



Press Clips

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CLIPS CONTENT

FROM THE OC REGISTER (PAGE 3)

- **Angels lose amid tributes to Mike Scioscia on the eve of the season's final game**
- **Alexander: Is Scioscia's goodbye also a farewell to managing?**
- **Angels have been successful with reclamation projects on the mound**

FROM LOS ANGELES TIMES (PAGE 8)

- **If Mike Scioscia is gone, the Angels will send him off with a third consecutive losing season**

FROM ANGELS.COM (PAGE 9)

- **Angels' celebration of Scioscia overshadows loss**

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS (PAGE 11)

- **Khris Davis' 48th homer powers Oakland past Angels, 5-2**

FROM FORBES.COM (PAGE 13)

- **Mike Trout Is Undisputedly MLB's Best Hitter, But Won't Win MVP**

FROM THE OC REGISTER**Angels lose amid tributes to Mike Scioscia on the eve of the season's final game**

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — The fans who streamed into Angel Stadium and collected their Mike Scioscia bobbleheads on Saturday were treated to even more nostalgia throughout the game.

Before the Angels' 5-2 loss to the Oakland A's, the crowd of 43,762 watched a Scioscia highlight videos. More videos were sprinkled between innings.

Starting from his days in the periwinkle uniforms in 2000, through the 2002 World Series, all the division titles since, the tributes certainly provided further evidence of what could happen as soon as Sunday, the final day of the regular season.

Scioscia's 19-year run as Angels manager is expected to come to an end after he completes the final season of his 10-year contract.

Although Scioscia and others around the organization have been tight-lipped — some unwilling to confirm and others unsure just what will unfold — there is an unmistakable feeling around the team that an era is ending.

"It's been great," said Kole Calhoun, who made his major league debut in 2012. "Coming up here and playing for one manager for seven years, it's been a long time. You definitely build a relationship over that span. It's been fun. We've had some good times and some bad times and he's stayed pretty even-keeled. Definitely a lot of respect."

Tyler Skaggs, who started Saturday's game, has played for Scioscia since 2014.

"He's definitely been an influential person in my career," Skaggs said earlier this week. "We've had our ups and downs and butted heads. But he's definitely been my biggest advocate at times."

Skaggs admitted to "mixed emotions" regarding Scioscia, but he felt overall positive about his time with him.

"I think he's been a big supporter and at times he's been tough," Skaggs said. "He's tough on young guys. But I have a lot of respect for him."

Scioscia's highlight reel was packed from 2000 to 2009, when the Angels went to the postseason six times, but it's been more sparse lately. Scioscia's Angels never had two losing seasons in a row before 2016-17, but on Saturday night they locked up their third straight losing season by losing their 82nd game.

Skaggs, pitching his third game since missing a month recovering from a groin injury, gave up a two-run homer to Khris Davis in the first inning and got knocked out in the fourth.

Skaggs allowed three runs in 3-1/3 innings, finishing his season with 4.02 ERA. Skaggs' ERA had been under 4.00 the entire season until the end. It had been as low as 2.62 in late July, but then he twice tried to pitch through the groin injury and gave up 17 runs.

"I thought the first half was fantastic," Skaggs said after the game. "It was a career best for me. The second half ... it's tough to pitch in the big leagues when you're healthy and it's even tougher when you're fighting through something. This last month has not been fun for me personally. It's going to leave a nice sour taste in my mouth to work hard and come back next year stronger."

Although pitching through the injury proved to be a mistake, Skaggs nonetheless provided some hope for the future by pitching very well when he was healthy. He also avoided any arm trouble for the second straight year.

"I think if he can apply the lessons that he's learned and some of the trials and tribulations and some of the successes, he can get better," Scioscia said. "Right now the Achilles Heel of Tyler is getting healthy and staying healthy... In the meantime, he pitched some great baseball for us."

The Angels cut the lead to 3-1 on Kaleb Cowart's RBI single in the fifth, but then Jed Lowrie answered with a solo homer against Jim Johnson in the sixth.

In the seventh, the Angels scored a run and loaded the bases for Mike Trout, but Trout hit a flyout to deep right field to end the inning. Trout, who is making his final case for the MVP award, went hitless in four at-bats.

Alexander: Is Scioscia's goodbye also a farewell to managing?

By Jim Alexander

A Mike Scioscia bobblehead is the giveaway at Angel Stadium Saturday night. If that doesn't send a message, I don't know what does.

(If the dolls were to be truly realistic, they would depict Scioscia with palms up and a look of bewilderment on his face, as if to say, "What in the world happened to my pitching staff?")

Sunday's game against the A's, in the eyes of most of the baseball world, is expected to be Scioscia's last game as Angels manager. After a 19-year tenure that includes a World Series championship, seven playoff appearances, two Manager of the Year awards and a club record 1,649 victories through Friday, it is anticipated that Scioscia, whose 10-year contract is up with the season finale, will be asked to step aside. That will come in the wake of four straight non-playoff seasons, and three straight in which the Angels have finished 20-plus games back of the division leader.

Since Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic first broached the possibility in early August, Scioscia has insisted that no decision had been made but that he would sit down with general manager Billy Eppler and owner Arte Moreno at some point to discuss his future.

But he seems to understand the drill. And while he has maintained his daily focus on the task at hand and sidestepped questions asking him to speculate about his future, he did say this to Angels radio broadcaster Terry Smith earlier in the week about whether he wanted to continue managing and specifically managing the Angels:

“I’d like to. We’ll continue to evaluate things this week and I’ll speak with Arte and speak with Billy and kind of come to a decision, but I think that if you love something, you want to continue doing it, and if you can, great, and if you can’t, so be it. But I love the dugout.”

The gist of Scioscia’s statement, if I interpret it correctly: He wants to stay, understands if the Angels want to make a change, but if they do he wants to manage again somewhere.

The problem with that train of thought? The market for a 60-year-old manager with a lot of experience, a big salary and outsized influence in an organization is drying up.

In fact, such managers are dinosaurs. Scioscia, his former lieutenant Joe Maddon with the Cubs and Bruce Bochy with the Giants all made \$6 million this year, with Cleveland’s Terry Francona and Baltimore’s Buck Showalter next at \$4 million.

(Bochy, even with three World Series championships on his resume, is in a tenuous position in San Francisco after two straight non-contending seasons. He has another year on his Giants contract.)

Meanwhile, according to a survey by USA Today earlier this season, 10 of the big leagues’ 30 managers are paid under \$1 million. Three others, including Dave Roberts of the Dodgers and Andy Green of the Padres, are right at \$1 million, and the Dodgers still have not picked up Roberts’ option for 2019. The guy who beat Roberts in the World Series last year, Houston’s A.J. Hinch, makes \$1.2 million but received a four-year extension from the Astros last month, which probably will come with a decent but not outlandish raise.

Take away the top five, and the average salary for a major league manager in 2018 is a shade more than \$1.36 million.

The bottom line: The manager may still be the day-to-day face of the team, and he may be the one responsible for making sure the clubhouse runs smoothly — and enforcing the rules with guys who, in many cases, make a lot more money than he does. But general managers/presidents of baseball operations now have the power and influence — and, presumably, salaries to match — while avoiding most (but not all) of the second-guessing.

This is not to say that Scioscia wouldn’t be willing to step into such a situation. I’m guessing he would, in a minute. I’m just not sure he would get an offer.

Ask his old Dodger teammate, Dusty Baker, how that works.

The conundrum here is that large numbers of Angel fans have short memories. Scioscia draws a lot of heat from the faithful these days, for the usual reasons: In-game strategy, lineups and matchups, when to take starters out, etc. When you don’t win, those decisions and their cumulative effects stand out more.

So it is easy to forget that, when Scioscia arrived in 2000 out of the Dodgers organization, he spurred a change in organizational culture, and in expectations, that exists to this day. That 2002 World Series championship and those five divisional titles in the 2000s didn't happen by accident.

Thus, when the Angels finish their season Sunday, regardless of what you think about Scioscia's managerial style or strategic decisions or recent performance, he deserves a long, rousing ovation.

Consider it a thank you.

Angels have been successful with reclamation projects on the mound

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — As Hansel Robles was blowing away the Oakland A's with 99 mph fastballs on Friday night, it was natural to start ticking off the names on the list he joined.

Blake Parker, Yusmeiro Petit, Bud Norris, David Hernandez, JC Ramírez, Parker Bridwell, Taylor Cole, Felix Peña.

The Angels got them all for practically nothing — waiver claims, trades for cash considerations, minor league deals — and each has at times provided surprising value to their pitching staff.

Manager Mike Scioscia gave a hat tip to the Angels front office for discovering these gems.

"I think the analytics done on these guys are certainly right on the money," Scioscia said on Saturday. "I think those guys up top have done a great job of targeting guys who they think can make adjustments and have success. I think these guys have hit on a fair share of them, and it's been critical to us."

The top four pitchers in the Angels' bullpen in 2017 were Parker, Petit, Norris and Hernandez. Parker was claimed on waivers, then lost on waivers, and then reclaimed. Petit and Norris were signed to minor-league deals just before spring training. Hernandez was acquired for cash considerations from the Atlanta Braves shortly after the season began.

The Angels also got 38 starts — nearly a quarter of the season — from Ramírez and Bridwell. Ramírez had been claimed on waivers in 2016 and then moved into the rotation. Bridwell was acquired from the Baltimore Orioles for cash considerations.

Both Ramírez and Bridwell have had injury issues this year, which is likely a reflection of the fact that they wouldn't have been available so cheaply if there weren't some pre-existing arm issues.

Just after the 2017 season, the Angels acquired Peña from the Cubs for cash considerations. He was initially slated to be a reliever, but he was moved to the rotation and pitched well enough over 17 starts to be a candidate for next year's rotation.

Cole was signed to a minor league deal just before the start of spring training. He came to the big leagues and has been one of the Angels most reliable long relievers, perhaps carving himself a role going forward similar to what Petit did in 2017.

Robles came on a waiver claim from the New York Mets in June. His velocity increased and he's worked his way to the back of the bullpen, peaking with a dominant performance to record his second save this week.

Blake Wood could also be considered a successful reclamation project, albeit for a shorter time. The Angels got him on waivers in 2017 and he showed enough that he had a prominent role in the bullpen for the first few weeks of the 2018 season before he got hurt.

Reflecting on the success of the pitchers the Angels have picked off the scrap heap, Scioscia said some credit also goes to pitching coach Charlie Nagy and bullpen coach Scott Radinsky.

"Charlie and Rad do a great job," Scioscia said. "They get these guys and then get information on what can help them. They've done a tremendous job of implementing it."

OTHER OHTANIS?

As Shohei Ohtani finishes off a season in which he showed he is capable of being a rare success as a two-way player, Scioscia was asked what other players from the past might have been able to pull this off.

Fernando Valenzuela was among them.

"Fernando was not the offensive talent that Shohei is," Scioscia said. "Shohei has so much opposite field power. Fernando was a very good hitter. I think he could have done it, to be honest with you."

Scioscia also said Darren Dreifort, a former Dodgers pitcher, could have done it. He also mentioned Ken Brett. The older brother of George Brett, Ken Brett was a pitcher for parts of 14 years, and he hit .262.

Among current players, Scioscia mentioned Zack Greinke.

Scioscia, however, rejected the idea that Ohtani was simply taking advantage of an opportunity that other players hadn't been afforded.

"What Shohei has done is not easy," Scioscia said. "It's not like anybody can do. What he's done is exceptional. He's an exceptional talent. If there's another guy who comes along with exceptional talent of being able to hit at that level and pitch at that level then obviously they'll get the opportunity. He's shown it because of exceptional talent, not just the opportunity."

UP NEXT

Angels (RHP Matt Shoemaker, 2-2, 4.82) vs. A's (LHP Brett Anderson, 4-5, 4.42), 12 p.m., Sunday, Fox Sports West, KLAA (830 AM).

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES**If Mike Scioscia is gone, the Angels will send him off with a third consecutive losing season**

By Maria Torres

If there really is one game left of Mike Scioscia's tenure as Angels manager, Saturday night's 5-2 loss to the Oakland Athletics at Angel Stadium isn't likely to stick out to the 59-year-old.

Not in a fond way, at any rate. The loss meant the Angels, who had won four games in a row to climb within reach of a .500 record, would not avoid a losing season. They dropped to 79-82 in 2018 with one game remaining. For three consecutive years, the Angels have lost more than they have won.

But on the eve of what is expected to be the finale of his career in an Angels uniform, the Angels tried to make sure the results of a meaningless game in late September would hold little weight, if any, in Scioscia's mind.

They made Saturday night count in other ways. They distributed bobbleheads modeled in Scioscia's likeness to the first 30,000 spectators to walk through the gates. The boxes holding the figurines listed his accomplishments in 19 seasons as manager.

The Angels also commemorated his career by showing short montages of his milestones on the video boards between innings. Among the highlights: beating the San Francisco Giants for the 2002 World Series championship, leading the Angels to 100 regular-season wins for the first time in club history in 2008 and earning manager-of-the-year honors for the second time in his career in 2009.

Still, a distraction from the presumed end of Scioscia's time in Anaheim would have been welcome for the announced crowd of 43,762, many of whom were likely drawn by a combination of nostalgia and a trio of late-season promotions (Saturday was also fan appreciation night and Japan day).

Instead, those gathered saw the A's pitching staff confound Angels hitters. Their bats were, for the most part, silenced by starter Liam Hendriks and veteran right-hander Trevor Cahill, who had pitched four scoreless innings when he was replaced in the sixth inning. Six Angels managed to reach base against the two, but only two did via hits. One was pegged by an errant Cahill pitch, two drew a walk from Cahill and another reached base on an error by third baseman Matt Chapman. Second baseman Kaleb Cowart was the only Angel to drive in a run on a hit. On his fifth-inning single, shortstop Andrelton Simmons scored an unearned run and rookie Taylor Ward was thrown out trying to advance from first base to third base.

The futility did not end when the Angels threatened Oakland's three-run lead in the seventh. Simmons hit a leadoff single against Fernando Rodney. Rodney issued three free passes and watched Simmons trot home after issuing a bases-loaded walk to Jose Fernandez. But the Angels made no more successful contact. MVP candidate Mike Trout, the batter after Fernandez, lofted a fly ball to deep right field to strand three runners and deprive fans of seeing what might have been his 40th home run.

If indeed this is the end of their alliance, the Angels at least have another chance to send their manager out with a win Sunday afternoon. If they succeed, Scioscia will reach the end of his record-setting 10-year contract having locked up his 1,650th win.

Etc.

Angels starter Tyler Skaggs wrapped up his turbulent season Saturday night with 3 1/3 innings, over which he yielded four hits, two walks and three runs. He finished 2018 with career highs in ERA (4.02) in starts (24), but the final statistics might have been more impressive had injuries not waylaid what had been an All-Star worthy campaign.

Through his 19th start of the season, Skaggs owned a 2.62 ERA (32 earned runs in 110 innings). He had limited opponents to eight home runs.

The script flipped dramatically with his inability to shake off adductor strains that forced him to the disabled list three separate times this summer. In his final five starts, he allowed six homers and issued nine walks. He did not make it through four innings in any of those outings.

“This last month has not been fun for me personally,” Skaggs, 27, said. “But It’s gonna leave a nice sour taste in my mouth to work hard and come back next year stronger.”

FROM ANGELS.COM

Angels’ celebration of Scioscia overshadows loss

Halos’ win streak ends at 4 thanks to pair of A’s home runs

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- An undercurrent of nostalgia flowed steadily throughout the Angels' 5-2 loss to the A's on Saturday night at Angel Stadium.

Officially, it was Japan Day, but the evening soon morphed into an unofficial tribute to Mike Scioscia, who is expected to step down following Sunday's regular-season finale, ending his 19-year run as Angels manager.

While Scioscia has deflected questions about his future with the organization, the Angels found ways to acknowledge the impending departure of the most successful manager in franchise history. They gave away bobbleheads in his honor and played video tributes in between innings highlighting his various milestones with the club. Scioscia, for his part, said he didn't see any of the clips on the scoreboard.

By dropping their penultimate game of the season, the Angels (79-82) secured a less distinguished feat under Scioscia. They are now guaranteed to finish below .500 for the third consecutive season for the first time since 1992-94.

The Angels mustered only four hits against six A's pitchers as they lost for the first time in five games, and left-hander Tyler Skaggs couldn't get past the fourth inning in his final outing of the season, yielding three runs on four hits over 3 1/3 innings.

"Frustrating way to end the season for me," Skaggs said.

The A's forced Skaggs to throw 33 pitches in the first inning alone, seizing a 2-0 lead on Khris Davis' MLB-high 48th home run. In the third, Skaggs surrendered a leadoff double to Ramon Laureano, who scored on Jed Lowrie's sacrifice fly to make it 3-0.

On a limited pitch count in his third start since returning from the disabled list, Skaggs was pulled after yielding a one-out double to Mark Canha in the fourth.

The 27-year-old ends the 2018 season with a 4.02 ERA over a career-high 125 1/3 innings, though he endured a frustrating second half that was derailed by a nagging adductor injury. After posting a 2.62 ERA through his first 19 starts, Skaggs tried to pitch through the malady and gave up 17 runs over 6 2/3 innings over his next two outings, causing his ERA to spike to 3.78.

Skaggs' third stint on the DL cost him more than a month, but he returned to make three starts in September, giving up seven runs over 8 2/3 innings (7.27 ERA) over that span.

"I thought the first half was fantastic," Skaggs said. "It was a career-best for me, and the second half -- it's tough to pitch in the big leagues when you're healthy, and it's even tougher when you're trying to fight through something. This last month has just not been fun for me, personally, but it's going to leave a nice sour taste in my mouth to work hard and come back next year stronger."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Angels leave 'em loaded: Kaleb Cowart's RBI single in the fifth accounted for all of the Angels' production through the first six innings, but they showed some life in the seventh against Oakland reliever Fernando Rodney.

Andrelton Simmons singled and Cowart and Kole Calhoun walked to load the bases with two outs. Jose Fernandez then drew another walk to force in a run and cut the A's lead to 4-2. Mike Trout followed with a deep drive to right field, but Stephen Piscotty was there to make the catch at the warning track, quashing the Angels' rally.

UP NEXT

Right-hander Matt Shoemaker (2-2, 4.82 ERA) will start opposite A's left-hander Brett Anderson (4-5, 4.42) in the regular-season finale on Sunday afternoon at 12:07 PT at Angel Stadium. In his last start, Shoemaker gave up one run over five innings on Tuesday against the Rangers. He is 6-3 with a 4.11 ERA in 14 career appearances against Oakland.

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**Khris Davis' 48th homer powers Oakland past Angels, 5-2**

By Greg Beacham

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — The Oakland Athletics' minds are already partly on the wild card playoff game looming in the Bronx.

They're still finishing up the regular season in Orange County with an attention to all the little details that could make a difference in the postseason.

Khris Davis hit his major league-leading 48th homer and the A's locked up their winningest season in 16 years with a 5-2 victory over the Los Angeles Angels on Saturday night.

Jed Lowrie homered and drove in two runs for the A's (97-64), who hadn't won 97 games since going 103-59 in 2002. Oakland has made a stunning turnaround from losing at least 87 games in each of the past three seasons.

"It means we've had a nice year, and we've had quite a run since the middle of June," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "Ninety-seven is a nice number, especially after what we've been through the last three years."

A majors-best 42-22 since the All-Star break, the A's are already locked into a trip to New York on Wednesday night to face the Yankees. But while they prepare mentally for that one-game showdown on arguably baseball's biggest stage, the A's are taking care of the final bits of remaining business in September — including a chance to preview a possible pitching strategy for the Yankees.

Liam Hendriks pitched the first inning, allowing one single, before Trevor Cahill (7-4) threw four innings of one-hit ball for the A's. Hendriks also could start Wednesday, depending on how Melvin decides to approach the one-game playoff.

"It's different, but I feel like I didn't change too much about what I do," Cahill said. "We're going out and trying to win games. We're all thinking about New York, but we're all trying to play well and work on some things, too. We're excited the regular season is over, and more excited the postseason is going to start."

Davis connected in the first off Tyler Skaggs (8-10), driving a two-run shot for his ninth homer in September and his fifth in seven games. The 30-year-old slugger matched Jimmie Foxx's 48 homers in 1933 for the fourth-most in a single season in A's history.

Davis, who was born in nearby Lakewood and played a few miles away at Cal State Fullerton, also drove in his 122nd and 123rd runs.

"It's just a number," Davis said. "I don't keep score. I play and try to get as many as I can. I basically just try to keep getting better."

After driving in a run with a sacrifice fly in the third, Lowrie got his 23rd homer on Angels reliever Jim Johnson's first pitch in the sixth, giving him 99 RBIs.

Davis and Lowrie both seem likely to get one more day to add to their impressive regular seasons in Sunday's finale.

"That's the balance right now," Melvin said. "We want to get some guys some rest, but you also want to take care of some milestones, too."

Blake Treinen got pinch-hitter Eric Young Jr. on a groundout with two runners on in the ninth to secure his 38th save.

FALLEN ANGELS

Kaleb Cowart had an RBI single for the Angels, whose four-game winning streak ended with a landmark loss.

The Halos (79-82) are guaranteed to finish with three consecutive losing records for the first time under manager Mike Scioscia, who hasn't announced whether his 19-year tenure is over.

Mike Trout, Shohei Ohtani and Justin Upton each went 0 for 4 for the Angels, who have made the playoffs just once since 2009 despite their annually bulky payroll. The club hadn't had three straight losing seasons since 1992-94.

"We got behind quickly and didn't get much going until later," Scioscia said. "We talked to the guys about making sure we finish hard this weekend. The quest for a championship doesn't start in the spring. It starts now."

SCIOSCIA'S FAREWELL?

Although Scioscia has steadfastly refused to confirm reports that he won't be back next year, the Angels essentially treated this game as a potential farewell: They gave away a bobblehead doll in his likeness and aired several video tributes to the winningest manager in franchise history. Scioscia led the Angels to their only World Series championship in 2002, but the Halos haven't won a playoff game in nine years.

When asked after the game if he had noticed the tribute videos, Scioscia claimed he had not.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Athletics: Melvin is unlikely to play many of his regular position players for full games in the season finale, giving them ample rest before Wednesday.

Angels: RHP Felix Pena won't take his rotation turn for the series finale because he's already pitched much more than expected this season. The former reliever will rest after seizing a chance to pitch in the Halos' injury-ravaged rotation and posting a 4.18 ERA in 17 starts and 92 2/3 innings.

UP NEXT

Athletics: Brett Anderson (4-5, 4.42 ERA) is likely to make his fourth start since returning from the disabled list. He has a 3.69 ERA since the All-Star break.

Angels: Matt Shoemaker (2-2, 4.82 ERA) makes his seventh start of the season. He missed 134 games over five months with a right forearm strain, but has returned in solid form for September.

FROM FORBES.COM

Mike Trout Is Undisputedly MLB's Best Hitter, But Won't Win MVP

By Anthony Witrado

Something needs to be said here, because while its occasionally mentioned, it's not shouted nearly enough.

Be that because of the time zone in which the subject performs, or the quality of the surrounding partners, or because the time zones and partners of others are more appealing to the selective senses of the general masses. For any of these reasons, it's not stated emphatically or often enough.

Mike Trout, of the Los Angeles Angels of Orange County, California, is the unequivocal best hitter in baseball. And over the course of his career, that fact has helped him become the best overall player in the game.

There it is. Black and white. Said at least once more, with evidence to follow.

Understand another thing, though: This is *not* a declaration that Mike Trout should win the American League's MVP award this year. He's not going to. Boston's Mookie Betts is likely to win it because he is great and because of who his teammates are, among other reasons. And he is every bit the adversary to Trout's throne for this past summer.

Understand another thing, if you would: Mike Trout's teammates not being good enough to propel him into the postseason, or the cusp of it, should not disqualify him from the MVP conversation, which is the case for some of the electorate and a sizable portion of said general masses.

However, this has been true this year. Case in point was MLB Network's Twitter account, on Sept. 19, tweeting a graphic of the AL's "notable MVP candidates" with the caption, "Pick one!" Trout was not one of the options listed despite him being slightly behind Betts in Baseball-Reference and Fangraphs WAR and despite Trout being the league leader in B-R's offensive WAR, wRC+, wOBA, OPS, OBP, walks, OPS+ and fourth in home runs even though he missed three weeks in August.

Clearly – *CLEARLY* – Trout is “notable.” But that tweet subscribed to the theory that players on a team not in the playoff picture cannot possibly be considered for the MVP award. It’s an absurd idea for too many to list in this space.

The reason Betts likely will, and probably should, win the award is because his defense in right field has been absolutely stellar. But let’s be honest. Some of the people using this as a reason – and again, it’s valid – are those who cherry-pick numbers when it fits their case for their guy in any particular year. For instance, next year they may choose to leave defensive metrics out of the argument because they are suddenly “unreliable” or don’t paint an accurate enough picture.

It’s happened before – to Trout in 2012 when Miguel Cabrera was named MVP – and it will happen again.

But let’s pay closer attention to OPS+. This advanced statistic takes OPS (on-base plus slugging percentage) and normalizes it against the league, accounting for factors like ballparks – AT&T Park in San Francisco isn’t the hitter haven Great American Ball Park in Cincinnati is. It then puts the number on a points scale, where having a 100 OPS+ means that player is league average. It’s a pretty good (not great) measurement of a player’s season/career, just like all other pretty good baseball metrics.

Well, Trout’s 2018 is historic in terms of OPS+. It’s among the best ever as he entered play Saturday at 202, far and away the best mark of his Hall of Fame-caliber career. No other player since Barry Bonds in 2004 has reached 200 in this category.

Again, OPS+ is not the start and finish of all baseball measurements. It’s a quality metric, one that can paint an easy picture on the offensive side of the ball. And this season, Trout is having an all-time great one by its calculation.

He won’t be rewarded with the AI MVP award, and, once more, he probably shouldn’t be based on what Betts has done on offense and defense. But Trout should at least be considered, which he probably won’t be by most because the Angels are going to finish around .500 again.

But that doesn’t change that Mike Trout, of the Los Angeles Angels of Orange County, California, is the unequivocal best hitter in baseball. And over the course of his career, that fact has helped him become the best overall player in the game.