, the Angels’ system was ranked third overall by Baseball America at the time.

After moving up twice as a minor league hitting coach, Johnson took his first managerial assignment in 2008 with Class-A Cedar Rapids. He has witnessed an entire franchise’s talent pool rise, shrink, then rise again since his last season as a player in Salt Lake in 2003.

“Down there it’s not necessarily about wins and losses,” Johnson said, “but when guys come up here and you see them, all the work that you put in to see them flourish and show up here, it’s just a great feeling.”

While minor-league managing is no longer the prerequisite it once was, Johnson’s ease working with young players and his reputation as a player-friendly mentor fit the mold of a modern field general.

When rookie catcher Jose Briceño snuffed out a double-steal attempt by the Seattle Mariners in July, Scioscia was quick to credit Johnson and his staff for reinforcing those details long before Briceño arrived in the big leagues.

“When you’re the manager in Triple-A, a hitting coach or pitching coach, you’re an extension of the major league staff,” Scioscia said.

For Johnson, that feels more real than ever.

JEREZ UP, TROPEANO LANDS ON DL

Left-handed reliever Williams Jerez got his first major league call-up, and right-hander Nick Tropeano was placed on the 10-day disabled list with right shoulder inflammation.

For Tropeano, it’s his second trip to the DL for the injury this season. He allowed one run over five innings Monday before leaving the game, having thrown just 62 pitches.

Jerez was acquired from the Boston Red Sox on July 30 along with right-hander Ty Buttrey in the Ian Kinsler trade. In 36 Triple-A games this year (34 with Pawtucket and two with Salt Lake) he was 2-1 with six saves, a 4.62 ERA and 72 strikeouts in 54-2/3 innings.

Jerez will become the 30th different pitcher the Angels have used in 2018. The club record is 31, set in 2014 and 2017.

OHTANI UPDATE

Shohei Ohtani will begin throwing off a mound on Saturday, Scioscia said.

The decision was announced one day after the Angels’ pitcher/designated hitter made his first dry throws off a mound since receiving a stem cell and platelet-rich plasma injection in June. Ohtani continues making progress in his long-toss program as well.

Though Ohtani will throw to a catcher in a crouch, Scioscia said his bullpen session “will not be full gorilla.”

ALSO

Pitcher Matt Shoemaker will throw another bullpen on Wednesday, his second this week. The right-hander has been on the disabled list since April. ... In his first minor league rehab game with Class-A Inland Empire, Rene Rivera served as the 66ers’ designated hitter and singled in his first at-bat. He also

grounded into a couple outs and struck out. Scioscia said that Rivera's rehab stint is expected to last seven or eight days. ... Four Angels were included on Baseball America's midseason Top 100 prospects list: Double-A outfielder Jo Adell (11), Triple-A pitcher Griffin Canning (48), Class-A outfielder Brandon Marsh (89) and Triple-A pitcher Jose Suarez (90).

ON DECK

Angels (RHP Jaime Barria, 6-7, 3.84 ERA) vs. Tigers (LHP Blaine Hardy, 4-3, 3.25 ERA), Wednesday, 1 p.m., Fox Sports West

FROM LOS ANGELES TIMES

Ohtani's long blast in the first ignites Angels' 11-5 rout over Tigers

By Jeff Miller

He made international headlines Monday by standing in the bullpen pretending to pitch using a towel instead of a baseball.

So it was no surprise Tuesday when Shohei Ohtani tickled Twitter to its core with an actual in-game feat.

His opposite-field, three-run home run highlighted a seven-run first inning as the Angels beat Detroit 11-5 at Angel Stadium.

Within moments of the 411-foot drive landing in that same bullpen beyond left field, social media buzzed with an appearance by the Ohtani puppet.

The doll is part of a Japanese television show and is employed to re-create Ohtani's home runs.

But the puppet, no matter how magical, would struggle to adequately convey the magnificence of what Ohtani did against the Tigers.

After Kole Calhoun and Justin Upton led off the first inning with singles, the rookie launched a fastball from Jacob Turner (0-1) with a swing that looked impossibly easy.

Ohtani appeared to hit the ball close to the end of his bat, yet it somehow exited at 107 mph and at an angle of 34 degrees, and it didn't require a working knowledge of calculus to do the math.

This one was crushed squared.

"He leverages the ball really well," manager Mike Scioscia said. "When he gets extended and barrels it up, the ball comes off very hot."

As the home run descended from its peak height of 117 feet, Angels reliever Noe Ramirez scrambled to move under it and readied to catch the ball in his removed cap.

But at the last instant, Ramirez turned away like a man suddenly fearing for his safety. The ball one-hopped into the crowd.

“It might look like I’m taking easy hacks, but, for me, I’m swinging the bat pretty hard,” Ohtani said through an interpreter. “If it looks like that and the ball’s flying far, that’s a good sign.”

The home run was the 12th for Ohtani and came only hours after his potential return as a pitcher received a boost.

Scioscia said Ohtani is expected to throw a light bullpen workout Saturday as he continues to progress from a Grade 2 sprain of his right ulnar collateral ligament.

This, too, was big news, Ohtani’s bullpen session Monday, during which he replicated his pitching motion holding the towel, trumpeted in the manner of genuine breaking news.

But that’s the way every development is treated when the subject is a first-year hitting-pitching sensation doing things not accomplished in this sport since Babe Ruth played.

Ohtani’s night also included an infield single, a stolen base and a tag-up from third base, each of which showcased the speed he mixes with his power.

His home run, though, was the lasting moment on a night when the first six Angels to bat scored and the team rallied in support of struggling left-handed starter Andrew Heaney (7-7), who earned the victory but couldn’t reach the sixth inning.

The big first inning included a two-run single by Francisco Arcia and a steal of home by Arcia as part of a double steal.

Though records are unclear on such things, it can be safely assumed that Arcia is one of the few players in baseball history to steal home after opening the season as a team’s fifth-string catcher.

Mike Scioscia will leave the Angels but his toughness will remain with the organization

By Bill Plaschke

The respect isn’t imagined. The aura isn’t embellished.

The impact Mike Scioscia has had upon the Angels’ organization for 19 years is as real as a threatened punch to the face.

It was the fall of 2004, and mercurial Angels outfielder Jose Guillen had just lost his mind. He was removed for a pinch-runner and came storming back to the dugout, slamming his helmet, throwing his glove, and charging at Scioscia with the clear intent to sock him.

But he never got there. A group of veterans led by Troy Percival jumped in his way. If Guillen wanted to get to Scioscia, he was told, he would have to go through them first.

“We were having none of it,” Percival recalled Tuesday. “We lived and died by our manager.”

More than the 2002 World Series championship, more than six division titles, more than two manager of the year awards, this passion will be Scioscia’s lasting legacy.

The Angels fought everywhere for him, played beyond their limits for him, and were forever changed by him.

Soon, they will be saying goodbye to him, as the man with the second-most wins by any manager of one team in baseball history is expected to retire when the season ends.

Only, Scioscia is not acknowledging it. Not yet. The Athletic broke the news last weekend and he hilariously brushed it off as “poppycock.” A person with knowledge of Scioscia’s thinking has since confirmed that he could publicly announce his departure as soon as the middle of September, but he’s still not talking about it.

All of which is perfectly, delightfully Scioscia. He will finish his managerial career the way he’s lived it. He’ll end it his way. He’ll finish it on his time. And he’ll try to do it on a day when nobody is looking.

Sorry, Sosh. Not possible. Not fair. The Angels are going to want to throw a party for the most influential person to ever wear an Angels uniform, and you’re going to have to let them.

The number will be retired. The push for induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame will begin. And there might even be the creation of statue, adorned with quotes like this from another Scioscia creation named David Eckstein.

“When you break down how he won all those games, all those years, with all those lineups ... it’s amazing,” Eckstein said Tuesday.

Scioscia hasn’t won as much lately. This likely will be the eighth time in nine seasons the Angels have missed the playoffs. They are on pace to finish with a third consecutive losing record, the worst stretch of his career.

Fans are ready for a change. The organization is ready for a change. Even Scioscia, 59, surely will acknowledge that after nearly two decades in the same clubhouse — the longest current tenure in baseball by seven years — one’s voice loses its strength.

Scioscia is still a vibrant manager who has slowly but smartly adapted to the changing sport. But his time in Anaheim is finished, and he’s also smart enough to see that, and the expiration of his contract gives him the perfect opportunity to experience that blessed rarity of walking out of a major league dugout on his own.

This is not a plea for Scioscia to stay. It’s a plea for everyone to remember and recognize the depth of his footprints before he is gone.

“The Angels have always been more than Mike’s team,” Percival said. “They’ve been Mike’s toughness.”

Scioscia ranks 18th among managers with 1,625 victories, the key number being his 26 more wins than mentor Tommy Lasorda.

Yet neither statistic tells the true story of Scioscia’s enduring effect on an Angels organization that he transformed from a sleepy Orange County attraction into a national player.

“The Angels were always viewed as just another small-market club,” Eckstein said. “Mike Scioscia changed everything.”

He was a Dodgers legend who became a Dodgers cast-off who joined a franchise that reflected the fun and easygoing manner of its Disney owners.

He brought the Dodgers with him in a coaching staff that included Mickey Hatcher, Alfredo Griffin and Ron Roenicke. He brought the National League with him in a hustling, bunting, running, small-ball style of play that made the rest of the American League weak at the knees.

“He always knew how to get the best out of whatever he had,” Eckstein said, and he’s talking about himself.

Scioscia led the Angels to their only World Series championship with Eckstein playing shortstop for the first time as a pro — “Nobody thought I could do it; it was a crazy idea, yet Mike knew.”

The Angels won that championship behind a giant home run by journeyman Scott Spiezio and a Game 7 start by a rookie named John Lackey, with role players and rug-burners everywhere.

“I don’t think anybody would ever rate our 2002 team as having the most talent,” Eckstein said. “But if you go on a tough scale, we were right up there.”

Scioscia made the Angels a marquee team with five playoff appearances in the next seven years, while giving a player like Vladimir Guerrero the freedom to propel his career into the Hall of Fame, where he became the first player enshrined in an Angels cap. More recently, the great Mike Trout has flourished in a similar environment, a fun Scioscia clubhouse that follows a path to a fierce Scioscia dugout.

“He had innate ability to keep things light in the clubhouse, but always let you know what was expected on the field,” said Percival, the baseball coach at UC Riverside. “And he’s so smart. I’ve never seen anyone manipulate the roster like him. A lot of times, he would just out-think the other guys.”

In the end, though, he couldn’t out-think giant, suffocating contracts, a bevy of injuries, disappointing signings. As Scioscia aged, the Angels roster seemed to slowly disintegrate, and when last winter’s celebrated acquisitions of Shohei Ohtani, Zack Cozart, Ian Kinsler and Justin Upton couldn’t make a difference this summer, it was clear his time was done.

“Maybe he just needs to have his voice be somewhere else,” Percival said. “I know this. He’s a guy who can still go out and manage and win more World Series.”

Who knows how long Scioscia will stay retired? For now, it is enough to spend his final Angels weeks in thanks, and with memories of that proposed punch to the face.

Jose Guillen? Almost as soon as the veterans could shove him away from Scioscia, he was suspended from the team, in the final days of the season, in the middle of a pennant race, even though he was one of the team's top hitters, and traded that winter.

"You didn't mess with Mike's way," Percival said.

And that's no poppycock.

Shoulder issue again puts Nick Tropeano on Angels' disabled list

By Jeff Miller

A maddening season for **Nick Tropeano** continued Tuesday when he was put on the disabled list for the third time in barely three months because of shoulder inflammation.

The right-hander was pulled from his start Monday against Detroit after five one-hit, one-run innings because of what the Angels described as tightness in the joint.

He was out for 10 days in May and sat out 31 games starting in mid-June because of the problem, which Tropeano said has been diagnosed as bursitis.

General manager **Billy Eppler** described the issue as an impingement that is limiting range of motion and causes swelling and increased pinching when Tropeano tries to pitch through the discomfort.

"It's more annoying than it is significant," Eppler said. "You want to correct some movement and free up some space."

Tropeano will be treated with exercises similar to those used in physical therapy. Eppler said surgery is not an option at this point.

The Angels became concerned while watching Tropeano's labored effort Monday. Even though he limited the Tigers to a home run, he was "grinding" in the estimation of manager **Mike Scioscia**.

Given that Tropeano did not pitch in 2017 after undergoing elbow ligament-replacement surgery, the Angels were worried about him compensating for the impingement and risking additional injury.

To take Tropeano's roster spot, left-handed reliever **Williams Jerez** was called up from triple-A Salt Lake.

Jerez, 26, was acquired last week from Boston in the **Ian Kinsler** trade. His first Angels appearance will be his big league debut.

Scioscia called Jerez "a power left-handed arm that we're going to be excited to take a look at."

Shohei Ohtani to throw bullpen session

Shohei Ohtani's progress as a pitcher has reached a point where the Angels expect him to throw a light bullpen session Saturday.

The right-hander has not pitched from a mound since being diagnosed with a Grade 2 elbow sprain in early June. Ohtani was treated with platelet-rich plasma and stem-cell injections in an effort to avoid surgery.

Having returned to the lineup July 3 as designated hitter, he was cleared July 19 to begin working his way back as a pitcher.

Matt Shoemaker is happy with progress

Matt Shoemaker (forearm surgery) reported no issues a day after his return to the mound. The right-hander threw 20 fastballs during a bullpen session Monday.

He is scheduled to go through a similar workout Wednesday and said he hopes to throw a full bullpen this weekend.

"Very excited to say the least," said Shoemaker, who has made only one start this season. "I couldn't be more thankful for how things are going."

Etc.

Tyler Skaggs (groin strain) is set to throw a bullpen session Wednesday that could determine his status for the weekend. He hopes to come off the DL to start Saturday against Oakland. ... The Angels, who improved to 11-21 against left-handed starters Monday, are scheduled to face another left-hander Wednesday in Detroit's **Blaine Hardy**.

FROM ANGELS.COM

Ohtani powers Angels offense in win vs. Tigers

Rookie's 12th homer sparks 7-run 1st inning in Anaheim

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- Shohei Ohtani is still working his way back to the mound for the Angels, but he continues to find ways to make an impact with his bat in the interim.

Ohtani's three-run home run off right-hander Jacob Turner sparked a seven-run first inning that helped spur the Angels to an 11-5 victory over the Tigers on Tuesday night at Angel Stadium.

Detroit jumped out to a lead by scoring a pair of runs off left-hander Andrew Heaney in the top of the first, but the Angels quickly responded in the bottom half of the inning. After Kole Calhoun and Justin Upton delivered back-to-back singles, Ohtani crushed a 2-0 fastball from Turner 411 feet to left field to put the Angels ahead, 3-2.

"It may look like I'm taking easy hacks, but I'm swinging the bat pretty hard," Ohtani said through interpreter Ippei Mizuhara. "If it looks like [I'm swinging effortlessly] and the ball's flying far, that's a good sign. My timing is good. I'm seeing the ball well."

It was Ohtani's 12th home run and his second to the opposite field this season.

"He leverages the ball very well," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He's got great leverage in his swing. When he gets extended and barrels it up, the ball comes out very hot."

Ohtani's latest display of power came hours after the Angels announced that the 24-year-old rookie is expected to throw off the mound on Saturday for the first time since receiving stem-cell and platelet-rich plasma injections to treat his sprained elbow ligament on June 7.

"I've been waiting for this day," Ohtani said. "I've been very eager, ever since I got injured. I'm very excited. Looking forward to it. Just hoping there's good results and no setbacks."

Following Ohtani's homer, the Angels loaded the bases with no outs against Turner, who allowed the first eight batters he faced to reach base. Kaleb Cowart forced in another run with a bases-loaded walk, and Francisco Arcia followed with a two-run single to right field that made it 6-2. Arcia later capped the big inning by swiping home as part of a well-executed double steal. The seven runs were the most the Angels had scored in the first inning since April 20, 2013, which also came against the Tigers.

The early outburst allowed the Angels to overcome an uneven start from Heaney, who gave up five runs on eight hits over five innings. The Tigers pulled within two after Jeimer Candelario launched a two-run homer off Heaney in the fifth, but the Angels padded their lead with a three-run sixth that was highlighted by Upton's two-run shot just inside the right-field foul pole.

"It's nice to not pitch all that well and get a win," said Heaney, who earned his career-high seventh win. "It's always great to have run support like that. ... Those guys see me pretty well. I fell behind in some counts and kind of got just complacent with a pitch, and it cost me. It happens."

With their second consecutive win, the Angels improved to 57-58 and secured a series victory over Detroit. Even with Mike Trout out of the lineup for the sixth straight game due to a bruised right wrist, the Angels pounded out 13 hits against six Tigers pitchers. Ohtani went 2-for-4 with three RBIs, two runs scored and a stolen base, while Calhoun, Upton, Arcia and Andrelton Simmons chipped in with two hits apiece.

Heaney entered Tuesday having logged a 1.60 ERA in his last nine home starts, but he wasn't as sharp against Detroit. He struck out Mike Gerber to open his outing but then yielded back-to-back singles to Jose Iglesias and Nicholas Castellanos. After Candelario opened the scoring with a ground-rule double to left field, Heaney uncorked a wild pitch that allowed Castellanos to score from third to give the Tigers a 2-0 lead.

Victor Martinez followed with a walk to put runners on the corners with one out, but Heaney managed to avoid further damage by coaxing a 4-6-3 double play from Niko Goodrum to end the inning. The Tigers added another run in the second after James McCann singled and scored from first on JaCoby Jones' RBI double to left field.

Gerber subsequently walked to put runners on first and second with one out, but Kole Calhoun and Simmons quashed the threat by turning an impressive inning-ending double play. After Iglesias flew out to right field, Gerber attempted to tag up and advance to second, but Kole Calhoun quickly fired to Simmons, who slapped a tag on Gerber for the third out.

In the sixth, the Tigers flew into yet another double play. After Ronny Rodriguez drew a one-out walk off Jim Johnson, Eric Young Jr. made a brilliant diving catch in center field to rob McCann of extra bases. Young then lobbed a one-hop throw to Albert Pujols to pick off Rodriguez at first base, ending the inning.

"At that particular point in time, it's a 7-5 game," Young said. "The game just shifted back in our favor when the Tigers seemed like they were picking up some momentum."

JEREZ DEBUTS

Left-hander Williams Jerez, who was acquired from the Red Sox in the Ian Kinsler trade on July 30, made his MLB debut in the eighth and worked around a two-out double to Martinez to post a scoreless inning. Jerez returned to the mound in the ninth and retired Rodriguez, McCann and Jones in order to end the game.

"There's always going to be butterflies, and if there were, he masked it very well," Scioscia said. "He went out there and threw strikes, showed good stuff. That's two good innings for him to open up his Major League career. Hopefully, there's many more."

SOUND SMART

Eight of Ohtani's 12 home runs this season have come against American League Central teams.

UP NEXT

The Angels will send rookie Jaime Barria (6-7, 3.84 ERA) to the mound on Wednesday as they close out their three-game series against the Tigers at 1:07 p.m. PT at Angel Stadium. Detroit will counter with left-hander Blaine Hardy (4-3, 3.25 ERA). Barria is set to make his first career start against the Tigers. He did not factor into the decision in his last start on Friday after yielding three runs over five innings against the Indians.

Ohtani to throw bullpen session on Saturday

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- Shohei Ohtani continues to inch closer to returning to pitch for the Angels.

Ohtani is expected to throw off the mound on Saturday for the first time since receiving stem-cell and platelet-rich plasma injections to treat the sprained ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow on June 7. Manager Mike Scioscia said it will be a "touch and feel" bullpen session, meaning it will not be performed at maximum effort.

"It will be the beginning stages of throwing off the mound, so the effort level will be monitored, and the reps will be monitored," Scioscia said Tuesday.

Ohtani, who has not pitched since June 6, has already progressed to throwing from 120 feet in his long-toss program. On Monday, he performed dry throws off the bullpen mound with a towel in his right hand. Scioscia said the drill was meant to help get Ohtani reacclimated to the slope of the mound.

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 .268 with an .866 OPS, 11 home runs and 29 RBIs in 61 games this season.

Tropeano lands on disabled list, Jerez called up

One day after prematurely departing his start against the Tigers, Nick Tropeano was placed on the 10-day disabled list with right shoulder inflammation for the third time this season. The 27-year-old right-hander has battled shoulder issues throughout the season and missed 31 games during his most recent DL stint.

Tropeano said that he felt his right shoulder tighten during his pregame warmups on Tuesday, which eventually forced him to exit after throwing only 62 pitches over five innings. He was initially hopeful that he would be able to avoid the DL and make his next scheduled start against the A's on Sunday.

To replace Tropeano on the roster, the Angels called up left-handed reliever Williams Jerez from Triple-A Salt Lake. It was the first big league callup for the 26-year-old Jerez, who was acquired from the Red Sox as part of the Ian Kinsler trade last week.

"I feel very happy," Jerez said in Spanish. "I've been fighting for this since I signed, trying to achieve my goal, and I've accomplished it. But there's still work to do. Now I have to keep working hard to stay here in the big leagues for a long time."

Jerez said he was surprised when he learned that he had been traded to the Angels along with fellow Triple-A reliever Ty Buttrey, though he was grateful for the opportunity to join the organization.

"It surprised me a lot because I wasn't expecting it," Jerez said. "I was pitching in a game, and all of a sudden they pulled me, and I was like, 'What happened?' After the game, they gave me the news that I had been traded to another team. I was very happy."

Jerez has logged a 3.62 ERA with 72 strikeouts over 54 2/3 innings between Triple-A Pawtucket and Salt Lake. He has a three-pitch mix that includes a fastball that averages 95 mph and has touched 100 mph, an above-average splitter and an average slider.

"He's a power left-handed arm that we're going to be excited to take a look at, for sure," Scioscia said.

27 turns 27

Mike Trout (right wrist contusion) was out of the lineup for the sixth consecutive game on Tuesday, which prevented him from taking the field on his 27th birthday. Trout is one of four players with at least 1,100 hits and 600 walks before turning 27, joining Jimmie Foxx, Mel Ott and Mickey Mantle. His 61.9 career WAR is the second-highest all time by a position player by their 27th birthday, behind only Ty Cobb.

Trout spent part of his birthday visiting the Children's Hospital of Orange County along with his wife, Jessica, and was serenaded by some of the young patients. The Angels are hoping Trout will be able to return to action on Friday against the A's.

Injury updates

- Rene Rivera (right knee surgery) was slated to play five innings behind the plate in his first rehab game with Class A Advanced Inland Empire on Tuesday.
- Tyler Skaggs (left adductor strain) will throw a bullpen session on Wednesday to determine whether he will be able to come off the disabled list on Saturday and start against the A's.
- Matt Shoemaker (right forearm surgery) threw 20 fastballs during a bullpen session on Monday and said he was "very encouraged" by the workout. He is slated to throw off the mound again on Wednesday and expects to begin working in all his pitches by this weekend.

FROM THE ATHLETIC

For Shohei Ohtani, it's 'Showtime,' both at the plate and back on the mound

By Fabian Ardaya

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Even having been in the United States for months, it's hard to get a gauge on Japanese two-way star Shohei Ohtani's cultural interests.

He himself has been more a cultural item than himself appreciating something specific in culture, spawning several Twitter accounts (including one for his interpreter, Ippei Mizuhara), and having a puppet of his likeness included in Japanese television programming to commemorate each time he hits a home run.

The signs of his own self-expression, to date, have yet to come to the surface. He speaks Spanish almost as well, if not better, than English, something he can attribute to former teammate Martín Maldonado. His knowledge of American music and pop culture, at least based off a game on the Angel Stadium scoreboard that asks players to "Name That Song," is limited.

His song choices, from his batting song of "Wrapped Up" by Olly Murs feat. Travie McCoy, to his pitching song of "Do or Die" by Afrojack feat. 30 Seconds to Mars, date back to his days in Japan and haven't

shifted as he's spent more time on American soil. It's not often you get a glance behind the curtain other than when his teammates get involved.

After coming out of his start against the Tigers on Monday at Angel Stadium, Angels right-hander Nick Tropeano jokingly suggested a new walk-up song for Ohtani, one that is reserved specifically for when he comes up with runners on base. The rest of the starting rotation, including noted hip-hop savant Tyler Skaggs, quickly agreed. The song was filtered through media relations to the stadium operations crew, who this season have been gifted with a new sound system throughout the stadium, which included subwoofers surrounding each dugout.

The debut couldn't have gone better.

As Ohtani strode up to the plate in the first inning of Tuesday's game against Detroit, the speakers around the park blared, "OH OH, OH OH," the verbal beat at the heart of Lil Wayne's "Showtime."

The actual lyrics of the song are actually quite lewd in nature — it's about the moments immediately preceding sex, but Tropeano and Co. found the name of the track and its chorus quite fitting.

"Lights, camera, action, you dig/Lights, camera, action, you dig/It's showtime, it's showtime/Show me yours, show you mine."

The song is reserved for "ShoTime," with runners on base. As it debuted, Ohtani came up with a pair of runners on and no one out against Jacob Turner.

Ohtani watched a pair of fastballs miss off the plate, then took an outside-middle fastball and got full extension with his arms, driving the ball an estimated 411 feet into the bullpen in left field for a three-run homer to give the Angels a 3-2 lead in an eventual 11-5 victory.

"It obviously had good results the first time I came up," Ohtani said of the "Showtime" change. He would stick to "Wrapped Up" for his next two at-bats, returning to the new song until the eighth inning, when he struck out looking with a pair on.

"I'm thinking I'll continue it," he said.

Ohtani's blast further displayed the natural gifts that make him so tantalizing. The homer, which left his bat at 107.2 mph, was just his second homer to the opposite field in the United States, a free and easy swing that sent a rocket over the fence. In the hours before Tuesday's win, Angels manager Mike Scioscia noted that Ohtani, despite some added pull power, had similar ability to spread the ball to all fields as Mike Trout has displayed in his time in the bigs, as was shown in his Japanese NPB film of his days with the Nippon Ham Fighters.

"He leverages the ball very well, has great leverage in his swing," Scioscia said. "When he gets extended and barrels it up, the ball comes out very hot. He's got power to all fields. I think that's something Mike does also. Just a natural talent. He really leverages that ball well."

Ohtani said his best days in Japan came when he worked away from his pull-happy tendencies, instead taking the ball to each part of the park with ease and power.

“It may look like I’m taking easy hacks, but for me, I’ve just been seeing the ball really well,” Ohtani said. “If it looks like that, and it carries out of the ballpark, that’s a good sign.”

Ohtani, the hitter, and Ohtani, the pitcher, have continued to make him baseball’s unicorn. For the second time in a week, he homered and stole a base in the same game. With his blast he joined Babe Ruth (1919 Red Sox) and Jimmy Ryan (1888 White Stockings) as the only players in baseball history with 12 homers and at least four wins in a season. He’s the first person to hit double-digit home runs and strike out at least 50 batters in the same season.

Tuesday also provided an indication he can expand on those numbers, on both sides of the ball. Ohtani continues to work as a hitter, batting third on Tuesday and adding to his level of comfort in facing American pitching.

Even more encouraging is the fact that he’s working as a pitcher. Monday, he stepped on a mound for the first time since leaving a start early on June 6 and suffering a Grade 2 sprain of the ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow, but instead of throwing a baseball he practiced some dry throws while holding a towel. He shortly thereafter received a platelet-rich plasma and stem-cell injection in the elbow to promote regrowth in the ligament. He was shut down from playing for three weeks, from throwing for six weeks, but the ligament showed enough growth in recent weeks to have him throwing again. He could return to throw off a mound as soon as Saturday, with Scioscia indicating he could throw a light, “touch and feel” bullpen where reps and effort level will be closely monitored.

Saturday will be “Showtime.”

“I’ve been waiting for this day,” Ohtani said. “I’ve been very eager, ever since I got injured. I’m very excited, looking forward to it. Just hoping there’s good results and no setbacks.”

27 for 27: The numbers that define Mike Trout’s historic career on his 27th birthday

By Fabian Ardaya

If someone’s “Golden Birthday” signifies them turning the same age as the day they were born — for example, if you were born on Aug. 7, your “Golden Birthday” is when you turn seven years old — then what do we call it when athletes are the same age as their uniform number? And how do you properly celebrate?

Take Mike Trout, for example. Baseball’s best player rocks No. 27 for the Angels and turned 27 years old Tuesday, giving many a chance to recognize his accomplishments and put them into context.

“I think there will be a day for that,” Angels manager Mike Scioscia said of recognizing the breadth of Trout’s achievements.

“But when you see somebody doing what Mike does, it doesn’t take 20 years of reflection to look back and say, ‘Hey, that’s pretty good.’ We’re seeing it firsthand. ... He’s been incredible, and the best thing

about Mike, his driving force, is he wants to win. That's really important for the guys in that room to see that."

If you want to attempt to appreciate the feats the Angels center fielder has already achieved at 27 years of age, how do you go about doing that? Well, in lieu of a birthday cake with 27 candles, we've come up with 27 numbers that most signify the big-league career of Anaheim's No. 27.

Count along.

- Mike Trout was taken with the **25th** overall pick in the 2009 draft with the second of four first-round picks the Angels owned (including supplemental selections). The first round that year included the likes of Stephen Stasburg (No. 1 overall), Zach Wheeler (No. 6), Mike Minor (No. 7), Mike Leake (No. 8), A.J. Pollock (No. 17), Shelby Miller (No. 19) and others, including Angels draftees Randal Grichuk, Garrett Richards and Tyler Skaggs — each of whom has since made the big leagues and had varying levels of success.
- Mike Trout needed just **1,330** plate appearances in the minor leagues before making his big-league debut at 19 years old on July 8, 2011. He didn't hit the ground running, per se — in a partial season in 2011, he slashed .220/.281/.390 with five home runs and an 89 OPS+ in 135 plate appearances. By age 20, however, he was an All-Star.
- Trout's **61.9** Wins Above Replacement, according to Baseball Reference, is the sixth-highest cumulative value among active position players in the game, trailing teammate Albert Pujols, Adrián Beltré, Miguel Cabrera, Robinson Canó and Chase Utley. Only 20 non-active players in big-league history have accumulated more bWAR than Trout for their entire career and not been elected to the Hall of Fame. Only Ty Cobb had a higher bWAR total by his 27th birthday. Only Ted Williams and Albert Pujols had higher bWARs through eight seasons.
- For comparison's sake, the entire 2009 first-round class has combined to contribute 150.4 bWAR in the big leagues to date. Grichuk, the man the Angels selected one pick before Trout and eventually traded to St. Louis in 2013, has collected 8.3 bWAR during his big-league career with the Cardinals and Blue Jays.
- Looking at FanGraphs' version of Wins Above Replacement, it's even easier to look upon Trout favorably. He's been worth **62.5** fWAR for his career, the third-highest total among active players.
- Jay Jaffe's JAWS metric, which takes a player's career bWAR and averages it with their peak 7-year bWAR, is typically used to indicate a player's worthiness towards making the Hall of Fame. Despite this being just Trout's eighth season, he's already accumulated a career JAWS total of **61.7**, which is seventh all-time among big-league center fielders and higher than the average JAWS score of 57.9 for Hall of Fame center fielders. This is just Trout's eighth year — he'll need to play at least two more seasons before he'd be even eligible to be inducted in the Hall of Fame.
- The "Black Ink" test essentially values the impressiveness of a player's Baseball Reference page, with the black ink referencing when a player leads the league in an important category. The metric typically discriminates against younger players, with fewer years to accumulate the number of times necessary to

be atop the leaderboard. Mike Trout has **30** “Black Ink” appearances, the sixth-highest among players not yet eligible to be inducted in the Hall of Fame.

- Trout has laid claim to **two** American League MVP awards, as well as the 2012 American League Rookie of the Year award. He won the MVP honors in 2014 and 2016 and has finished within the top four of the AL MVP voting **five** times, including four finishes in the top two. He accumulated “just” **7.6**bWAR in 2014, his first MVP season, which remains his lowest bWAR total for a full season. So far this season, he’s already been worth **7.8** bWAR.
- Trout is a **seven**-time AL All-Star, making the squad every season since 2011. He has also recorded a hit in all six All-Star Games he’s actually played in, and has earned **two** All-Star Game MVP honors. The only other players to win twice? Willie Mays, Steve Garvey, Gary Carter and Cal Ripken Jr, with Trout being the only one to win it in consecutive years (2014, 2015). He still hasn’t competed in the Home Run Derby, though (don’t hold your breath on that).
- Trout made his big-league debut against the Mariners in 2011, finishing 0-for-3, but he has been torching them ever since. He’s hit eight home runs against former Cy Young winner and Mariners legend Félix Hernández, the most off any pitcher he’s faced. He’s also slugged **20** home runs at Safeco Field, including five this year alone, the most of any visiting player in the ballpark’s history.
- Trout has shown excellence on the basepaths and in the field, but his true excellence is measured in his abilities with the bat. His **171** wRC+ for his career is the sixth-highest of all time, only trailing Babe Ruth, Ted Williams Lou Gehrig, Rogers Hornsby and Barry Bonds. His 191 wRC+ this season is the highest in baseball, with the next-closest player being Mookie Betts’ 186. In addition, his career **174** OPS+ is also the sixth-highest of all time, trailing (in order) Ruth, Williams, Bonds, Gehrig and Hornsby.
- Trout has hit a homer once every **16.32** at-bats on average, which is tied for 38th all-time.
- Trout has slugged 231 homers, stolen 186 bases and recorded 1,155 hits to go with a .306/.415/.571 line. He’s also walked 670 times, reaching base **1,887**times. The only guys with at least 1,100 hits and 600 walks before age 27: Jimmie Foxx, Mel Ott and Mickey Mantle. The only guys to hit at least 225 homers and walk 600 times before turning 27: Foxx, Mantle and Eddie Matthews.
- Only Trout and Willie Mays have had three **30/20** seasons, with 30 homers and 20 stolen bases, before their age-27 season.
- Trout has walked **99** times this season, including a career-high 20 intentional passes. With his next walk, he’ll have at least 25 homers, 20 stolen bases and 100 walks for the third time in his career. No AL player has done that more than once, with the only other ones to do it being Toby Harrah in 1977 and Carl Yastrzemski in 1970. Trout is on pace to walk more often than he strikes out for the second time in as many seasons.
- The plate discipline is well known, but do you know how many times in the 19,433 pitches Trout has seen(not including intentional walks) that he actually swung the bat on a 3-0 count? **Fifteen**. He hasn’t swung on a 3-0 count yet in 2018.

- Few know the zone as well as Trout. For his career, his O-Swing% — how often he swings at pitches outside of the zone — is just 23.5 percent, including just 21.4 percent this season. When he does swing, he makes a ton of contact, and hard contact, with his contact rate for his career at 81.7 percent. His xWOPA, which uses Stat Cast's exit velocity data and more to measure quality of contact, is at .438 this season — in the top one percent in baseball. His career xWOPA is **.423**, meaning his weighted on-base average and time spent on the basepaths should be 42.3 percent of the time.
- Trout is sidelined with a minor wrist ailment on his birthday Tuesday, but for his career he has gone 7-for-23 on his special day. He's homered **four** different times on his birthday, with Todd Helton, Derrek Lee, Mark Reynolds, Alex Rodriguez and Al Simmons being the only players to do so five times.
- It looks like Trout will avoid a stint on the disabled list for that ailing wrist, keeping his streak of being on the DL only **one** time in his career. He missed time last year after undergoing surgery to repair the ulnar collateral ligament on his left thumb, limiting him to 114 games.
- For all his greatness, Trout has played in only **three** postseason games with the Angels. The club won 98 games and the AL West title in 2014, only to be swept in the ALDS by the Kansas City Royals. The Angels have **zero** postseason wins since Trout debuted with the club, with Trout picking up just **one** hit, a homer, in 15 postseason plate appearances.
- Trout has just **two** seasons remaining on the six-year, \$145.2 million contract extension that kicked in in 2015, meaning he will be a free agent after the 2020 season.

Awards Watch: The AL MVP race is a three-way battle for the ages

By Cliff Corcoran

There are fewer than eight weeks left in the 2018 regular season, and none of the major player awards are even close to being decided. This month's Awards Watch finds a new leader in four of the six awards races. The American League's Most Valuable Player race is a three-way battle for the ages. The AL Cy Young award is also a three-man scrum. The National League Cy Young and the AL Rookie of the Year races are whisker-close two-man contests, and the NL's pitching award may yet expand beyond the current top two. The NL Rookie of the Year award race remains wide open, and the field of contestants for the NL MVP is so deep that I had to pore over the statistics of more than twenty players to come up with my expanded standings below.

Speaking of which, we have our first Cy Young/MVP crossovers of the season. So, to avoid spoiling the Cy Young rankings, I'm presenting the pitching award first with the MVP rankings to follow.

As always, the rankings below are based on who would most deserve each award if the season had ended Monday night. Last month's rankings are in parentheses after each player's name, where relevant. "Off the list" indicates players who have fallen out of the top five since last month. League-leading statistics are in bold. Major-league-leading statistics are in bold and italics. Rookies are players with fewer than 130 plate appearances or 50 innings pitched in the major leagues prior to this year who

also had fewer than 45 days on an active major-league roster prior to this year (not counting time on the disabled list or during expanded rosters in September). Ozzie Albies and Josh Hader are not rookies.

Cy Young

American League

1. Trevor Bauer, RHP, Indians (5)

2.25 ERA, 197 ERA+ (2.36 FIP, 2.52 DRA), 3.68 K/BB, 31.3 K%, 1.12 WHIP, 6.7 IP/GS, **24 GS**

2. Chris Sale, LHP, Red Sox (4)

2.04 ERA, 216 ERA+ (2.07 FIP, 2.11 DRA), 6.27 K/BB, **37.6 K%**, **0.87 WHIP**, 6.4 IP/GS, 22 GS

3. Justin Verlander, RHP, Astros (1)

2.19 ERA, 178 ERA+ (2.79 FIP, 2.22 DRA), 7.29 K/BB, 33.7 K%, 0.88 WHIP, 6.5 IP/GS, **24 GS**

This is very nearly a three-way tie. Per all of that bolded text, Sale has clearly been the best pitcher in baseball on a per-inning basis. However, he hasn't pitched since July 27 due to shoulder inflammation and now trails Verlander by 15 1/3 innings and Bauer by 18 2/3. The Red Sox hope to get Sale back this weekend, but he'll effectively be three starts behind his rivals by then. Sale's 28-point lead over Verlander in ERA+, when combined with his other rate-stat advantages, is large enough to compensate for that playing-time discrepancy for now. Bauer, however, has a greater advantage in innings and trails Sale by just 19 points of ERA+.

As for Bauer's inferior peripherals, this is one spot where failing to list home-run rates distorts the picture. Bauer's walk rate (3.2 BB/9) inflates his WHIP and diminishes his strikeout-to-walk rate, particularly relative to Verlander, who is issuing walks half as often. However, Bauer has allowed just seven home runs on the season to Verlander's 19. In terms of bases allowed, Verlander has surrendered 28 fewer bases on walks than Bauer, but 48 more bases on home runs, and every one of those home runs is a scoring play, whereas Bauer has been able to strand many of his walks, in part because he rarely gives up home runs. To wit, over his last dozen starts, Bauer has walked 28 men but allowed just two home runs in 81 2/3 innings, netting a 1.76 ERA. By comparison, Verlander has issued just 13 walks in his last 12 games, but has also allowed 14 home runs over the same span to the tune of a 3.36 ERA.

4. Corey Kluber, RHP, Indians (2)

2.63 ERA, 169 ERA+ (3.37 FIP, 2.72 DRA), **7.30 K/BB**, 24.6 K%, 0.92 WHIP, **6.7 IP/GS**, 23 GS

Kluber hit a rough patch as June turned to July, giving up 22 runs in 26 innings across five starts while dealing with a right knee issue. Kluber withdrew from the All-Star Game due to that injury, and was lit up in his first start after the break. However, he appears to have put the issue behind him, allowing just one run in 16 1/3 innings over his last two starts. Most tellingly, Kluber gave up two fly balls for every ground ball during his five-start rough patch. Over his last two starts, however, his groundballs have outnumbered his fly balls.

5. Gerrit Cole, RHP, Astros

2.64 ERA, 147 ERA+ (2.76 FIP, 2.39 DRA), 4.12 K/BB, 35.1 K%, 0.99 WHIP, 6.4 IP/GS, 23 GS

Since busting out of the gate with a 1.42 ERA and five double-digit strikeout games in his first seven starts as an Astro, Cole has settled in as a reliable source of six innings, eight strikeouts, and roughly two runs allowed every five days. That's tremendously valuable, but it's not going to move him up in these standings.

Off the list: Luis Severino

Most Valuable Player

American League

1. Mike Trout, CF, Angels (1)

.309/.459/.624 (**197 OPS+**), .438 xwOBA, 30 HR, **99 BB**, 97 K, 21 SB (88%), 482 PA

Trout jammed his right wrist sliding feet-first into third base last Wednesday and has been sidelined ever since. He [received a cortisone shot](#) in the wrist before Monday's game, and the Angels hope he can return for the weekend series against the A's. A backdated disabled-list stint would keep Trout out until Sunday. Whatever the exact timing of his return, we can only hope he avoids a prolonged absence and that his performance doesn't suffer from the time off. In his last 10 games, Trout hit .355/.543/.935 with five home runs, 13 walks, and six stolen bases. The five games he has missed with the injury thus far are the only games he has missed all season.

2. José Ramírez, 3B, Indians (3)

.300/.410/.629 (172 OPS+), .407 xwOBA, **33 HR**, 74 BB, 54 K, **26** (87%), 488 PA

Ramírez enters Tuesday's action tied for the major-league lead in home runs and the American-League lead in stolen bases. The last man to lead his league in both categories was Hall of Famer Chuck Klein in 1932 (38 homers, 20 steals). The last American Leaguer to do it was Ty Cobb in 1909 (9 homers, 76 steals). However, that may not be the most impressive thing about the season Ramírez is putting together.

It is entirely possible that we are witnessing the greatest season by a third baseman in major-league history. According to Baseball-Reference's wins above replacement (bWAR), the current gold standard at the position belongs to another Cleveland player, the late [Al Rosen](#). In 1953, Rosen compiled 10.1 bWAR via a .336/.422/.613 (180 OPS+) batting line and an uncharacteristically strong performance in the field. Ramírez is trailing Rosen slightly at the plate, but he has already contributed more value in the field and on the bases than Rosen did in his unanimous MVP season. As a result, entering Tuesday's action, Ramírez is on pace for 10.8 bWAR this season. Per FanGraph's WAR, Adrian Beltre's 2004 tops the list of third-base seasons at 9.7 wins above replacement. Ramírez is on pace for 10.9 fWAR. Baseball Prospectus's Wins Above Replacement Player gives top honors to Mike Schmidt's 1974 at 11.6 WARP. Ramírez is on pace to best that mark by two whole wins above replacement. That is an absurd rate of

production, and it underscores just how good Trout has been that Ramírez could have the greatest season ever at his position, by unanimous decree of all three wins-above-replacement metrics, and still be only the second-best player in the American League this year.

3. Mookie Betts, RF, Red Sox (2)

.342/.428/.652 (184 OPS+), **.470 xwOBA**, 26 HR, 52 BB, 58 K, 21 SB (88%), 425 PA

The two weeks Betts missed with an abdominal strain in early June continue to haunt him in this extremely close race between the three best players in baseball. More recently, Betts has hit a relatively pedestrian .254/.324/.448 over his last 16 games. Overall, Betts has slugged “just” .552 since returning from that injury, which would be a tremendous figure in almost any context, but is contributing to his falling behind in this absurd three-man MVP race.

4. Francisco Lindor, SS, Indians (4)

.295/.376/.560 (146 OPS+), **.414 xwOBA**, 27 HR, 54 BB, 77 K, 17 SB (77%), **514 PA**

Lindor is an also-ran in this race, but his continued development at the plate in this, his age-24 season, suggests that we’re watching the blossoming of one of the greatest shortstops in the game’s history. Skeptical? Here are the all-time bWAR leaders among shortstops through their age-24 seasons:

Name	bWAR
Alex Rodriguez	38.1
Arky Vaughan	34.3
Cal Ripken Jr.	28.0
Jim Fregosi	23.3
<i>Francisco Lindor</i>	22.5
Robin Yount	22.0

Lindor won’t turn 25 until November and should pass Fregosi on that list before the end of August.

5. Trevor Bauer, RHP, Indians

2.25 ERA, 197 ERA+ (2.36 FIP, 2.52 DRA), 3.68 K/BB, 31.3 K%, 1.12 WHIP, 6.7 IP/GS, **24 GS**

6. Chris Sale, LHP, Red Sox

2.04 ERA, 216 ERA+ (2.07 FIP, 2.11 DRA), 6.27 K/BB, **37.6 K%**, **0.87 WHIP**, 6.4 IP/GS, 22 GS

7. Justin Verlander, RHP, Astros

2.19 ERA, 178 ERA+ (2.79 FIP, 2.22 DRA), 7.29 K/BB, 33.7 K%, 0.88 WHIP, 6.5 IP/GS, **24 GS**

Even though everything beyond the third spot on this list is effectively an honorable mention, the three top pitchers in the league are so tightly bunched that I couldn't justify cutting off the list after Bauer.

Given the confluence of Cleveland players in the middle of this list, it's worth noting the stars-and-scrubs composition of the Indians' roster this season. After Ramírez, Lindor, and their top four starting pitchers (adding Mike Clevinger and Carlos Carrasco to Bauer and Kluber), the Indians don't have another player who has compiled more than a single win above replacement for them this season, per bWAR. The only team in baseball to have received more than 1.0 bWAR from fewer than six players thus far this season is the Marlins, with five, one of whom (Cameron Maybin) they have since traded. By way of comparison, the Red Sox, Yankees, and Cubs have all had 14 such players, and the Astros have had 15.

Off the list: José Altuve

Rookie of the Year**American League****1. Gleyber Torres, 2B, Yankees (2)**

.279/.344/.539 (134 OPS+), .383 xwOBA, 18 HR, 24 BB, 74 K, 289 PA

2. Shohei Ohtani, DH/RHP, Angels (1)

.268/.346/.521 (136 OPS+), .368 xwOBA, 11 HR, 22 BB, 60 K, 218 PA

3.10 ERA, 134 ERA+ (3.27 FIP, 3.23 DRA), 3.05 K/BB, 30.5 K%, 1.14 WHIP, 5.5 IP/GS, 9 GS, 49 1/3 IP

Torres and Ohtani have been roughly equal at the plate on a per-at-bat basis. However, Torres has come to bat 71 more times than Ohtani and fielded 287 chances in the field. Ohtani's only exposure in the field has come on the mound, where he faced exactly 200 batters before an ulnar-collateral-ligament sprain in his pitching elbow cut short that portion of his season. The 23-year-old Ohtani's pitching was more valuable than 21-year-old Torres's fielding, which is above-average on the whole but can be erratic, but when you add Torres' edge in plate appearances, he takes the lead in what remains a very close Rookie of the Year race.

3. Joey Wendle, 2B/UT, Rays

.292/.345/.416 (114 OPS+), .309 xwOBA, 6 HR, 21 BB, 73 K, 8 SB (75%), 348 PA

Wendle fell off this list in June, but has hit .375/.450/.602 in 100 plate appearances since July 1 to storm back into the mix. The slick-fielding 28-year-old has started in left field, at third base and shortstop, and spotted in right field, but should finish the season at second base following Daniel Robertson's likely-season-ending thumb surgery.

4. Lou Trivino, RHP, A's

1.16 ERA, 352 ERA+ (2.80 FIP, 2.92 DRA), 2.82 K/BB, 29.7 K%, 0.96 WHIP, 1.2 IP/G, 45 G, 54 1/3 IP

In 26 appearances since June 7, the 26-year-old Trivino has thrown 32 innings and been charged with just two runs, posting a 0.56 ERA, 0.69 WHIP, and 4.22 strikeout-to-walk ratio over that span. He has also recorded four or more outs in 10 of those 26 appearances, working two scoreless frames four times over that span. On the season as a whole, the only pitchers in all of baseball, rookies and veterans, who have a higher ERA+ in a dozen or more innings are converted Astros starter Collin McHugh (387 ERA+ in 53 1/3 IP) and the man Trivino sets up, Blake Treinen (431 ERA+ in 57 IP).

5. Miguel Andújar, 3B, Yankees (3)

.288/.321/.489 (115 OPS+), .341 xwOBA, 14 HR, 17 BB, 72 K, 399 PA

With Brandon Drury dealt to the Blue Jays for J.A. Happ, Andújar will continue to learn on the job. Since July 1, the 23-year-old has hit safely in 25 of 30 games, batting .309 with a .356 on-base percentage, but has slugged just .427 with two home runs in 118 plate appearances over that span. His fielding, meanwhile, remains a problem, as evidenced by his two errors in the Yankees' disastrous 10-inning loss on Sunday in Boston. Still, he's not only a reliable bat, but he has come to the plate 51 more times than any other rookie in the league.

Off the list: Max Stassi, Brad Keller

****Article edited to include only American League-related material.*

FROM ESPN.COM

Real or Not? Shohei Ohtani gives Mike Trout a birthday blast

By Bradford Doolittle

Mike Trout sat out on his birthday party, so Shohei Ohtani partied all on his own. Trout was on hand for the Los Angeles Angels' 11-5 win over the Detroit Tigers on the 27th anniversary of his birth, but for the first time in his MLB career, he wasn't in the lineup on his celebratory day. Trout missed his sixth straight game with a lingering jammed wrist suffered on a slide last week.

Meanwhile, Ohtani hit his 12th homer to pace the L.A. attack, launching a three-run shot to the opposite field off Detroit's Jacob Turner. It was his first three-run dinger since April 3.

With the home run, Ohtani joined Babe Ruth as the only players to hit at least 12 homers and throw at least 40 innings from the mound in the same season.

Since Ohtani returned from the disabled list, where he landed because of pitching-related elbow trouble, he has hit .250 with six homers and 12 RBIs in 28 games as a DH. But his days as a boring, run-

of-the-mill one-way player might be coming to a close. The club announced Tuesday that Ohtani will throw a bullpen session on Saturday.

As for Trout, these missing games are not aiding his quest to win his third MVP award. Cleveland's Jose Ramirez once again has nearly passed Trout in the FanGraphs version of WAR, and Boston's Mookie Betts shows no sign of letting up. With the Angels out of contention, thus lowering the pennant-related leverage of Trout's accomplishments, he needs to build up a buffer against his competitors.

However it turns out, this is high-level stuff in the American League. Plus, let's face it, baseball is just more fun when Trout is in the lineup, whether or not it's his birthday.

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

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ohtani, Upton hit Halos past Tigers 11-5 on Trout's birthday

By Greg Beacham

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Mike Trout couldn't play on his 27th birthday, thanks to a sore right wrist.

Shohei Ohtani and the Los Angeles Angels made sure the fans in the giveaway T-shirts bearing Trout's uniform No. 27 still went home in a celebratory mood.

Ohtani hit a three-run homer during a seven-run first inning, and the Angels pounded out 13 hits in an 11-5 victory over the Detroit Tigers on Tuesday.

Trout missed his sixth consecutive game with an injury that will sideline him at least until Friday during the second-longest injury absence of his career — but for one night, his teammates didn't miss the two-time AL MVP's peerless bat at the Big A. Rookie catcher Francisco Arcia had a two-run single during their first-inning outburst after Detroit scored two runs in its half of the first.

"You like to get right back into the game after you give up a few early, and we carried some momentum there in the first," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Shohei's homer was a huge hit at the time."

With Trout sidelined, Ohtani moved up to third in the order — and he didn't disappoint. His 411-foot drive to the opposite field was his third homer in August, and he added a single for his third multihit performance in five games.

"I may look like I'm taking easy swings in my at-bats, but I'm swinging pretty hard," Ohtani said through a translator. "I haven't really changed my approach. Back when I was in Japan, that was one of my strengths, going to the opposite field."

Justin Upton later added a two-run homer during Los Angeles' second straight win over Detroit. The Angels haven't lost a home series to the Tigers since August 2009.

Jeimer Candelario hit a two-run homer in the fifth and drove in three runs as the Tigers emerged from their four-game offensive funk, but still dropped to 0-5 on their six-game California trip.

The Angels' first eight batters reached base with six hits, an error and a walk against Jacob Turner (0-1), who lasted just one inning in his first appearance for Detroit since 2012. Turner, a former Tigers prospect who returned on a minor league deal this season, struggled in the rotation spot opened by Mike Fiers' trade to Oakland.

"The big thing was he threw (37) pitches, and we didn't make some plays," Detroit manager Ron Gardenhire said. "Believe me, it's not all on him. He took the beating for it ... (but) we played sloppy baseball tonight."

Detroit scored just three runs over 40 innings in the first four games of its trip, but matched that total in two innings against Andrew Heaney (7-7). Candelario had an RBI double in the first inning, and JaCoby Jones added a run-scoring double in the second.

Upton snapped a 0-for-15 slump with an infield single in the first. The former Tigers slugger added his 22nd homer in the sixth.

HEANEY'S HIGH

Heaney set a new career high with his seventh victory, but this one won't go in the trophy case. He persevered through five rocky innings in his shortest home outing since April 20, yielding five runs and eight hits.

"It's nice to not pitch all that well and get a win," Heaney said. "It's nice for the team to get a win."

OUTSTANDING E.Y.

Eric Young Jr. made an outstanding defensive play for the second straight night while filling Trout's spot in center field. The veteran dived to catch James McCann's sinking liner in the sixth and then made a precise throw to double up Ronny Rodriguez at first.

TIME TO THROW

Ohtani got more good news before the game when the Angels announced the rookie will throw a bullpen session Saturday in the next step in his return from a sprained elbow ligament.

"I've been waiting for this day," Ohtani said. "I've been very eager to get back on the mound."

ROOKIE RIBBIES

Arcia's bases-loaded single gave him 12 RBIs in his first three home starts. That's a record for any player in the first three home starts of a major league career since RBIs became an official stat in 1920, according to STATS LLC.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Tigers: Blaine Hardy will take another start in the rotation Wednesday in place of Michael Fulmer, who is still recovering from an oblique strain at Detroit's spring training complex in Florida.

Angels: Nick Tropeano was placed on the disabled list for the third time this season with right shoulder stiffness. The right-hander threw five innings of one-hit ball Monday against Detroit, but was pulled after just 62 pitches.

UP NEXT

Tigers: Hardy (4-3, 3.25 ERA) got a no-decision last week despite throwing seven scoreless innings of one-hit ball against Oakland, taking a no-hitter into the seventh inning. He has faced the Angels six times in his career, but in relief each time.

Angels: Jaime Barria (6-7, 3.84 ERA) makes the 17th start of his steady rookie season. He got a no-decision last week in Cleveland after throwing five solid innings.