



***Press Clips***

**(April 8, 2018)**

**CLIPS CONTENT**

*FROM THE OC REGISTER (PAGE 3)*

- **A's sound impressed by Shohei Ohtani as he prepares for pitching encore**
- **Angels still searching for starting pitching length after loss to A's**

*FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES (PAGE 7)*

- **Angels will look to Shohei Ohtani to help them bounce back from 7-3 loss to Athletics**
- **Angels welcome journeyman Ryan Schimpf**

*FROM ANGELS.COM (PAGE 10)*

- **Ohtani back on mound today for Angels**
- **Angels upended despite Upton's home run**
- **Ramirez has forearm tightness, will be evaluated**
- **Halos recall Morris, Schimpf from Triple-A**

*FROM ESPN.COM (PAGE 15)*

- **The One Baseball's Been Waiting For**
- **Balanced Oakland Athletics outlast Ohtani-less Angels 7-3**

*FROM NBC NEWS (PAGE 25)*

- **With Shohei Ohtani, MLB follows path forged by past Japanese stars**

*FROM BLEACHER REPORT (PAGE 27)*

- **Shohei Ohtani Proving Two-Way MLB Stardom Is Far From Myth**

*FROM SPORTS XCHANGE (PAGE 30)*

- **Angels host A's as Ohtani makes second pitching start**

*FROM MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE (PAGE 31)*

- **Twins marvel, root for Shohei Ohtani, the Angels rookie designated hitter/pitcher**

*FROM FANGRAPHS (PAGE 33)*

- **Shohei Ohtani and Beyond: a History of Double-Duty Players**

**FROM THE OC REGISTER****A's sound impressed by Shohei Ohtani as he prepares for pitching encore**

By Jack Wang

ANAHEIM — It's very, very early, but for now, no MLB hitter has been more successful against Shohei Ohtani than Matt Chapman. That doesn't mean the A's third baseman is eager for a rematch — not even with the benefit of seeing the Angels' two-way phenom on the mound twice in eight days.

"He's got such good stuff that I don't know if it's ever going to be an advantage," Chapman said Saturday afternoon.

Ohtani made a strong pitching debut in Oakland last Sunday, allowing three runs in a 7-4 win over the A's. All three came courtesy of Chapman, who sent a slider over the left-center wall. Ohtani only allowed one more runner on base — a walk — before ending his six-inning stint with six strikeouts.

Ohtani did not play on Saturday after blasting three home runs in three games, resting in preparation for his return to the mound. His pitching debut at Angel Stadium is scheduled at 1 p.m. Sunday. And to hear Chapman tell it, he and the rest of the A's will need to be ready.

"The first time you see somebody, you're trying to feel it out," said Chapman, a 24-year-old who looks like a potential star in his own right. "Luckily, I got two of the same pitches in the row. And then the next at-bat, I saw the fastball. It's got good life. When his splitter's down, it's hard to differentiate between the two."

It was a stark turnaround from his struggles in spring training, which included a shellacking at the hands of the Tijuana Toros. Those issues vanished when Ohtani finally stepped on the big stage.

"I didn't see any sort of command issue that first start," said A's first baseman Matt Olson, who struck out swinging twice against Ohtani. "He was pretty locked in, doing what he wanted."

Angels manager Mike Scioscia downplayed the strategic significance of Ohtani taking the mound against the A's twice in a row.

"There's adjustments that you make whether you're facing the same team or you're facing a different team," Scioscia said. "They got a chance to see Shohei last Sunday. He got a chance to log what their hitters are doing."

"But they made adjustments during the game last Sunday also. I think it's just part of the schedule."

**CALLED UP**

The Angels optioned starting pitcher Parker Bridwell on Saturday, an unsurprising development after he allowed six runs in 1-2/3 innings the night before.

Left with a thin bullpen after Friday night's win over the A's, the Angels called up right-hander Akeel Morris — whom they'd acquired from the Braves on Tuesday. Morris, 25, logged a 1.23 ERA in 7-1/3 innings for Atlanta last year.

"Hopefully he'll give us a boost to the bullpen, which is right now been stretched a little bit," Scioscia said.

The Angels now have just four starting pitchers, which means they will need to add two more for next week's road series against the Rangers. Possible additions include lefty Andrew Heaney, who is on the disabled list with elbow inflammation, and Nick Tropeano.

"He'll throw his bullpen in couple of days," Scioscia said of Heaney, who made a rehab start on Friday for Class-A Inland Empire. "We'll evaluate what his next step is."

The Angels also sent Nolan Fontana to Triple-A Salt Lake for Ryan Schimpf, an infield switch that could be explained by the latter's bat. Schimpf has a .492 slugging percentage in the last two years, compared to Fontana's .182.

"One thing he's got is, he's got big power," Scioscia said of Schimpf. "He's able to play three infield positions and both corner outfielders. We'll see how he walks in, but he gives us a lot of depth because of his versatility."

**KINSLER OPTIMISTIC**

Second baseman Ian Kinsler wants to come off the 10-day disabled list as soon as possible, but also knows that his isn't the only voice in the room.

The 35-year-old veteran said his strained groin is no longer limiting him, and that he would be "ecstatic" to get back in the lineup when he's eligible Tuesday. Still, he acknowledged that the Angels want to reduce the risk of a potential re-injury.

"They just want to make sure I'm 100 percent, strong, and can handle playing a bunch of games in a row," Kinsler said.

Scioscia echoed some of Kinsler's optimism, but would not go as far as saying he expected a Tuesday return.

"We're hopeful we're getting close," he said. "It's tough to put an end point on it."

**UP NEXT**

A's (RHP Kendall Graveman, 0-1, 8.10 ERA) at Angels (RHP Shohei Otani, 1-0, 4.50), Sunday, 1 p.m., Fox Sports West, 830 AM

**Angels still searching for starting pitching length after loss to A's**

By Jack Wang

ANAHEIM — After the week it's had, the Angels bullpen might deserve a break.

On Wednesday, the Angels burned through eight different relievers in a 13-inning marathon against Cleveland. Two nights later, they leaned on six — salvaging a win against the A's despite starter Parker Bridwell lasting less than two innings.

So on Saturday afternoon, it was only a matter of time before someone asked Mike Scioscia if the Angels' starting pitching woes was becoming a trend.

The Angels manager responded with, well, mild indignation.

"We're trying to go out there and pitch as deep as we can in the game," Scioscia said, speaking before the second of three games against the A's. "If it's a trend, there's not much we're going to do about it other than just work a little harder, continue to prepare, and hopefully these guys will make pitches and get deeper into a game."

His club might need a different approach.

The Angels lost to the A's 7-3 on Saturday, with Scioscia pulling starter JC Ramirez after just two innings — the shortest start of the pitcher's career. No Angels starter has lasted six innings since Shohei Ohtani, who made his MLB pitching debut on April 1 and will take the mound again Sunday.

Ramirez fell just shy of five innings in last week's home opener against Cleveland. He gave up five runs in that 6-0 loss, pitching through a broken nail on his index finger. Scioscia mentioned that ailment again before the start of Saturday's game, but added that Ramirez "feels great now."

But Ramirez felt tightness and soreness in his forearm during warmups, and his pitches in the game hovered around 90-91 miles per hour — roughly five or six miles slower than his usual velocity when healthy. He walked five batters on 55 pitches, including two of the first three hitters he saw.

He got out of the first inning relatively unscathed when Khris Davis grounded into a double play, but had less luck in the second. Third baseman Matt Chapman, who got on base with a walk, scored on Stephen

Piscotty's line drive to left field. Piscotty and Jake Smolinski — another walk — bumped the A's lead to 3-0 when shortstop Marcus Semien singled to center.

Ramirez closed the top of the second by striking out second baseman Jed Lowrie, but he didn't return.

It was a concerning outing for the 29-year-old, whose breakout 2017 season ended six weeks early thanks to an elbow injury. Ramirez underwent stem-cell therapy in September to try and avoid surgery on the partially torn ulnar collateral ligament, and said last month, "I feel like I'm back."

After the game, Ramirez admitted that his injury history loomed in his mind. But he also said that the forearm soreness did not resemble the pain he felt in 2017, and that it had not cropped up at all during spring training.

"The good thing is I didn't feel the same thing that I felt last year," he said. "That's the plus right now. Tomorrow, we'll see."

Asked if Ramirez will undergo an MRI, Scioscia said, "He'll be evaluated tomorrow."

"Any time a pitcher has an issue with his arm, you're always concerned with it," Scioscia added. "Hopefully, this will be something that'll be manageable."

Ramirez was replaced by Akeel Morris, recalled from Triple-A Salt Lake earlier in the day. The 25-year-old pitched two scoreless innings before giving up a solo shot to Lowrie.

That cleared the way for Luke Bard, who struck out two batters in the fifth inning, but also walked one and hit another. He lasted 44 pitches, leaving the mound with two outs in the top of the seventh.

Meanwhile, the Angels kept themselves within striking distance. In bottom of the fourth, Justin Upton whacked a two-run homer into right center, trimming the A's lead to 3-2. In the seventh, Luis Valbuena, — who has historically struggled against lefties — knocked one out against left-hander Ryan Buchter to pull the Angels within 4-3.

But the A's responded quickly, adding two more runs in the eighth on Chapman's triple and Bruce Maxwell's single against Angels reliever Blake Parker.

Noé Ramírez took over in the ninth and added two strikeouts, but Matt Olson's single bumped the A's lead to 7-3.

"They gave everything they had to keep us in the game," Scioscia said of his bullpen.

**FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES**

## **Angels will look to Shohei Ohtani to help them bounce back from 7-3 loss to Athletics**

By Jeff Miller

The health of the Angels' season seems to hinge largely on the health of their starting rotation.

That group took another hit Saturday when JC Ramirez was removed after two innings because of tightness in his right forearm.

The team already is without Matt Shoemaker, whose strained forearm is scheduled for more tests Monday.

Andrew Heaney also is on the disabled list with left elbow inflammation. He made a rehab start Friday and could join the rotation soon.

Ramirez first felt the tightness while warming up before the Angels lost to Oakland 7-3.

"I thought it was like when the game started it would disappear," he said. "That never happened."

Ramirez suffered a partial tear in the ulnar collateral ligament of his right elbow last season. He had the injury treated with a stem-cell injection and pitched through spring training and his first regular-season start without incident.

But Saturday, struggling with his control and with his velocity down, Ramirez walked five and gave up three runs before being pulled.

"It's in my mind a little bit right now," he said when asked about his level of concern. "The good news is I didn't feel the same thing that I felt last year."

Ramirez will be reevaluated Sunday. Manager Mike Scioscia refused to speculate on the severity of the condition.

Before the game began, the Angels certainly didn't think they'd be getting more outs from Akeel Morris and Luke Bard than from Ramirez.

But that's what happened, the injury making this a second straight game that taxed the team's bullpen.

Ramirez was replaced by Morris, who just joined the Angels on Saturday and was still introducing himself to his new teammates during pregame stretching.

The right-hander pitched 2 1/3 innings, a span that ended with a Jed Lowrie solo homer, the only hit Morris permitted.

That effort got the Angels into the fifth, not a minor contribution for a team that the past two days has seen its starting pitchers combine to secure just 11 outs.

Following Morris, Bard pitched 2 1/3 innings as well, surrendering nothing more than one walk, the Angels bullpen again giving the offense a chance.

Down 3-0 early, the team's hitters couldn't have been discouraged, not after coming back to beat the A's on Friday after falling behind 6-0.

Justin Upton, who hit the winning home run in the series opener, ripped a two-run shot in the fourth to make it 3-2.

This time, though, the Angels failed to make it all the way back on the A's, who pulled away in the eighth with two runs off Blake Parker, the rally aided when Upton lost a Matt Chapman triple in the lights.

So, now the Angels turn to Shohei Ohtani, and why not, given his recent success? Ohtani commands his fastball and the spotlight better than he does his second language at the moment.

But he certainly understands the concept of being locked in, what Americans like to call being in the zone.

"I'm having some good games," the Angels rookie said through an interpreter. "So I'm hoping that I can continue that with my role as a starting pitcher."

After homering in three consecutive games as the designated hitter, Ohtani didn't play Saturday in order to prepare for his return to the mound Sunday.

In his big league pitching debut last weekend, he limited the A's to three runs and three hits in six innings, getting the victory in a 7-4 Angels win.

"You have more understanding," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said of this second meeting. "It doesn't mean you're going to have more success."

No, it doesn't, solving Shohei Ohtani of late very much a mystery.

## Angels welcome journeyman Ryan Schimpf

By Jeff Miller

He joined his latest team Saturday and tried to settle in as quickly as possible, settling in having become something of a hobby for Ryan Schimpf.

The Angels are his fourth team since mid-December, the infielder traded three times during that span — from San Diego to Tampa Bay, Tampa Bay to Atlanta, Atlanta to Anaheim.

"It's been a little busy, for sure, moving the family around," said Schimpf, who turns 30 next week. "But that goes with the territory. I'm definitely excited to be here."

He was recalled after playing two games for triple-A Salt Lake to replace Nolan Fontana, who was sent down.

Schimpf has played mostly second base and third base but also can play the corner outfield spots. Manager Mike Scioscia said the Angels like his defensive versatility and power.

Only 5 feet 9 and 180 pounds, Schimpf hit 34 home runs in 441 at-bats for the Padres in 2016 and 2017.

### Akeel Morris up, Parker Bridwell down

The Angels added right-hander **Akeel Morris**, who was acquired last week from Atlanta in exchange for cash or a player to be named.

**Parker Bridwell**, who started Friday and lasted only 1 2/3 innings, was optioned to Salt Lake.

With the bullpen having pitched 15 2/3 innings the previous two games, with day off in between, the Angels decided to bring in another arm — and immediately put him to work.

Morris pitched 2 1/3 innings Saturday after JC Ramirez exited after two innings due to tightness in his forearm. Morris allowed two walks and a solo home run by Jed Lowrie.

"I just want to help the team win games, point blank," said Morris, 25, who had appeared in nine big league games. "And I like red ... I just like the flair ... it brings me life. I love it."

### Short hops

Left-hander **Andrew Heaney** (elbow inflammation) reported no problems after making a rehab start Friday at Class-A Inland Empire. He will throw a bullpen session next and could join the rotation after that. ... Second baseman **Ian Kinsler** (muscle strain) fielded ground balls and took batting practice. He is

eligible to return Tuesday when the Angels are in Texas. ... Catcher **Juan Graterol** cleared waivers and was outrighted to Salt Lake.

**FROM ANGELS.COM**

## Ohtani back on mound today for Angels

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- Shohei Ohtani's second test on the mound will come against a familiar foe.

Ohtani is slated to make his first pitching appearance at Angel Stadium this afternoon in the Angels' series finale against the A's, the same team he beat in his pitching debut at the Coliseum last week.

Ohtani earned his first MLB win after limiting Oakland to three runs on three hits over six strong innings. All the A's runs came via a three-run homer by Matt Chapman in the second inning, though Ohtani did not permit a hit after that, retiring 14 of the last 15 batters he faced. Ohtani, whose fastball averaged 97.8 mph, struck out six and induced 18 swings-and-misses over the impressive outing.

The A's had little information on Ohtani heading into his first start, as the 23-year-old right-hander logged only 2 2/3 innings over two Cactus League starts during Spring Training, but there won't be as much intrigue this time around.

"There's adjustments that you make whether you're facing the same team or you're facing a different team," manager Mike Scioscia said. "I think that as they got a chance to see Shohei last Sunday, he got a chance to log what their hitters are doing. He made adjustments during the game last Sunday also, so I think it's just part of the schedule. When you're going back to back, it's things that every pitcher has to deal with. Shohei will start off with a good game plan and make adjustments off of it."

Ohtani, who homered in his third straight game as the Angels' designated hitter on Friday, has already made history over his successful first week in the Majors. He is the first American League player to homer in three consecutive games in the same season that he started a game as a pitcher since Babe Ruth in 1930.

"I'm having some good games, so I'm hoping that I can continue that with my role as a starting pitcher," Ohtani said.

## Angels upended despite Upton's home run

By Avery Yang

ANAHEIM -- A Justin Upton two-run home run in the fourth inning, one of his two extra-base hits on the night, and a Luis Valbuena solo shot were not enough to compensate for JC Ramirez's erratic night on the mound Saturday night as the Angels' three-game winning streak was snapped in a 7-3 loss to the A's at Angel Stadium.

Ramirez was pulled after two turbulent innings, in which the right-hander walked five batters and gave up three earned runs.

Ramirez, who underwent stem-cell therapy to treat a partially torn ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow last summer, confirmed after the game that he had experienced some forearm tightness during Saturday's game -- enough for manager Mike Scioscia to pull the plug on him after just 55 pitches. He will be evaluated by the Angels medical staff Sunday, Scioscia said.

"It didn't seem like he was comfortable from the get-go," Scioscia said.

In 2017, Ramirez averaged 95.9 mph on his fastball -- on Saturday, the highest he reached was 92.5 mph. Besides his velocity and control issues, Ramirez hung his slider a few too many times, the impetus of both Stephen Piscotty's RBI double and Marcus Semien's two-run single in the second inning.

"When you're uncomfortable throwing the ball, it's not going to be the way you want to throw," Ramirez said. "All my pitches weren't the way that I wanted today. I was trying to survive."

Andrew Triggs picked up his first win of the season after holding the Angels to two runs on four hits while walking two and striking out six.

The Angels had one promising opportunity to tie the game in the fifth inning. Down 4-2 with runners on second and third and one out, Triggs quelled the situation by inducing a Rene Rivera lineout and a Zack Cozart flyout. The Angels were 0-for-7 with runners in scoring position.

### MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

**A's add insurance on Upton's defensive miscue:** Matt Olson began the eighth inning against Blake Parker with a four-pitch walk. The next batter, Matt Chapman, lined a bullet to left field, where it looked as if Upton would make the routine catch. Instead, he lost the ball in the lights, allowing Chapman to slide into third with a triple, bringing Olson home from first base. This miscue was Upton's second defensive mistake this week; he also permitted Cleveland's Edwin Encarnacion to circle the bases for an inside-the-park home run on Monday. Two pitches later, Maxwell singled to left field, scoring Chapman from third.

**Bittersweet Angels debut:** Akeel Morris made his season debut for the Angels mere hours after being called up from their Triple-A affiliate, the Salt Lake Bees. The 25-year-old U.S. Virgin Islands native contributed 2 1/3 innings and struck out Olson, but also gave up two walks and a solo home run to Jed Lowrie.

#### **SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS**

For the second time in his career, Upton hit both a double and a home run in back-to-back games. His first was done Sept. 14-15, 2008, against the Reds and Giants.

#### **WHAT'S NEXT**

Two-way phenom Shohei Ohtani will make his second start on the mound in Sunday's series finale against the A's at 1:07 p.m. PT at Angel Stadium. The 23-year-old rookie impressed in his pitching debut against Oakland on Sunday, allowing three runs and striking out six over six innings.

## **Ramirez has forearm tightness, will be evaluated**

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- The Angels received more bad news regarding their rotation on Saturday night, as JC Ramirez departed the club's 7-3 loss to the A's after two innings with right forearm tightness. Manager Mike Scioscia said Ramirez will be evaluated by team doctors on Sunday.

It's a troubling development for Ramirez, who missed the final six weeks of the 2017 season after undergoing stem-cell therapy to treat a partially torn ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow.

"Anytime a pitcher has an issue with his arm, you're always concerned," Scioscia said. "But hopefully this will be something that will be manageable. We'll wait for the doctors to evaluate him."

Ramirez, 29, said the tightness first surfaced while he was warming up Saturday. He hoped the discomfort would dissipate once the adrenaline from pitching kicked in, but it lingered after the game started and led to a shaky performance against the A's.

Ramirez needed 55 pitches to get through two innings, giving up three runs while walking five. He showed a noticeable dip in velocity, topping out at 92.5 mph after averaging 95.9 mph on his fastball in 2017.

"When you're uncomfortable throwing the ball, it's not going to be the way you want to throw," Ramirez said. "All my pitches weren't the way that I wanted today. I was trying to survive."

Ramirez's health was a question mark at the beginning of Spring Training, but he felt normal throughout spring games and pitched well enough to earn a spot in the Angels' Opening Day rotation. He struggled in his season debut against the Indians on Monday, yielding five runs over 4 2/3 innings, but he said his forearm wasn't an issue then.

"Spring Training was perfect," Ramirez said. "My first outing was good. Just today."

Ramirez admitted that he found his latest arm trouble "a little bit" concerning, though he took some comfort in the fact that the malady feels distinct from last year's.

"It's on my mind right now," Ramirez said. "The good thing is that I didn't feel the same thing that I felt last year. That's a plus right now. Tomorrow we'll see. We'll see the doctors, see what they say."

Rotation injuries have plagued the Angels in each of the last two seasons, with Garrett Richards, Tyler Skaggs, Andrew Heaney, Matt Shoemaker and Ramirez all enduring lengthy stints on the disabled list in 2017. The club had been counting on a healthier rotation in 2018, but it's already without two starters, as Shoemaker is sidelined with a right forearm strain and Heaney is still working his way back from left elbow inflammation.

Now they're left to hope that Ramirez's injury doesn't test their depth even further.

## **Halos recall Morris, Schimpf from Triple-A**

*Bridwell, Fontana optioned in flurry of moves*

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- The Angels made a flurry of transactions before Saturday night's game against the A's, recalling right-handed reliever Akeel Morris and infielder Ryan Schimpf and optioning right-hander Parker Bridwell and infielder Nolan Fontana to Triple-A Salt Lake.

Adding Morris will provide some cover for the Angels' overtaxed bullpen, which has pitched 15 2/3 innings over the last two games after Tyler Skaggs and Bridwell were both knocked out of their starts early.

"He's an arm that has pitched in the Major Leagues," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He has three terrific pitches. Hopefully he'll give us a boost to a bullpen, which has right now been stretched a little bit, obviously, with the last two games."

Morris, who was acquired from the Braves in exchange for a player to be named or cash earlier this week, logged a 3.09 ERA and averaged 10.2 strikeouts per nine innings in 30 games for Atlanta's Triple-A affiliate in 2017. The 25-year-old has allowed six runs over eight career innings (6.75 ERA) in the Majors.

"It's awesome," said Morris, a native of the U.S. Virgin Islands. "I feel like it's a great opportunity. I just want to do everything I can to help the team win ballgames, point blank. And I like red."

Morris made his season debut in Saturday's 7-3 loss to the A's, allowing one run on one hit in 2 1/3 innings with two walks and a strikeout.

The Angels have nine relievers and four starters on the roster, though they will have to expand their rotation later this week. Left-hander Andrew Heaney, who allowed one run over 6 1/3 innings in a rehab start with Class A Advanced Inland Empire on Friday, appears well positioned to rejoin the Angels during their upcoming series in Kansas City, though Scioscia said he will need to be evaluated by the club's medical staff and throw a bullpen session before his next step is determined.

Schimpf will replace Fontana as the Angels' utility infielder and can also play both corner outfield spots. A left-handed hitter, Schimpf posted an .809 OPS with 34 home runs over 142 games with the Padres from 2016 to '17.

"One thing [Schimpf's] got is big power," Scioscia said. "He's able to play three infield positions and both corner outfield positions, so we'll see where he works in. But he gives us a lot of depth because of his versatility."

Schimpf, 29, was traded three times over the last four months, bouncing from the Padres to the Rays, and then to the Braves before landing back in Southern California with the Angels, who acquired him from Atlanta in exchange for catcher Carlos Perez last week.

"It's been a little busy, for sure, moving the family around," Schimpf said. "But that comes with the territory. That's how it goes, but I'm excited to be here."

Schimpf pinch-hit for Jefry Marte on Saturday and struck out for the final out of the game.

The Angels also announced that catcher Juan Graterol cleared waivers and was outrighted to Salt Lake's roster. Graterol had been designated for assignment earlier this week.

### **Worth noting**

Ian Kinsler (left adductor strain) took ground balls and hit on the field for the second consecutive day Saturday. Kinsler is eligible to be activated off the disabled list on Tuesday during the Angels' series against the Rangers in Arlington.

"We're hopeful we're getting close," Scioscia said. "Right now it's tough to put an end point on it because there's some things he has to do to make sure he's ready."

**FROM ESPN.COM**

## The One Baseball's Been Waiting For

*So far. The two-way sensation is living up to Ruthian expectations. But how will he possibly keep this up? We trace his journey back to Japan in search of the surprising answer.*

By Tim Keown

Luis Valbuena bears witness. The Angels third baseman watches Shohei Ohtani finish the first inning of his first start with a three-pitch strikeout that starts with a 100 mph fastball and ends with an 89 mph splitter that takes a late, cartoonish dive to avoid a bat held by Oakland's Matt Olson. Valbuena starts jogging toward the dugout with his eyes down and his head slowly shaking -- just a guy from Venezuela appreciating a guy from Japan as they play together in California. By the time he passes Ohtani near the first-base line, Valbuena's head is tilted up and he is staring at the sky, laughing at something only he finds funny, and the temptation on this Easter Sunday afternoon is to attribute his beatific look to a spontaneous religious experience. Which, in its own way, why not? It fit all of the categories: wonder and excitement and surprise.

After the game, and after Ohtani spends six innings making the wondrous look relatively routine, Valbuena says: "It just made me happy. I was watching him and thinking how much fun this is." Valbuena's reaction carries with it a statement --*that's what everybody's been talking about* -- and a question -- *where the hell did that come from?*

To that point, hints were hard to find. Ohtani made just two spring pitching appearances against big league lineups, and both went poorly. He went 0-for-4 in a game against minor league pitching and hit just .125 through the spring. But as the days piled up, he exuded serenity when everything around him implied panic.

After each game, as questions turned to doubts, Ohtani stood in a blinding white events tent in a parking lot in Tempe, Arizona. Hands clasped behind his back, neck bowed, he stared out at a group of people who stared back with the vigor of a stakeout. His pose suggested a man awaiting a cigarette and a blindfold. The routine took on an ambient sameness. He was asked a question, it was reformulated into his language and he began to talk. His Adam's apple ascended and descended like a freight elevator. He made eye contact. He was clearly polite. He was meticulously humble. His words were reformulated back into the language of the questioner and relayed as the most banal of possible answers. The repetition made it feel like a concerted effort to extract all personality, like wiping clean a hard drive.

Through it all, Ohtani was so contained, so unerringly regulated that it became easy to forget the enormity of his quest. He has come here to hit three days a week and pitch once a week, at a level he has yet to experience, in front of a vast, impatient audience. The task is fascinating, difficult and so rare, the last person to do it was Babe Ruth 99 years ago.

Even as spring training gives way to the start of the season, there is no indication that Ohtani feels the burdens of pressure or expectation or -- honestly -- much of anything else. And so, dutifully, day after day, we stand and watch as he stands and watches. His mannerisms become a fascination: the way he touches the tip of his cap and bows slightly every time the umpire tosses him a new baseball; the way he flicks away whatever minor clods of dirt might have congealed in the batter's box; the way he responds to giving up a home run by dropping his glove and aggressively retying his already-tied shoelaces; the way that, in his pitching debut in Oakland, he repeatedly thanks a teammate who makes a good play behind him until he is sure the teammate knows he is being thanked. We search for an external sign of the unease that must be -- that simply has to be -- hiding deep inside.

And day after day, there is none.

THE INFIELD SKIN is rich, dark earth. The dormant grass in the outfield is bleach blond, broken only by three patches of bare dirt, like scuffs on a floor, where the fielders stand. This baseball stadium in Himeji, Japan, is up the road from a castle first built in 1333. The castle is a towering, wedding-cake structure perched above the town like an eagle's nest. It is the largest intact example of Japanese feudal architecture, largely untouched by the bombs of war, built during a time when the country was run by warriors whose name -- samurai -- translates roughly as "those who serve." That Bushido code endures up the road, in the ballpark where Ohtani's high school, Hanamaki Higashi, is playing an exhibition doubleheader in preparation for the spring Koshien tournament. Spring Koshien is a little brother to the Summer Koshien, which is Japan's version of March Madness.

On this wintry Sunday in late March, more than 600 miles from their home in the northern prefecture of Iwate, Hanamaki players wear their uniforms in the same styleless manner. Tight pants pulled up on the waist a few inches higher than cool, the elastic cuffs three inches below the knee, as if measured with a ruler. Their caps are pulled tight over teamwide buzz cuts, the brims curled slightly. After an intricate pregame infield-outfield, they line up from the mound to home plate, facing the home team's dugout. They take off their caps as one and bow toward their coach, thanking him for helping them improve. They turn toward their hosts, thanking Shikama Himeji Municipal High School for the opportunity to take infield. They turn and face the fans, bowing and thanking them for attending. And finally they turn toward the mound and bow to the field itself, thanking the earth for being there. Without it, the game would not be possible.

It is impossible to overstate the level of attentiveness required of the boys who wear these uniforms. Adults in Japanese high school baseball are not allowed on the field, so players coach the bases, and if a manager needs to instruct his fielders or calm his pitcher, he sends a player as messenger. If the manager were to do the unthinkable and leave the dugout to question a call by the umpire, he would be

stripped of his spot in the federation; essentially, he would lose his license to coach. There are no sagged heads, no dirt-kicking or pouting. When the second baseman for Shikama High makes his second error in as many innings, his manager calls out, "Don't make a sad face. Keep on smiling."

It is a world of structure and obedience, camaraderie and respect. Much of what takes place in Japan is bound to the centuries-old code that built that hulking castle. You can see it in the dark-suited businessmen weaving their bicycles through Tokyo sidewalks late at night, their ties still smartly knotted. You can see it in the schools, where lunchtime is not a break from education but an extension of it. Students grow their own vegetables, serve one another and are responsible for everything from preparation to cleanup. And you can see it on the baseball field, where the remnants of the Bushido way have taken hold in the minds and bodies of teenage boys and the men who coach them.

Throughout most of Hanamaki's doubleheader, its coach, Hiroshi Sasaki, sits in the corner of the sunken dugout, a subterranean sage. When he speaks, even during play, his players remove their caps and form a semicircle around him, standing at attention. After six hours of baseball and two wins, the Hanamaki players head to a side field to practice for another 90 minutes. The players do this without complaint, picking up their bat bags and shoes and walking briskly from one field to the other, stopping only to bow in thanks to those who took time out of their weekend to watch them play.

All of which is to say: We've been looking for Shohei Ohtani in the wrong places. He cannot be found in a crowded clubhouse, where he sits at his locker with his translator and friend, Ippei Mizuhara, never more than three steps away. He can't be found working on his splitter on a too-hard mound with a too-slippery ball on a back field, and he definitely can't be found perfecting the art of the polite banality in a rented tent in a stadium parking lot.

EVERY BASEBALL PLAYER who chooses Hanamaki Higashi High School is given a complete physical and an MRI when he arrives on campus. It is considered one of Japan's better baseball schools, so the competition for a spot in the school, let alone on the team, is rigorous. The season is year-round, and each player must live in a team dormitory, regardless of how close to campus his family resides. The players are responsible for cleaning and maintaining the dorm. The coach, Sasaki, assigns the tasks. One of his rules is that pitchers must clean the toilets.

"The pitcher, especially in Shohei's case, is literally and figuratively at the highest point on the field," Sasaki says. "Once they get up there, they are at the pinnacle, so for the rest of the day I tell them, 'You have to do the lowest job.' Shohei never complained."

Ohtani's MRI showed growth plates so far apart it was obvious he was going to be tall, and therefore his potential far exceeded the already-developed 15-year-olds who entered Sasaki's program with hair under their arms and closed growth plates. Sasaki does not claim to have predicted what Ohtani would become -- by 19 a household name, by 21 the country's best hitter and pitcher, by 23 the most sought-after international free agent in baseball history. He had no idea that those growth plates would remain ajar until Ohtani reached 6-foot-4, or that a major league international scouting director would tell me

last spring that "Ohtani could be the best pitcher in the history of baseball, and I don't say that lightly. He has equal if not better stuff than all of them." Sasaki didn't predict that Ohtani would quickly transform himself from a high school kid with an unreliable fastball and quick hands at the plate into an international sensation whose name was attached to Babe Ruth's so reflexively that it seemed like a mandate. No, Sasaki knew only that Ohtani's best days would not take place within his jurisdiction.

"Because of what we were seeing in those images, we knew Shohei's goal was not to achieve success in high school but beyond," Sasaki says. "Ohtani was someone who would peak at the end of his 20s, so that had to be the way we approached his training."

The granular details of Ohtani's childhood remain unknown; his parents are as elusive and private as their son. In one of his few interviews, Shohei's father, Toru, emphasized his son's normal childhood and says he indulged Shohei's baseball dreams after long shifts at an auto assembly plant made it difficult for him to coach Shohei's brother. "I've got to give Shohei what I couldn't give his older brother," Toru told the Mainichi newspaper. Sasaki says Ohtani's parents are "nothing like the monster parents who are around these days. They are the most humble people you will meet in your life."

America is an ongoing subplot to Ohtani's career. With Sasaki's blessing, Ohtani wanted to sign with a major league team when he graduated from high school in 2012, but Nippon Professional Baseball's Nippon-Ham Fighters drafted him anyway, then put together a successful recruiting pitch that sought to enlighten the then-18-year-old and his family on the cultural rigors of the minor leagues. Last season the focus shifted: With MLB changing its rules regarding international players, Ohtani could have stayed in Japan and been a true free agent after two more seasons. Instead, he announced his decision to leave Japan in November 2017 and immediately became the most sought-after and cheapest arm and bat on the market. A frenzied and somewhat odd courtship ensued, with Ohtani and his agent narrowing the field to seven mostly West Coast teams before choosing the Angels.

Asked for his opinion on Ohtani's decision to forgo potentially \$200 million by joining MLB this year, Angels second baseman Ian Kinsler asks back, "What is he, 23? What's he making, the minimum? Most everyone in here made the minimum at that age." Kinsler shrugs and sends his lower lip forward with a that-settles-that finality. Ohtani's new teammates keep their observations light, their words like stones skipping across a flat lake. The team has erected a fortress of positivity around Ohtani, and when he warms up in Oakland before his first start, the metaphor becomes literal: A total of eight teammates and coaches stand behind the bullpen mound.

General manager Billy Eppler recites a list of outings Ohtani embarked upon with teammates this spring -- golf with Mike Trout, H-O-R-S-E with Andrew Heaney, a hockey game with Garrett Richards and Tyler Skaggs -- as evidence that he is fitting in with his new teammates. "He is very simple," Eppler says. "Very focused, very meticulous in everything he does." Rangers reliever Chris Martin, Ohtani's teammate for two years in Japan, doesn't remember the two having a meaningful conversation. After Ohtani's celebrated high school career and five years as a star in NPB, even the aggressive Japanese media failed

to turn up anything worthy of headlines. "Yu Darvish and Ohtani are different personalities," one tells me. "Darvish always had groupies after him. Ohtani is boring."

Ohtani made several million dollars in Japan, and he lived in the team dormitory for all five years, which means this year is the first time he has ever lived outside of his family home or a team facility. He never bought a car or bothered to get a driver's license. His mother handled his money, doling out a meager monthly stipend that her son rarely spent.

"There were times when I would ask him, 'Don't you want to go out and have a few drinks and loosen up?'" says Hideki Kuriyama, manager of the Fighters. His voice rises, and he waves his arms in front of him as he mimics Ohtani's hurried response: "No, no, no. That's not me. I'd rather go to the gym and work out because the only joy I can find is on the field." The way Kuriyama tells it, with his arms wishing away the question, the thought itself embarrassed Ohtani.

I ask Masato Yoshii, a former major leaguer who was Ohtani's pitching coach with the Fighters, a simple question: What are Ohtani's interests outside of baseball?

Yoshii takes a deep breath followed by a long sigh. He tilts his head back as if he's pondering something deeper than what's been asked.

Finally, he says, "Shohei Ohtani outside of the baseball uniform is a mystery."

AFTER A LONG night game roughly halfway through the 2016 NPB season, Kuriyama called Ohtani into his office. Ohtani was scheduled to pitch and hit the next day, and his manager had a proposal to make. He'd noticed Ohtani's struggles in the first inning of road games, and he attributed it to his hitting third or fourth in the batting order. The inning would end with Ohtani either on the bases or on deck, leaving him to rush to the mound with scattered thoughts, so Kuriyama looked across his office desk and said, "I want you to lead off tomorrow."

Kuriyama stared and waited. This was as much a challenge as a strategy.

"He looked at me and nodded with fierce eyes," Kuriyama says. "After a while he said, 'I know what you're telling me.' It gave me goose bumps all over. Even for someone who has been in this game as long as I have, it was an awesome moment."

The next night, in another chapter in the legend, Ohtani led off with a homer and pitched eight shutout innings in a 2-0 win. Martin pitched the ninth for the save, and as he stands in the Rangers' spring training clubhouse he can recall the game as if it's happening in front of him. "The first two months of the season his command was bad, and his off-speed was just OK," Martin says. "I was like, 'I've seen guys *way* better than this guy. Why is he such a big deal?' After that game, I was like, 'OK, *this* why.'"

Kuriyama, like Sasaki, wanted Ohtani to leave for the States earlier. He felt he always had a good read on his best player, and even though his team would feel the loss, he believed Ohtani needed the challenge.

There was the game four years ago when Ohtani got hit all over the park and had to be pulled in the second inning. When Kuriyama got home and logged on to his computer, he found an email from Ohtani. "I always know when he wants something," Kuriyama says. "Everything is 'Mr. Manager' -- so polite." Ohtani wanted to hit the next day to rid himself of the metallic tang of the bad outing. "Please use me tomorrow because I can't sleep, Mr. Manager," he wrote. "I am so frustrated."

He has thrown 102 mph from the mound and hit home runs of 500-plus feet, two facts that go a long way toward creating a myth but don't guarantee success with the Angels. NPB is considered the world's second-best league, but the gap is wide and the peculiarities notable. His talent, it seems, has always provided a layer of protection. One example: Ohtani is a right-handed thrower and a left-handed hitter, and his importance to his country's baseball culture kept most pitchers from throwing inside and threatening his exposed pitching arm. Yoshii says one of the biggest adjustments between countries is the canyon that exists between the respective codes, a difference Martin describes by saying, "When you hit someone over there it's a big deal. The pitcher bows to the hitter to apologize and make sure everyone knows it wasn't intentional. Over here it's not like that. Over here it's: *We'll do it again.*"

(During a spring training game for the Mets in 1998, Yoshii drilled a hitter one at-bat after the guy had homered off him. Afterward, veteran starter Al Leiter asked, "Did you hit that guy on purpose?" Yoshii hadn't -- "a mere accident," he says --but he quickly told Leiter, "Oh, yeah." Now Yoshii laughs and says, "I noticed I got immediate respect from the pitchers.")

Ohtani is strong and broad, his physique at odds with his nearly prepubescent face, but his career in Japan was marked by injuries. Last season he pitched just 25 innings due to ankle and hamstring problems that lingered through August. "They babied him," Martin says. "We were wondering why he wasn't at least pitching. My ankle was blown up and they were trying to get me back in two weeks. You learn not to ask questions." After Ohtani was activated but before the team was comfortable allowing him to hit or pitch, he would emerge from the dugout late in games and swing a bat in the on-deck circle. "Never seen anything like it," Martin says. "Fifty thousand people cheering a guy standing in the on-deck circle like he's Michael Jackson or Justin Timberlake." There was never any intention of letting him pinch-hit, but Martin laughs and says, "I guarantee you the guy hitting got a few more pitches to hit because of it."

Kuriyama, who believes Ohtani's personality is better suited to hitting (the id) than pitching (the ego), fought forces within his organization who wanted Ohtani to concentrate solely on pitching. Arms like his are rare, and any risk is seen as too great. But the first thing Kuriyama told Ohtani after the Fighters signed him directly out of high school was, "Let's do something nobody's done before."

Through a meaningless spring training, Ohtani was halting and mechanical on the mound, jumpy and impatient at the plate. The Japanese baseball has higher seams and a velvety feel. Even straight out of the box it feels like it's been through a few rounds of batting practice. The mound feels less steep in Japan, the dirt is softer, and Ohtani's hesitance can be attributed to an inability to stride out and fully trust his body to follow. His spring training starts were broadcast live on national television at 5 a.m.,

and despite the language barrier, it was easy to detect the disappointment in the voices of the Japanese announcers when the Rockies scored seven runs in an inning.

But by his first regular-season start, with the ball jumping out of his hand and nearly 70 percent of his pitches thrown for strikes, nothing that came before mattered. It looked as if he'd arrived on the mound fully formed. In his first at-bat in Angel Stadium, he hit a three-run homer that cleared two walls: the one in right-center and the one that had been holding back Ohtani's emotions. He entered a dugout that gave him the silent treatment and tried to play along, high-fiving the air, before his joy overwhelmed him and he hugged Ian Kinsler from behind, setting off a wild celebration. It was a late-arriving echo from the words Chris Martin spoke about his time in Japan: OK, this is why.

"For his sake, I want him to struggle for at least two years," Sasaki says. "For his sake, as a person, for him to grow and further blossom, the struggles he will go through are something that is needed. That is why he is constantly smiling. He is definitely enjoying this struggle, and he will find the ability to overcome within himself."

He senses that this is not the expected answer. He laughs, clearly enjoying the disconnect. He holds up his right hand as if requesting time. He needs a moment to think as he tries to come up with the precise metaphor to explain what he's trying to say. "Right now, Shohei is crouched," he says. "He must go down before he rises up."

SASAKI HAD BEEN cut by his university's baseball team and thrown out of the school's dormitory, thinking life couldn't get much lower, when he walked through a bookstore with a friend and picked up a book written in 1937 by the American self-help guru/huckster Napoleon Hill: *Think and Grow Rich*. Sasaki held the book up to his friend, pointed to the title and deadpanned, "Yeah, this'll help me." He bought it, mostly as a joke, and more than 20 years later his cheeks color and he smiles bashfully as he tries to explain the book's impact on his life.

There's one chapter in particular -- "Auto-Suggestion: The Third Step Toward Riches," about putting thoughts into action -- that Sasaki has incorporated into his coaching philosophy. As one of their first tasks (presumably after the MRI), Sasaki's players are told to write down their goals. The idea is to force them to transfer their dreams from the ephemeral to the tangible. He made a point to keep and share Ohtani's list. Some of them are typically lofty musings of a teenager, but others reveal a self-awareness unusual in a high schooler.

*Age 24: Throw a no-hitter and win 25 games.*

*Age 26: Win the World Series and get married.*

*Age 36: Break the strikeout record.*

*Age 37: First son starts baseball.*

*Age 38: Stats drop; start to think about retirement.*

*Age 40: Throw a no-hitter in my very last game.*

Sasaki draws great significance from coincidence. In Japanese, the words "*vision*," "*target*" and "*achievement*" all start with the same symbol. He is not just teaching his players to cover a base -- he is teaching them to help one another, to care for one another, to not leave someone to fend for himself. He mentions the 2011 Japanese earthquake, which devastated Iwate and its neighboring cities, and wonders what Americans thought of the communal response by the Japanese people.

"I care about covering a base for your teammate and telling your teammate where the next play is going to happen," he says. "These things aren't just necessary in baseball but also in life and work. Salarymen have to care about each other. Families have to care about each other. I believe baseball is the perfect textbook to teach the ethics of society."

Sasaki has one more coincidence he would like to note: Inazo Nitobe, the first man to bring the concept of Bushido to the English-speaking world, was from Iwate Prefecture. Back when Ohtani was in his final year at Hanamaki and thinking seriously about going directly to the United States instead of playing professionally in Japan, Sasaki told him the story of Nitobe as a way of encouraging him to chart his own course. Doing something nobody else has done, bringing a new way of thinking to America -- Sasaki believes Ohtani is setting out to be a pioneer in much the same way. "I don't know if Shohei feels it," Sasaki says, "but there is a bond."

The first syllable of Ohtani's given name -- Sho -- is in honor of the Japanese military commander Minamoto no Yoshitsune, one of the most honored samurai from the area near Oshu, Ohtani's hometown, and Hiraizumi. "Hei" comes from the first kanji symbol in the written form of Hiraizumi. It's an indication of how intrinsic history is to the culture that Ohtani is named after a warrior who died in 1189.

Nitobe wrote, "Nurture men of character rather than mere talents."

Sasaki says, "I believe it is my duty to teach these kinds of Bushido lessons through baseball."

So take another look at Ohtani standing there, hands clasped behind his back, neck bowed, shoulders straight. Maybe it's a posture designed not only to invite attacks but to withstand them.

"I would like everyone to perceive his success in the longer term, to have patience and understanding in what he is trying to achieve," Sasaki says. "You must understand: He is searching for a way that does not yet exist."

Nobility in the pursuit, joy in the pain: Much of this is taking place at a frequency we no longer possess the capacity to hear. The struggle, as Bushido demands, is a gift that must be honored. It will clear a path for whatever comes next.

## Balanced Oakland Athletics outlast Ohtani-less Angels 7-3

ANAHEIM, Calif. -- Blake Treinen and the Oakland Athletics' entire pitching staff were still smarting from their struggles against the Los Angeles Angels' powerful lineup this season.

The A's finally took control on the mound, and their lineup provided ample backup.

Marcus Semien had an early two-run single, Jed Lowrie homered and the Oakland Athletics beat the Los Angeles Angels 7-3 on Saturday night.

Andrew Triggs pitched four-hit ball into the sixth inning, and his bullpen also came through after Oakland blew a six-run lead Friday night in its fourth loss to its AL West rivals already this season. Treinen earned a two-inning save one night after giving up a tiebreaking three-run homer to Justin Upton.

"Last night left a pretty sour taste, so it was good to get it out," Treinen said.

Seven A's had one hit apiece, and six drove in a run as Oakland beat Los Angeles for just the second time in six meetings already this season.

Shohei Ohtani didn't play for the Angels while resting for his home pitching debut Sunday. The two-way Japanese sensation homered in each of Los Angeles' last three games as a designated hitter, including a 449-foot shot Friday against Oakland.

Upton and Luis Valbuena homered for the Angels, but their Ohtani-less lineup largely struggled against the Oakland bullpen and Triggs (1-0), who earned Oakland's second win by a starter all season.

"It was nice to come back and shut them down," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "When they're swinging the bats, they're a dangerous lineup."

The Angels couldn't make up for another bad performance by their pitching staff, which wasn't significantly bolstered in the offseason beyond the addition of Ohtani. The Angels walked 10 batters, the franchise's most in a nine-inning game since April 21, 2006.

J.C. Ramirez (0-2) and his first two relievers issued eight walks and hit a batter in the first five innings alone. Oakland went up 3-0 on Stephen Piscotty's RBI double and Semien's key single in the second, and Ramirez didn't return for the third after throwing 55 pitches and walking five of his 12 batters.

Manager Mike Scioscia said Ramirez felt tightness in his right forearm.

"When you're uncomfortable throwing the ball, it's not going to be the way you want it," said Ramirez, who walked five of his 12 batters. "I was just trying to survive today, and that happened."

Another injured starter is exactly what the Angels don't need with Matt Shoemaker and Andrew Heaney already on the shelf in their six-man rotation, but it's no surprise for a team that struggled with injured starters throughout the previous two seasons.

"You walk 10 guys, and you're not going to be in many games," Scioscia said. "We were only OK because our bullpen kept it close."

#### J-UP SLUGS

Upton's two-run homer in the fourth was his third in four games and his second of this weekend series. He added a double in the sixth, giving him five hits in six at-bats since Friday.

#### TROUT OUT

Mike Trout went 0 for 4 with three strikeouts and a double-play groundout, dropping to 1 for 18 on the Angels' homestand. The two-time AL MVP is batting .184 after nine games.

#### TRAYCE ARRIVES

Trayce Thompson joined the A's at Angel Stadium after Oakland claimed him off waivers from the Yankees earlier in the week. The former Dodgers outfielder is from Orange County, as is his brother, Golden State Warriors' All-Star Klay Thompson. He'll return to Dodger Stadium next week when the A's play a two-game interleague series.

#### HALOS MAKING MOVES

After Parker Bridwell flopped Friday in his first start of the season and left the Angels short of fresh arms, Los Angeles optioned him and infielder Nolan Fontana to Triple-A Salt Lake. The Angels also recalled infielder Ryan Schimpf and right-hander Akeel Morris, who threw 2 1/3 solid relief innings in his Angels debut. Schimpf struck out to end the game as a pinch-hitter in his own Angels debut.

#### UP NEXT

Athletics: Kendall Graveman (0-1, 8.10 ERA) has given up four homers in two starts this season. He gave up five runs in five innings against the Angels on opening day in Oakland.

Angels: Ohtani (1-0, 4.50 ERA) faces the A's for the second time this season. The right-hander pitched six innings of three-hit ball in Oakland in his strong big-league debut, although Matt Chapman connected for a three-run homer.

**FROM NBC NEWS****With Shohei Ohtani, MLB follows path forged by past Japanese stars**

*In more than two decades since Japanese players returned to the MLB, the league has learned how to accommodate the fanfare that comes with them.*

By Sheng Peng

LOS ANGELES — Shohei Ohtani, dubbed the “Japanese Babe Ruth” because of his rare combination of pitching and hitting prowess, won his first game as an MLB pitcher last Sunday then smacked home runs in consecutive contests on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The 23-year-old Los Angeles Angel became the first player since Babe Ruth in 1921 to win a game as a starting pitcher and then hit a first-inning home run in a two-day span, according to the MLB, citing to the Elias Sports Bureau, the league's official statistician.

But the path for Ohtani wasn't paved by the Babe — it was cleared by a Tornado.

When Hideo Nomo first took the mound for the Los Angeles Dodgers in May 1995, baffling hitters and thrilling fans with his “Tornado” pitching wind-up, he became the first Japanese player to compete in Major League Baseball in 30 years.

Since 1965, when pitcher Masanori Murakami left the San Francisco Giants, both Major League Baseball and Japan's Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB) league had respected each other's player contracts fully. No Japanese players came over; a handful of American free agents played in Japan.

Angels pitcher Clyde Wright, who pitched in Japan from 1976 to 78, was teammates with Japanese Baseball Hall of Famers Sadaharu Oh and Isao Harimoto.

“It never came up, them wanting to come to the States,” Wright said. “They didn't want to leave their hometowns.”

Nomo, however, longed to test his stuff against the best ballplayers in the world.

“It was Nomo's dream to play in the big leagues,” Don Nomura told writers Larry Burke and Pete Fornatale in “Change Up: An Oral History of 8 Key Events That Shaped Modern Baseball.” “To be with the best.”

Nomura, acting as Nomo's agent, took advantage of a loophole in the MLB/NPB agreement to import the 26-year-old pitcher to Los Angeles.

"We were all very anxious about how Hideo would do," Koji Bonkobara, a journalist who has covered baseball in America for Japanese outlets since 1981, said.

Bonkobara noted that Nomo's obstacles went beyond questions about his ability, "The MLB has a harder mound. The seams of the baseball are different. It can be very difficult to command the baseball."

Nomo's whirlwind success — he started the 1995 All-Star Game and won National League Rookie of the Year — ignited "Nomo-mania" in Los Angeles that summer, proving once and for all that Japanese ballplayers belonged on the world's biggest stage.

"He definitely established a road for Japanese players to come over here," current Dodgers pitcher Kenta Maeda said through his translator Will Ireton. "In that way, he had a tremendous impact for all of us, including myself."

But while Nomo was creating a new reality for Japanese ballplayers on the field, the Dodgers were dealing with a new reality off it.

"When you're trying to do something that hasn't been done before, there's a lot of interest," Grace McNamee, the Dodgers' Japanese media liaison from 1995 to 98, recalled. "The whole nation is focused on you."

"When a Japanese star comes over here, 50 or 60 writers and photographers come with you," Wright added, laughing.

"For the media that was covering Hideo, everything was a first. It was a first for the publicity department to accommodate that number of foreign media covering one player too. There was a huge learning curve for both of us," acknowledged McNamee, who's taken the same position with the Angels to handle the voracious demands on Ohtani.

The Oakland A's issued 240 media credentials to Japanese media alone for Ohtani's pitching debut last Sunday in Oakland, according to a MLB.com report.

McNamee recalled, regarding the learning curve with Nomo, "We'd hold mini-press conferences for Hideo. It's like what we do with Ohtani. We'd take him into a room, so he'd have an opportunity to talk to all of the media. Because there was no way we could have that many people in the clubhouse surrounding him. "

In McNamee's estimation, Japanese media numbers for Nomo were similar to those for Ohtani now.

"Media demands are different here. There's no clubhouse access in Japan," said Angels Vice President of Communications Tim Mead, who has seen it all, from Nomo to Ohtani, having been with the team since 1980. "The translator has become a bigger part of the game in recent years."

Since Nomo though, Major League Baseball clubs have handled many Japanese superstars, chiefly the Seattle Mariners with right fielder Ichiro Suzuki and the New York Yankees with left fielder Hideki Matsui.

For the fans too, the sight of a Japanese star in the MLB isn't as out of the ordinary as it used to be.

"Once you've seen something happen once or twice, it's not as eye-opening," Mead said. "The public doesn't read that much into it anymore. There isn't that wonderment to it."

But that wonderment has returned with Ohtani, McNamee said. Not because he's Japanese, but because he's trying to become the first great two-way player in the majors since the legendary Ruth.

McNamee noted, "There's somebody who's taken that path as a pitcher in Hideo, somebody who's taken that path as a hitter in Ichiro. Shohei's doing both."

## ***FROM BLEACHER REPORT***

### **Shohei Ohtani Proving Two-Way MLB Stardom Is Far from a Myth**

By Zachary D. Rymer

It took about 100 years, but Major League Baseball has finally found a worthy successor to the Great Bambino.

Or so it would seem after Shohei Ohtani followed up an MLB debut pitching win by launching home runs in back-to-back-to-back games—including a 449-foot monster shot on Friday night.

The 23-year-old Japanese phenom made his first start for the Los Angeles Angels on April 1 and earned a win with six mostly dominant innings. Two days later on April 3, he collected his first major league home run as the Angels' designated hitter.

According to MLB Stat of the Day, nobody had seen anything like this since Babe Ruth in 1921.

As if to prove a point, Ohtani homered again the very next day...off two-time Cy Young Award winner Corey Kluber, no less.

The cherry on top was both the farthest and hardest-hit of the trio at 112.3 MPH exit velocity off A's starter Daniel Gossett.

Because Ohtani is only five games into his MLB career, the usual small-sample-size disclaimers apply. Not every start he makes will be dominant. Not every at-bat he takes will result in a dinger. And so on.

Even still, there's no ignoring the smell of the crow that Ohtani is cooking up for his critics.

He had a lot of those (ahem) by the time spring training came to a close. He had arrived to his first camp with the Angels with an .859 OPS and a 2.52 ERA on his Nippon Professional Baseball record but exited it with only a .347 OPS and a 27.00 ERA to show for his first taste of major league action.

Ohtani looked as bad as those numbers suggested. As a pitcher, he battled up-and-down fastball velocity and an inconsistent release point. As a hitter, he struggled to put good swings on all sorts of pitches.

However, what looked like a real struggle at the time now looks like one of the greatest hustles in recent memory.

Ohtani didn't look like a pitcher who was still trying to find his way in his debut on the mound. He looked like an up-and-coming ace. His fastball averaged 97.8 mph and touched triple digits. He also got whiff after whiff on his unfathomably nasty splitter, plus a few more on a solid slider.

Although this marked a departure from what Ohtani did in the spring, it must have looked familiar to anyone who paid close attention to his pitching in Japan.

"He's every bit of a top-end-of-the-rotation starter," said one international scouting director in 2017, per Jonathan Mayo of MLB.com.

The loose consensus on Ohtani's hitting, on the other hand, was that it wasn't as foolproof as his pitching. His meager showing at the plate during the spring underscored that, and he didn't push back against the doubts by going 1-for-5 with just a weakly hit single in his debut as the Angels' DH on March 29.

Well, he's 6-for-13 with 3 HR and 7 RBI since then. And on the whole, what he's doing at the plate is getting impressive in a hurry.

For starters, Ohtani is averaging 97.3 mph in exit velocity on his batted balls. Through Friday, that ranked 4th among all hitters who'd put at least 10 balls in play.

Even better, eight of the 14 balls Ohtani had put in play were clocked at over 100 mph. That's 57.1 percent, which ranked here among qualified hitters:

- 1. Miguel Sano, MIN: 66.7%
- 2. *Shohei Ohtani*, LAA: 57.1%
- 3. Cory Spangenberg, SD: 54.6%
- 4. Yoan Moncada, CHW: 53.3%

Yup. Right there. Beneath only a 6'4", 260-pounder who's known (or should be known, anyway) far and wide for his ability to demolish baseballs.

To one extent, this speaks to the raw power that Ohtani has within his own 6'4" frame. To another, more interesting extent, it also speaks to his ability to adjust.

It became apparent during spring training that Ohtani was green against good breaking balls. This was perhaps to be expected for a hitter coming from a league in which breaking balls aren't as common, but it still had some scouts worried.

"He's basically like a high school hitter because he's never seen a good curveball," said one to Jeff Passan of Yahoo Sports. "He's seen fastballs and changeups. And you're asking a high school hitter to jump to the major leagues?"

But rather than stay the same and hope for different results, Ohtani made a change with his swing mechanics. It was highlighted on a Japanese broadcast and picked up by baseball writer Sung Min Kim on Twitter:

Ohtani ditched his leg kick and switched to more of a toe tap for his timing mechanism. Such an adjustment won't work for every hitter. But in his case, less pre-swing movement had the potential to allow for better reads on pitches.

As if on cue, curveballs went from being Ohtani's nemesis to being the victim of his first career homer:

The only nit to pick was that Josh Tomlin put that curveball in a good spot for Ohtani to hit it: the low-and-inside quadrant in the strike zone. That's the happy zone for left-handed sluggers, so *of course* he crushed it. Indeed, the same can be said of the other two hits he collected that day.

Kluber must have been paying attention, because his first move against Ohtani was to pound him with hard stuff in the upper half of the zone. It worked, as he punched Ohtani out on just four pitches.

But Ohtani was ready the next time. When Kluber missed a low-and-away target and sent another fastball in the upper half of the zone, there went Ohtani's second homer:

So in short order, Ohtani has demonstrated that he's capable of not just making physical and mental adjustments on the fly but also benefiting from them as well.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia said it well: "You see the bat speed, you see the power, he's making some adjustments, he's understanding the league."

It's just a matter of time before both MLB's hitters and pitchers adjust back to Ohtani. And it'll only become easier for them to do so as the scouting books on his arm and bat become more detailed.

And yet, Ohtani has already demonstrated that he's capable of fighting winning battles on both fronts. His arm is one of the most awesome weapons in baseball. Even if his bat isn't quite up to par, his approach and power are not to be underestimated.

Put another way, he can be a great pitcher-slash-hitter precisely because he looks like both an excellent pitcher and an excellent hitter.

## **FROM SPORTS XCHANGE**

### **Angel host A's as Ohtani makes second pitching start**

By Dan Arritt

After helping the Los Angeles Angels win three straight games with his bat earlier in the week, Shohei Ohtani will get another chance to win a game with his arm when he takes the mound against the Oakland A's in the finale of their three-game series at Angel Stadium on Sunday.

It will be the second start for the Japanese rookie, a highly sought offseason free agent who can pitch and hit at the major league level. He performed poorly in spring training but has exceeded expectations so far this season.

Los Angeles (6-3) had a chance for its best nine-game start in franchise history but lost 7-3 to the A's on Saturday night to end their second three-game winning streak of the season.

Ohtani (1-0, 4.50 ERA) faced the A's (4-6) in his pitching debut last Sunday, allowing three runs on a second-inning homer by third baseman Matt Chapman, but that was his only major mistake over six innings in the 7-4 victory.

Since then, Ohtani moved to designated hitter for games Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at Angel Stadium and homered in all three in dramatic fashion.

His three-run blast in his first at-bat in front of the home crowd propelled the Angels to a 6-2 lead against the Cleveland Indians on Tuesday, and they eventually won 13-2 to end a 12-game losing streak against the Indians.

The following day, he hit a game-tying two-run homer off two-time AL Cy Youngwinner Corey Kluber in the fifth inning, and the Angels went on to win 3-2 in 13 innings.

After an off day on Thursday, the Angels trailed 6-0 early against the A's on Friday night, but Ohtani smashed a 449-foot solo home run to center field with two outs in the second inning to bring the crowd to life, and Los Angeles eventually came back to win their third game in a row, 12-9.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia stuck with his plan to keep Ohtani out of the lineup the day before and the day after he pitches, and Ohtani did not bat in the loss on Saturday night.

Kendall Graveman (0-1, 8.10 ERA) will make his third start of the season for Oakland. He started the season opener against the Angels on March 29 and went five innings, allowing five runs and seven hits, three of which left the yard.

Graveman did not get the decision as the A's rallied to win 6-5 in 11 innings.

Kole Calhoun, Zack Cozart and Albert Pujols each homered off Graveman, who also went five innings in his most recent outing, allowing four runs and eight hits in a 4-1 loss to the Texas Rangers on Tuesday.

"I saw some signs of good things and feel like I'm really close to putting it all together," Graveman told the San Jose Mercury News after the game.

Pujols is 14-for-33 off Graveman with four home runs and 11 RBIs. Mike Trout is 10-for-30 with two home runs.

Graveman is 2-2 overall in his career against the Angels with a 4.33 ERA and 12 home runs surrendered in 68 2/3 innings.

Seth Manea is the only starter to make it through six innings for the A's this season. Oakland used four relievers on Thursday, six on Friday and three more on Saturday.

"We've got to get six, seven, sometimes pitch into the eighth inning to save some of those guys' arms early in the season," Graveman said. "I think it's just a couple of pitches that are getting the innings long. Eliminate those and we'll get deeper into the ballgame."

**FROM MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE**

## **Twins marvel, root for Shohei Ohtani, the Angels rookie designated hitter/pitcher**

By Phil Miller

When Brian Dozier watches highlights of Shohei Ohtani, the Angels rookie who pitched six solid innings last Sunday to beat the Athletics, then homered as Los Angeles' DH on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, he is reminded of ... Drew Butera?

Wait, better let him tell it.

“Remember when Drew Butera came in to pitch in Milwaukee?” Dozier said of a 2012 blowout loss to the Brewers in which the then-Twins’ backup catcher, now with the Royals, took the mound for the ninth inning to preserve the bullpen. “He has a cannon, and he was sitting at like 92 [miles per hour] with ease. Easy cheese, and he could hit 94, 95. There are guys out there who could play both ways if given the chance.”

It’s debatable whether there are many players who could deliver star-level performances in both disciplines like the Angels believe Ohtani will; Butera, after all, is a career backup, not an All-Star. But the notion of a true two-way player was a common topic in the Twins clubhouse last week, and Ohtani’s challenge clearly intrigues his peers around the game. “I can imagine it,” Twins slugger Logan Morrison said, “because I’ve wanted to do it.”

There are instances of players who have given up one side to try the other; new Hall of Famer Trevor Hoffman, for instance, was an overwhelmed middle infielder for the first two years of his pro career before turning himself into one of the greatest closers in history, and former Cardinal Rick Ankiel enjoyed a seven-year career as an outfielder after his promising pitching career was derailed by control problems.

Dozier drew a walk against his former Twins teammate, outfielder-turned-pitcher Jordan Schafer, during a spring training game against St. Louis in February, and the Twins considered using the overall No. 1 pick last June on Brendan McKay, a Louisville star now both pitching and playing first base in the Rays system.

Two-way players are obviously rare, and there’s a reason.

“We’re talking about some of the best athletes in the world. You can’t tell me there aren’t guys who could do it. There are guys in this clubhouse who probably could,” Dozier said. “But 162 games is so strenuous, there’s so much wear and tear on your mind and body, that adding to [your workload] is going to take a toll on your game. And there’s too much at stake for that.”

In other words, being a star at one position is far more beneficial, competitively and financially, than being less than that at more than one.

Morrison was a part-time pitcher when he was a kid. “Most major leaguers were — the best players pitch and play short” before focusing on their biggest strengths, he said. “I had a pretty good curveball.”

He stopped throwing it, though, when his power potential became evident. The division of time is the biggest barrier to an Ohtani feat, Morrison believes.

“Just seeing the work the pitchers put in, to be able to do something like that, a lot of your focus would have to be put on pitching. Then whatever extra time you have would be like, go to the cage,” Morrison

theorized. “If you can hit, you can hit. Pitchers sort of have to develop [their skills], even if they throw hard.”

So would the Twins ever pursue a two-way player? “We tried to get that two-way player,” Molitor said, referring to the Twins’ fruitless pursuit of Ohtani. The Angels’ six-man rotation and off days around Ohtani’s DH appearances have caught his attention. “You can’t help but think about what it would be like to figure out what would be best for him and for the team to use his skill set at both,” Molitor said. “He’s got a chance to be something special.”

Even opposing players seem to be rooting for him. “If he can sustain both and be successful at both, it’s going to be a beautiful thing for the game,” Dozier said. “It’ll be so much fun to watch.”

## FROM FANGRAPHS

### Shohei Ohtani and Beyond: a History of Double-Duty Players

By Jay Jaffe

Between Shohei Ohtani’s strong six-inning start against the A’s on Sunday and home runs in back-to-back games against the Indians on Tuesday and Wednesday, it’s fair to say that the 23-year-old phenom’s major league career is off to an impressive and unprecedented start. Obviously, it will take much longer before Ohtani’s attempt to star as both a hitter and pitcher can be judged a true success, but as Travis Sawchik pointed out, he has, at the very least, already shown off the tools that created all the hype in the first place—namely the triple-digit heat/nasty splitter/slider combo as a pitcher, as well as the raw power as a hitter.

Ohtani is doing things that haven’t been done at the major league level in nearly a century. Not since June 13-14, 1921 has a player followed up a win as a starting pitcher with a home run as a position player in his next game, and not since 1919 has a player served as both a starting pitcher and position player with any kind of regularity. Both of those feats were accomplished by Babe Ruth, of course. The Bambino spent his final two seasons with the Red Sox, 1918 and 1919, pulling double duty, then made cameos on the mound as a Yankee in 1920, 1921, 1930 and 1933. His last two Yankees pitching appearances came on the final day of the regular season, allowing him no chance to homer the following day. The other three times — including an October 1, 1921 relief appearance — that he pitched, he homered in his next game. Of course he did.

While other players have split time between the mound and position playing in a given season, the majority of them predate Ruth. Combing through the Baseball-Reference Play Index, since the inception of the American League in 1901, 20 players pitched at least 15 times in a season and played a position (besides pinch-hitter) at least 15 times as well; four of them did so twice. Fifteen of those 24 player-

seasons predated Ruth, with all but one of those falling between 1901-1909. Only two have occurred since the start of World War II:

Two-Way Seasons Since 1901										
Player	Year	Team	G(p)	W-L	ERA-	RA9-WAR	Pos	G(tot)	wRC+	WAR
<b>Dale Gear</b>	1901	Senators	24	4-11	108	1.5	RF	58	53	-1.0
<b>Jock Menefee</b>	1901	Orphans	21	8-12	119	0.6	RF	48	82	0.3
<b>Zaza Harvey</b>	1901	White Sox/Blues	16	3-7	104	0.3	LF/RF	62	124	1.4
<b>Doc White</b>	1902	Phillies	36	16-20	92	3.8	LF	61	89	0.1
<b>Harry Howell</b>	1902	Orioles	26	9-15	110	-0.1	2B/3B/OF	96	90	0.2
<b>Nixey Callahan</b>	1902	White Sox	35	16-14	106	2.3	RF	70	59	-0.6
<b>Jock Menefee</b>	1902	Orphans	22	12-10	90	2.2	RF/1B	65	46	0.1
<b>Watty Lee</b>	1903	Senators	22	8-12	102	0.8	Rf	75	64	-0.3
<b>Bob Wicker</b>	1904	Cubs	30	17-9	101	3.3	CF	50	50	0.3
<b>Otto Hess</b>	1905	Naps	26	10-15	122	0.8	LF	54	102	0.5
<b>Johnny Lush</b>	1906	Phillies	37	18-15	92	0.8	RF/1B	76	93	0.5
<b>Jack Coombs</b>	1908	A's	26	7-5	82	1.0	RF	78	103	1.0
<b>Doc White</b>	1909	White Sox	24	11-9	74	3.4	CF	72	111	0.7
<b>George Hunter</b>	1909	Superbas	16	4-10	98	0.6	RF	44	81	-0.2
<b>George Sisler</b>	1915	Browns	15	4-4	99	1.1	1B/RF	81	101	0.6
<b>Babe Ruth</b>	1918	Red Sox	20	13-7	84	3.2	LF	95	189	5.2
<b>George Cunningham</b>	1918	Tigers	27	6-7	113	-0.2	RF	56	83	-0.3
<b>Ray Caldwell</b>	1918	Yankees	24	9-8	109	2.0	OF	65	118	0.8

<b>Babe Ruth</b>	1919	Red Sox	17	9-5	96	1.2	LF	130	203	9.4
<b>Johnny Cooney</b>	1924	Braves	34	8-9	87	2.6	CF	55	62	-0.4
<b>Johnny Cooney</b>	1926	Braves	19	3-3	110	-0.4	1B	64	103	0.5
<b>Ossie Orwoll</b>	1928	A's	27	6-5	112	0.6	1B	64	102	0.7
<b>Earl Naylor</b>	1942	Phillies	20	0-5	187	-1.4	CF	76	39	-1.0
<b>Willie Smith</b>	1964	Angels	15	1-4	83	0.2	LF/RF	118	119	1.7

Minimum 15 games pitched and 15 games at a single position (not pinch-hitter) in the same season

That's quite a motley assortment, one that will test your knowledge of deadball era team nicknames (the Orphans became the Cubs, the Blues and Naps became the Indians, the Superbas became the Dodgers). As you can see, most of the early two-way players were pretty lousy hitters *and* nothing special as pitchers, at least within the seasons in question. I've highlighted the ones who were better than average at both tasks. A few of these players stand out and deserve worth closer looks.

#### Zaza Harvey

On name alone, I had to include this guy, though I know almost nothing about him other than his real name (Ervin King Harvey) and the fact that he switched roles due to a trade. After debuting with the Orphans in 1900, he jumped to the White Sox in 1901 and pitched all of his games for them before being purchased by the Blues in mid-August, after which he was exclusively an outfielder; apparently, he requested not to pitch. He hit a sizzling .333/.375/.443 and stole 16 bases in 227 PA as a 22-year-old that year. Illness limited him to 12 games the next year, and he disappeared from baseball entirely.

#### Doc White

Known by a nickname due to his degree in dentistry from Georgetown University, White was a very good pitcher during a 13-year career that ran from 1901-1913, going 189–156 with a 2.39 ERA (89 ERA-) and 48.9 RA9-WAR. Though he played 85 games in the outfield, he simply wasn't much of a hitter; baseball history makes no mention of his prowess at filling cavities. As a hurler, he led the NL in strikeout rate in 1902 (5.4 per nine) while serving as the staff ace and occasional left fielder for the seventh-place Phillies, hitting just .202/.331/.232 in 120 PA. He found more success after jumping to the White Sox in 1903, and posted ERAs below 2.00 from 1904-1906. In the first of those years, he reeled off 45 straight scoreless innings via a major league record five consecutive shutouts; he would live to see Don Drysdale break that record 64 years later.

He led the AL with a 1.52 ERA in 1906 and starred in the World Series as the "Hitless Wonder" White Sox upset the Cubs, pitching a complete game in the clincher after earning a three-inning save the day before. The next year, he led the AL with 27 wins in 1907. He spent about six weeks as the White Sox's regular center fielder in May and June of 1909, posting a .398 OBP for that stretch and hitting .234/.347/.292 in 238 PA on the season before his focus returned to the mound.

### Nixey Callahan

Callahan spent 13 years in the majors between 1894 and 1913, winning 20 games twice for the Orphans (1898 and 1899) and totaling 99 wins and 16.8 WAR (18.3 RA9-WAR) as a pitcher. He dabbled at other positions as early as 1897, when he pitched 23 games and made 18 or more appearances at second base, shortstop and in the outfield, and he played a total of 23 games in the pasture in 1902. That year, he threw the first no-hitter in AL history on September 20 against the Tigers, but by then, he was more or less done with pitching; he made just five more starts, three of them in 1903, the year he took over as the White Sox manager.

He led the Sox to a 60-77 record while serving as their regular third baseman, and was replaced as manager by Fielder Jones — who would lead the White Sox to the aforementioned upset of the Cubs — early in 1904. He spent that season and the next as the team's regular left fielder; over the 1903-05 span, he produced a combined 7.0 WAR while hitting for a 115 wRC+. He missed out on the White Sox's biggest triumph, spending 1906-10 leading the semipro Logan Squares, much to the consternation of AL president Ban Johnson, then rejoined the Sox as a player in 1911, and as their manager from 1912-14.

### Jack Coombs

Coombs pitched a shutout in his July 5, 1906 major league debut for the A's, and later that year pitched a 24-inning (!) complete game victory against the Red Sox, striking out 18. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he developed arm troubles that limited his effectiveness in 1907, and when A's right fielder Socks Seybold broke his leg in spring training the following year, manager Connie Mack installed Coombs as his regular. He started hot, but by June he had played his way back to the mound. While he hit just .255/.287/.355 in 235 PA for the full season, he posted a 2.00 ERA over 153 innings the rest of the way. He continued to improve as a pitcher, and in 1910, led the AL with 31 wins (against nine losses) with a 1.30 ERA in 350 innings, setting a record with 53 consecutive scoreless innings along the way and adding three more wins in the A's World Series victory over the Cubs. Though his ERA shot to 3.53 the next year, he had a league-high 28 wins and helped Philadelphia to another championship.

Later, he helped the 1916 Brooklyn Robins win the NL pennant, and got the team's lone win in their World Series loss to Ruth and the Red Sox. As his pitching declined, he made a 13-game foray to the outfield for the 1918 Robins, but his .168/.223/.230 line in 122 PA confirms that was the wrong way to go about it.

### George Sisler

As a rookie in 1915, Sisler dabbled on the mound, with seven relief appearances and eight starts, six of which were complete games. In one of them, he outdueled Walter Johnson. He hit a thin .285/.307/.369 in 294 PA as a rookie, but soon developed into a contact-hitting machine whose career bridged the dead-and-live-ball eras, winning a pair of batting titles with averages above .400 in 1920 (when he set a longstanding record with 257 hits) and 1922 and placing among the league's top five seven times in that

category, mostly before scoring levels got silly. He occasionally took the mound after his rookie season, throwing a total of 41 innings from 1916-1928, but as his career .340/.379/.468 batting line, 2,812 hits and 1939 election to the Hall of Fame attest, he made the right call.

#### Johnny Cooney

In a 20-year major league career that spanned from 1921-44, with a five-year foray to the minors (1930-34) in between, Cooney did it all: played, coached and managed in both leagues (albeit on an interim basis, with his AL stint confined to one game while Al Lopez attended a funeral). He even umpired a game. He broke in primarily as a pitcher with the Braves, but hot hitting (.379/.414/.394 in 73 PA in 1923) and good defense led to additional work in center field, though he hit a meager .254/.302/.285 in 1924 while throwing 181 innings.

Focused almost entirely on pitching the next year, he set a career high with 245.2 innings while going 14-14 with a 3.48 ERA. And he again hit well enough (.320/.346/.388 in 112 PA) to resume double duty, which came in handy when he was beset with arm trouble that limited his mound work. He hit .302/.367/.357 in 147 PA, primarily as a first baseman, while throwing just 83.1 innings in 1926. He didn't pitch at all in 1927, and did so only sporadically from 1928-30, but after his lengthy minor league detour, he returned as a center fielder, first with the Dodgers (1935-37) and then back to the Braves (1938-42), averaging 120 games a year in that capacity from 1936-41. He finished his career with an 86 wRC+ in 3,675 PA and a 95 ERA- in 795.1 innings, totaling 10.9 WAR.

#### Willie Smith

Of all the players to pull significant double duty, Wonderful Willie Smith is the only one to do so since World War II, and is the only black player to do so. He played his first professional baseball in the post-integration Negro Leagues, with the Birmingham Black Barons, and was good enough to play in the Negro American League's 1958 and 1959 East-West All-Star Games. As a 22-year-old southpaw, he pitched three scoreless innings of relief and singled in the winning run in the former, and started and hit an inside-the-park homer in the latter.

Signed by the Tigers, he spent 1960-62 in the minors, and got a cup of coffee in 1963, playing a total of 17 games, with 11 on the mound and the balance in pinch-hitting and -running roles. Traded to the Angels in 1964, he pinch-hit and threw 31.2 innings on the mound in 15 appearances, all in May and June, and nearly all in mop-up duty, with a 2.84 ERA. On June 8, manager Bill Rigney sent him to right field in the late innings. "I didn't dare say I wouldn't play out there," Smith later said. Rigney then brought him in to pitch, but he faced three batters and gave up two homers.

After taking one of his four losses in relief on June 13, he started the nightcap of a doubleheader the next day in left field and homered. He made just one more mound appearance that year but became a semi-regular at the outfield corners, hitting .301/.317/.465 with 11 homers and seven steals in 373 PA. He would spend seven more years in the majors, never replicating that success (.248/.295/.395 lifetime)

and making just three relief appearances in 1968 as his further mound work. The highlight of his post-double duty career was a game-winning pinch-hit homer for the Cubs on Opening Day in 1969.

...

As interesting as those players are, their relatively minimal success in one role or the other can't hold a candle to the expectations for Ohtani. And while the accomplishments of the nascent Ruth in 1918-19 may stand as the closest analogue to what the Angels are attempting, it's important to understand the on-the-fly nature of Ruth's journey from star southpaw to Sultan of Swat. After breaking in as a 19-year-old in 1914, Ruth went 65-33 with a 2.02 ERA in 867.2 innings over the next three seasons, topping 20 wins twice, leading the AL with a 1.75 ERA and nine shutouts in 1916 (when he helped the Red Sox beat the Robins in the World Series) and with 35 complete games the following year. Through the end of the 1917 season, he hit .299/.355/.474 (148 wRC+) with nine homers in 405 PA, but his non-pitching work was limited to pinch-hitting.

Ruth was the Red Sox's Opening Day starter on April 15, 1918, and started four times that month, with two pinch-hitting appearances thrown in as well. After another start on May 4, during which he hit his first home run of the season, he started Boston's next game, on May 6, as a first baseman, batting sixth. He homered. He tied the major league record by homering again in his third straight game, and thereafter his pitching was sporadic. He made just two more starts on the mound that month, one in June (when he hit eight of his MLB-leading 11 homers), and three in July, then eight in August, the season's final month; due to World War I, the regular season ended on September 2, and the World Series, in which Ruth beat the Cubs twice, ended on September 11.

In 1919, Ruth started nine times in May and June, but just six times the rest of the way; after he tied the major league record with nine homers in July (against just three starts on the mound), he took the hill just once in August and twice in September. He finished the year hitting .322/456/.657 with 29 homers, a record he would demolish in 1920, with 54 homers, and then 59 the following year. You don't need me to tell you that part of the story.

Here's a breakdown of Ruth's 1918-19:

Babe Ruth in Transition, 1918-19				
Year	P	LF	CF	1B
1918	19	46	11	13
1919	15	106	0	5

SOURCE: Baseball-Reference

Totals are only for games started at each position

Even working within the Angels' planned six-man rotation, Ohtani figures to surpass Ruth in games started; our Depth Charts forecast has him down for 24 (one to date plus 23 for the rest of his season). If

he's DHing three times a week, that's another 78 starts, and while that may be less taxing than playing the field for nine innings, it's also true that the caliber of competition he's facing is much higher.

We've grappled with other ways of looking at players who have spent time as both pitchers and hitters, but we're really in uncharted territory with Ohtani. And while the hype may be a bit much to endure, based on what we've seen so far, this promises to be a fun and fascinating ride. Buckle up.