



# ***Press Clips***

**(June 5, 2018)**

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**FROM THE OC REGISTER****Mike Trout has a pair of big hits in Angels' comeback victory over Royals**

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — Mike Trout tied the score with a rocket and he won the game with a ... well, it will look like a rocket in the box score.

The Angels' 9-6 come-from-behind victory over the Kansas City Royals on Monday night was built upon key hits from throughout the lineup, but Trout had two of the biggest.

In the sixth, he completed the comeback from a 5-2 deficit with a game-tying single on a line drive that left his bat at 113 mph.

Then he came up again in the eighth in a 6-6 game, with runners at first and second, and he hit what could have been a routine comebacker. The ball nicked off the glove of pitcher Burch Smith and skipped into center field, for a go-ahead single.

"It was a crazy one," Trout said. "That guy was pretty funky. Once I got to two strikes, I was just trying to put the ball in play and I found a hole up the middle."

Trout rarely gets the opportunity to have big hits in the late innings because opponents usually pitch around him. This time, he came up in both spots with two runners on base, and with Justin Upton and Albert Pujols swinging the bat well behind him.

The Royals had to pitch to him.

"The night presented guys on base, and I was just trying not to do too much," Trout said. "Get a pitch I can hit, and don't miss it. Just barrel it up, and I did tonight."

He had the support of the hitters behind him. Upton had singled, walked and hit a homer before Trout's tying hit in the sixth. When he followed Trout to the plate after his go-ahead hit in the eighth, he delivered an insurance RBI single.

Pujols had walked and hit a bases-loaded fly ball to the warning track in his first three trips, before delivering RBI singles in the sixth – to put the Angels ahead for the first time – and the eighth.

Pujols' final hit increased the Angels lead to three runs, which was enough for Blake Parker to close it out, giving the Angels their second victory in a row.

It was a rare game in which the Angels' hitters bailed out the pitchers, as starter Nick Tropeano gave up five runs and put the Angels in a 5-2 hole.

"They picked me up huge," said Tropeano, who allowed five runs in 4-2/3 innings. "Obviously I didn't have my best stuff today. Having the leadoff guy on in every inning is not a recipe for success. ... We're going to pick each other up. The offense was huge, and the bullpen picked me up, and we got the win."

The comeback began with Upton's homer in the fifth, followed by Jefry Marte's homer in the sixth, one of his career-high four hits.

Shohei Ohtani then delivered his second pinch-hit of the season, squirting an infield hit through the shift on the right side and using his speed to get on base.

An Ian Kinsler walk then preceded Trout's game-tying single, and Pujols then put the Angels ahead 6-5.

The lead then disappeared when Noé Ramírez gave up a homer to Sal Pérez on his first pitch of the seventh, tying the score once more.

Cam Bedrosian followed Ramírez to the mound and pitched a perfect eighth, setting up the winning rally.

## **Angels draft speedy high school outfielder Jordyn Adams with first-round pick**

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — The Angels followed a familiar script with their first-round pick on Monday, taking high school outfielder Jordyn Adams with the 17th overall pick.

Adams, a multi-sport star at Green Hope High in Cary, N.C., has a scholarship to play football and baseball at the University of North Carolina. He is known for his speed and athleticism.

At first glance, he seems to be similar to Jo Adell, the Angels' top pick in the 2017 draft. Adell, a high school outfielder, has already been through two levels of the farm system, advancing to high-A Inland Empire last month. Adell is the considered the top prospect in the Angels' farm system.

"The first thing that jumps out is his athleticism," scouting director Matt Swanson said of Adams. "If you look at our last couple drafts, that's a common thread. Jordyn is someone who is big and fast and strong and someone we can continue to mold."

The Angels took another high school player with their second-round pick, grabbing shortstop Jeremiah Jackson from St. Luke's Episcopal School in Alabama.

By taking two high school players, the Angels continued their recent shift to a more balanced strategy, instead of going so heavily after college players, as they had done for years. They had not taken high school players with their first two picks since 2010 when they took Kaleb Cowart and Cam Bedrosian.

When their first pick came around on Monday, the Angels had a shot to take Florida right-hander Brady Singer with their first pick. Instead of taking the polished college pitcher, who was considered by some to be one of the top few prospects in the draft, the Angels took a chance on Adams.

“We feel if we can infuse our system with talent such as his, with tremendous upside and athleticism, you take that and bring it in,” Swanson said.

Adams, whose father is an assistant football coach at North Carolina, is a wide receiver with pro potential, so the Angels will have to convince him to abandon any plans for playing football.

The slot value for the 17th pick is just under \$3.5 million.

“We’re fully expecting him to sign and play baseball,” Swanson said.

Adams, 18, hit .435 with five doubles, three triples and a home run during his senior year. He stole 26 bases. The 6-foot-2, 175-pound outfielder hit a walk-off single in the 2017 Under Armour All-America Game at Wrigley Field.

Jackson, 18, is believed to have an advanced right-handed bat, for a high school player. His hitting is ahead of his defense. He may have to move to second base as he climbs in the system.

Jackson, who had started for the school’s varsity team since he was in seventh grade, hit .644 with 15 homers as a senior.

The draft continues Tuesday (rounds 3-10) and Wednesday (rounds 11-40).

## **Angels remain confident that Shohei Ohtani will hit lefties**

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — For all that Shohei Ohtani has done, success against left-handed pitchers remains elusive early in his big league career.

Ohtani was not in the lineup against Kansas City left-hander Danny Duffy on Monday night. The Angels have faced a left-handed starter 11 times when Ohtani has been available – not pitching or within a day of pitching, and not when he had a sprained ankle. Ohtani has started five of those games.

Ohtani is hitting .143 (4 for 28) against left-handed pitchers, and .329 against right-handers. His OPS against lefties is .451, compared to 1.047 against righties.

When Ohtani first showed signs of difficulty with lefties in spring training, Manager Mike Scioscia said he had no issues with lefties in Japan. He expected that to continue.

Asked about the results so far, Scioscia said it was still a small sample.

“He’s had some really good at-bats against some lefties and sometimes he’s been searching,” Scioscia said. “There’s a lot on Shohei’s plate. Learning the league, learning the different deliveries. For any

young player coming up from the minor leagues to the major leagues there is an adjustment to make. There is a lot on his plate. He will hit lefties.”

Ohtani said the difference is the caliber of pitching from Japan to the majors. He also said he expects to be fine.

“Whether it’s a righty or a lefty, I try not to think about the righty-lefty thing,” he said through his interpreter. “I have a similar approach to both pitchers. I’m not too worried about it at this point.”

#### **UP NEXT**

Angels (Andrew Heaney, 2-4, 3.66) vs. Royals (Brad Keller, 1-1, 2.13), Tuesday, 7 p.m., Fox Sports West, KLAA (830 AM)

### ***FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES***

## **Angels take advantage of shifts, good fortune in victory over Royals 9-6**

By Mike Digiovanna

Home runs like the ones Justin Upton and Jefry Marte hit for the Angels on Monday night are great, and so are 112.6-mph line drives, like the one Mike Trout rocketed into center field for a run-scoring single in the sixth inning against the Kansas City Royals.

A few free passes and a little luck never hurt, either, as the Angels discovered during a quirky three-run eighth-inning rally that broke a tie score and gave them a 9-6 victory before 32,553 in Angel Stadium.

With the score tied 6-6, Royals left-hander Tim Hill walked No. 8 batter Martin Maldonado to open the eighth. Michael Hermosillo fouled off two sacrifice bunt attempts before drawing a walk, the No. 9 hitter reaching base when he was trying to make an out.

After Ian Kinsler struck out, Trout grounded a playable one-hopper that caromed off Hill’s glove and into center field for a single that scored pinch-runner Kaleb Cowart for a 7-6 lead. Upton and Albert Pujols followed with RBI singles to make the score 9-6, and Blake Parker pitched a scoreless ninth for the save.

“We haven’t had many seeing-eye hits, but that was one of them,” manager Mike Scioscia said of Trout’s single, one of the Angels’ 14 hits. “It was a great comeback. The eighth was a good inning for us. We had good at-bats all the way through, got some clutch hits. I thought we did a good job in the batter’s box all night.”

Philadelphia Phillies ace Jake Arrieta, who called his team “the worst in the league with shifts” after Sunday’s 6-1 loss to the San Francisco Giants, would not have liked two key Angels hits in the bottom of the sixth inning.

With the Angels trailing, 5-3, Marte drove a homer to left against Royals starter Danny Duffy, part of the second four-hit game of Marte's career. Pinch-hitter Shohei Ohtani, with one out, hit what would often be a routine ground ball to second. Instead, because of a shift, the ball slipped between two defenders for a single.

Kinsler walked and Trout rifled an RBI single to center to tie the score at 5-5. Upton grounded into a fielder's choice for the second out, and Pujols squibbed a grounder to the right of the mound.

An easy out for Kansas City? Nope. Second baseman Whit Merrifield was shifted behind the second-base bag, and the grounder reached the outfield grass for an RBI single and a 6-5 Angels lead.

The advantage lasted all of one pitch when Royals catcher Salvador Perez blasted reliever Noe Ramirez's first pitch of the seventh over the wall in left for his 10th homer, tying the score.

The Angels overcame a rare rocky start from right-hander Nick Tropeano, who gave up five runs and nine hits in 42/3 innings, striking out five and walking one.

Angels starting pitchers held opponents to three runs or fewer in 28 of the previous 32 games, with Tropeano giving up three or fewer in four of his previous five starts.

It took the Royals only two innings to reach that threshold.

John Jay opened the game with a single, took second on Merrifield's fly to the wall in left and scored on Mike Moustakas' single to right. Singles by Trout and Upton, a walk to Pujols and Andrelton Simmons' sacrifice fly to center pulled the Angels even 1-1 in the bottom of the first.

Kansas City took a 3-1 lead in the second when Hunter Dozier doubled to left and scored on Alcides Escobar's single to center. Escobar stole second and scored on Jay's single to left-center.

The Angels pulled to within 3-2 in the second when Marte singled to left and scored when Maldonado's bloop single to shallow left-center skipped past left fielder Alex Gordon for an error that allowed Maldonado to take second.

Trout's two-out intentional walk and another walk to Upton loaded the bases. Pujols flied out to the warning track in left.

Tropeano escaped a jam in the third with the help of third baseman Zack Cozart, who back-handed Jorge Soler's grounder down the line and, noticing that Moustakas hesitated at third, threw home. Moustakas was tagged out in a rundown.

The right-hander could not slip out of a similar jam in the fifth, when Merrifield's leadoff double, a walk to Moustakas, a wild pitch and Soler's two-run double to left gave the Royals a 5-2 lead.

Upton got one run back in the bottom of the fifth when he led off with a homer to right.

## Angels select two-sport athlete Jordyn Adams with their first pick in MLB draft

By Mike Digiovanna

The Angels used their top pick on a highly athletic high school outfielder for the second consecutive year, choosing two-sport star Jordyn Adams of Cary, N.C., with the 17th overall selection Monday in the first round of the amateur draft.

They chose high school shortstop Jeremiah Jackson of St. Luke's Episcopal in Mobile, Ala., in the second round, marking the first time since 2010 (infielder Kaleb Cowart, pitcher Cam Bedrosian) the team chose prep players with their first two picks.

The 6-foot-2, 180-pound Adams, a speedy receiver who has committed to play football and baseball at North Carolina, hit .453 (34 for 75) with five doubles, three triples, one home run and 15 runs batted in during his senior season at Green Hope High.

As a junior at Blythewood High in South Carolina, Adams, who throws and bats right-handed, hit .494 with 26 stolen bases. He was considered a better football prospect until he impressed scouts at USA Baseball's National High School Invitational in late March.

"The first thing that jumps out is his athleticism," scouting director Matt Swanson said of Adams. "If you look at our last couple of drafts, that's a common thread. Jordyn is someone who is big and fast and strong and someone we can continue to mold. It's another very exciting pick for us."

According to Baseball America, Adams, 18, was the tournament's best hitter in a field with many of the top high school bats in this year's draft class. Adams has excellent bat speed, and scouts project he will hit for more power as he adds muscle to his wiry frame.

With his superb speed — Adams has been clocked from home to first in 4.12 — he projects as more of a leadoff hitter. His speed and athleticism make him a potential impact defender in center field.

The Angels used the 10th overall pick in 2017 on Louisville high school outfielder Jo Adell, who has advanced to Class-A Inland Empire this season and is considered the organization's top prospect.

"The pure tools and athleticism they possess is very unique and similar, but they're very different players," Swanson said of Adams and Adell. "They share similar upsides but different ways to get there."

The 6-foot, 165-pound Jackson, 18, has good bat speed, raw power for his size and a strong arm that should allow him to remain at shortstop. A six-year varsity starter at his school, he hit .644 (58 for 90) with 15 home runs, nine doubles, four triples, 49 RBIs and 54 runs as a senior.

"We made the pick with the intention of developing him as a shortstop," Swanson said. "He's given us no indication that he shouldn't stay there long-term."



According to mlb.com, Jackson, the 57th overall pick, is the first Alabama high school middle infielder selected in the first three rounds since the New York Yankees picked Bo Jackson in 1982.

### **Ohtani left out**

The left-handed-hitting Shohei Ohtani was not in the Angels' lineup against Kansas City Royals left-hander Danny Duffy on Monday night.

Ohtani is batting .329 with a 1.047 on-base-plus-slugging percentage, six home runs and 19 RBIs in 95 plate appearances against right-handers but only .143 with a .451 OPS, no home runs and one RBI in 33 plate appearances against left-handers.

"I still think it's a small sample size," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He's had some really good at-bats against lefties, and sometimes he's been searching. He's learning a new league, different deliveries. There's a lot on Shohei's plate."

Ohtani has cooled off in the last two weeks, hitting .172 (five for 38) with a .644 OPS, no home runs, three RBIs, 12 strikeouts and nine walks in nine games from May 22 through Sunday, his average falling from .321 to .283. He pinch-hit against right-hander Kevin McCarthy in the sixth and got a fortuitous single past an infield shift.

"He's not expanding his zone, he's taking his walks, he's hitting some balls hard," Scioscia said. "You're not gonna get balls to fall in at an extraordinary pace all the time, but his process is great."

### **Lack of pomp**

MLB Network televised the first round and competitive-balance round of the draft. Things were a little different when Scioscia, the former Dodgers catcher, was selected in the first round in 1976.

"I wasn't even aware the draft was that day," Scioscia said. "I was out playing pick-up baseball with my buddies at the high school. I got home and my dad said, 'Hey, you got a phone call, you got drafted by the Dodgers.' That was it."

**FROM ANGELS.COM**

## **Angels draft two-sport star Jordyn Adams**

*UNC football commit taken 17th overall; Halos add prep SS at No. 37*

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- For the second straight year, the Angels used their first-round Draft pick on a high school outfielder, taking Jordyn Adams with the 17th overall selection on Monday night.

Adams, 18, is a two-sport standout from Green Hope High School in Cary, N.C., and he's committed to play football and baseball at North Carolina, where his father, Deke, is the defensive line coach. Scouting director Matt Swanson said the Angels don't expect to have any issues signing Adams, who is a four-star wide receiver recruit but has a longer history playing baseball. The slot value for the 17th overall pick is \$3,472,900.

Listed at 6-foot-2, 175 pounds, Adams hit .453 with five doubles, three triples, a home run and 15 RBIs during his senior season at Green Hope.

"The first thing that jumps out is his athleticism," Swanson said. "If you've looked at our last couple Drafts, that's kind of the common thread in what we're trying to do. Jordyn is somebody who is big and fast and strong. Somebody we can just continue to mold."

The Angels have developed an affinity for using their early-round picks on players with high athletic upside, as they also drafted outfielder **Jo Adell** with the 10th overall pick in 2017. Adell, 19, has already climbed to Class A Advanced Inland Empire and is ranked the club's **No. 1 prospect** by MLB Pipeline.

Florida right-hander Brady Singer, a polished college arm who was ranked No. 2 among MLB Pipeline's Top 200 Draft prospects, was still on the board when the Angels made their first-round selection, but Swanson said Adams had been their target for months.

"When we feel like we can grab somebody like Jordyn and infuse our organization with talent such as his, that's tremendous upside and tremendous athleticism, you take that," Swanson said. "You take it, and you bring that in. I think it's just another very exciting pick for us."

A right-handed bat, Adams was ranked No. 37 on MLB Pipeline's **Top 200 Draft prospects**, and he's projected to develop into a solid hitter with the potential to hit 15-20 home runs per year. He also possesses top-of-the-scale speed, which could allow him to become a premier basestealer and defender in center field.

Adams' athletic talents seem to extend beyond football and baseball, as a video of him throwing down an incredible dunk quickly made the rounds on social media after he was drafted.

"We stumbled upon that video in about March or April," Swanson said. "I can't even begin to imagine how many times that video has been played by Angels employees, but it's a lot."

The Angels stayed within the high schools ranks for their second-round pick, drafting shortstop Jeremiah Jackson out of St. Luke's Episcopal High School in Mobile, Ala., with the 57th overall selection. Jackson, 18, is the first high school middle infielder from Alabama to be selected within the first three rounds of the Draft since Bo Jackson was taken in the second round by the Yankees in 1982.

The Angels hadn't used their first two picks on high school players since 2010, when they took infielder Kaleb Cowart (18th overall) and right-hander Cam Bedrosian (29th overall).

"Jeremiah was another player that we scouted really heavily," Swanson said. "We were thrilled that he was there when we wrapped around into the second round. J.T. Zink, our area scout, did a phenomenal job staying on him and knowing the family and knowing the kid. Very comfortable with him as a person, but also as a baseball player. I don't think he should get lost in the shuffle of being our second pick, because we felt very passionately about him and what he's going to bring into our organization as well."

The 6-foot-1, 170-pound Jackson batted .644 with nine doubles, four triples, 15 home runs and 49 RBIs during his senior season at St. Luke's. He also made 12 appearances as a pitcher this year, going 3-1 with a 2.55 ERA and 42 strikeouts.

Jackson, a Mississippi State recruit, is an advanced hitter with solid arm strength, but his lack of a quick first step has led some scouts to believe that he'll end up shifting to second base. Swanson, for his part, said the Angels envision him sticking at shortstop.

"Our scouts have valued him there, and we made the pick with the intention of developing him as a shortstop," Swanson said. "He's given us no indication that he shouldn't stay there long term."

The Draft continues on Tuesday with Rounds 3-10. The MLB.com preview show begins at 9:30 a.m. PT, with exclusive coverage beginning at 10 a.m.

## Trout keys two 3-run rallies as Halos stun Royals

By Avery Yang

ANAHEIM -- **Mike Trout** had RBI singles and scored in three-run sixth and eighth innings as the Angels rallied to top the Royals, 9-6, on Monday night at Angel Stadium.

Trout finished the game 3-for-4 with three runs, two RBIs and a walk, extending his Major League lead in walks and on-base percentage to 51 and .450.

"Just tried not to do too much, get a pitch I could hit, and not miss," Trout said. "Just try not to do too much and just barrel [the ball] up. I did that tonight."

After the Angels grabbed their first lead in the sixth, 6-5, **Noe Ramirez** gave up a game-tying homer to **Salvador Perez** a half-inning later. But the Angels were the ones who landed the last blow, in the form of three straight RBI singles in the eighth that served as the final arbiter of a back-and-forth series opener.

**Martin Maldonado** started off the eighth inning with a hard-fought walk, on seven pitches, before being pinch-run for by **Kaleb Cowart**. **Michael Hermosillo** followed with a walk of his own. After **Ian**

**Kinsler** struck out, Trout hit a slow dribbler up the middle that scooted into center field to bring home Cowart, making it 7-6.

"That guy was pretty funky," said Trout, referring to the hop on his single. "Once I got to two strikes, I was just trying to put the ball in play, and I just found a hole up the middle."

**Justin Upton** singled to right two pitches later to bring home Hermosillo, then **Albert Pujols** followed up by knocking in Trout for the second time in three innings.

Upton also added a solo homer in the fifth inning, and went 3-for-4 overall with two RBIs and a walk.

**Nick Tropeano** allowed five earned runs on nine hits with a walk and five strikeouts over 4 2/3 innings in a no-decision. He had come into Monday having allowed three runs or fewer in four of his last five starts, but his splitter and fastball placement wasn't up to par against the Royals.

"Obviously, I didn't have my best stuff today," Tropeano said. "Having a leadoff guy on there almost every inning isn't a recipe for success. I felt good physically. I think I let up a lot of 0-2 hits, and that's just a matter of putting them away, executing pitches, especially with runners in scoring position.

"I'd say my fastball command wasn't quite what it was, as crisp the last two outings, and I think that's what led to the five runs."

Five relievers accounted for the other 4 1/3 innings -- **Jim Johnson**, **Jose Alvarez**, Ramirez, **Cam Bedrosian** and **Blake Parker** combining to allow just one run, Perez's homer.

"That's a team," Tropeano said. "We're gonna pick each other up. Offense picked me up huge, bullpen picked me up huge, and we got the win."

#### **MOMENTS THAT MATTERED**

**Marte's homer ignites rally:** **Jefry Marte**, who got the nod at first base with the Royals starting lefty **Danny Duffy**, had four hits on the night, including a solo homer that started the Halos' sixth-inning rally.

"Hopefully Jefry's just getting comfortable in the box. I mean, this guy, really -- he's got a great approach, especially against left-handed pitching, and we saw it a couple years ago," manager Mike Scioscia said. "It hasn't quite surfaced, but you saw tonight. He had a great night, and hopefully it's a sign of better things to come."

**Ohtani provides a spark:** With a right-hander coming in to replace Duffy following Marte's homer, Scioscia whipped out his shiny, new, left-handed-hitting force off the bench: **Shohei Ohtani**. Ohtani kept the momentum going with a base hit to the right side that slipped under the second baseman's glove for a single.

"That got the rally started -- good time for it right there," Scioscia said.

After Kinsler walked, Trout laced a single to center to bring Ohtani home and level the score at 5. Kinsler got thrown out at the plate on Upton's grounder, but Pujols cashed in Trout with a single up the middle that gave the Angels their first lead.

#### **SOUND SMART**

Pujols recorded his 3,024th and 3,025th career hits, passing Lou Brock for 27th on the all-time list. His eighth-inning single gave him 1,950 RBIs -- one shy of Stan Musial for seventh all-time.

#### **UP NEXT**

The Angels will turn to **Andrew Heaney** (2-4, 3.66 ERA) on four days' rest Tuesday night at 7:07 PT in the second game of their three-game series against the Royals. In his last start, Heaney gave up five earned runs over five innings in a loss to the Tigers. This will be the lefty's second start of the season against Kansas City. In his first, he gave up three earned runs over five innings, with seven strikeouts, in a no-decision. The Royals are calling on **Brad Keller** (1-1, 2.13 ERA), who will make his second career start after opening the season in the bullpen.

## **Monday's top prospect performers\***

By Mike Rosenbaum

- **Angels No. 28** prospect **Luis Rengifo** collected four hits to improve his average to .341 in 11 games since his promotion to Double-A Mobile. He drove in a pair and also stole a base in the contest, his 26th steal in 52 games this season between two levels. Altogether, the 21-year-old infielder is batting .327/.423/.468 with 20 extra-base hits and more walks (30) than strikeouts (24).

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

**FROM MLB.COM**

## **First round: Pick-by-pick analysis\***

By Jim Callis

### **17. Los Angeles Angels: OF Jordyn Adams, Green Hope (N.C.) HS**

This is another really interesting selection, because it indicates to me that Adams is going to be fully signable away from a commitment to play two sports at North Carolina, where his father's a defensive line coach. He's a four-star wide receiver recruit and a great athlete who gets top-of-the-skill running grades from some evaluators. Even though his attention has been divided between two sports, he's not extremely raw at the plate and has the upside of a .275 hitter with 15-20 home runs per season.

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

**FROM THE ATHLETIC****From Stickball to Secaucus: As the Angels go through first day of MLB Draft, they reflect on how it has changed**

By Fabian Ardaya

As he sat back and relaxed into his chair, Matt Swanson exhaled loudly.

“My brain is fried,” said the Angels’ director of scouting.

Less than an hour earlier, Swanson had finished the first day of his second MLB Draft as scouting director. A year of work, scouting, collecting of data and video information had matured into the selection of two picks within the draft’s first two rounds: Jordyn Adams with the 17th overall pick in the first round, and Jeremiah Jackson in the second, the 57th pick overall.

Naturally, a year of work going into not just Monday night’s two prospects, but the entirety of the draft-eligible pool that will be selected over 40 rounds and countless post-draft searches, will breed some optimism.

“I think their ceiling is really exciting,” Swanson said. The Angels got the players who Swanson said they’d wanted. (Of course, what kind of scouting director would publicly say they didn’t?)

Adams, an athletic, 6-foot-2, 175-pound two-sport star, excelled as an outfielder at Green Hope High School in Cary, North Carolina and jumped onto the club’s board over the course of the winter thanks to his upside. Jackson, who brings an intriguing bat to the table, is another high-upside high school talent, and as a shortstop is the first high school middle infielder from Alabama to be taken within the draft’s first three rounds since the Yankees made Bo Jackson their second-round pick in 1982.

Each player has some questions around them, as any prospect naturally does. Even the most experienced scouts will admit that it’s an inexact science. Adams is a UNC commit for both baseball and football, where his father, Deke, is the defensive line coach, though Swanson said he doesn’t have signability issues. Jackson is a hit-first prospect who, while boasting a strong arm, may not have the quickness to stay at shortstop, though Swanson said he’ll at least start there. Such is the dive into the abyss for the sake of upside.

“For me, when you bring in athletes, you can mold them and you can shape them,” Swanson said of the philosophy, which included taking another high school position player, Jo Adell, in the first round of his first draft with the Angels in 2017.

“I think with players like that, there’s things that you can do with them internally while you develop them that other players might have their limitations. We look for guys that we can bring in and make them bigger, faster, stronger and move them quickly. You look at the guys from last year’s draft, and how they’ve started to sort of skyrocket through the organization. I feel the need to give our player

development guys something they can work with. Not a finished product, but something they could work with and get them up here as quickly as possible.”

The draft is still an unknown, even for as much as it’s changed. Swanson, who came over to replace Ric Wilson as scouting director last season after previously serving as a cross-checker in the Cardinals organization, was candid about growing with each draft. This year, he said, he sought to slow himself down, trusting the work he and his area scouts did to compile information. He trusted them, including crediting area scout T.J. Zink on his work tracking Jackson at St. Luke’s Episcopal High School in Mobile.

The stakes, however, remain high.

“You do all this work for a full year, and it comes down to this three-hour window where you make multi-million dollar decisions,” Swanson said. “It can get a little haywire.”

The draft, once done mostly in private, has become a mini-spectacle. Adams heard his name called by commissioner Rob Manfred, with Jackson hearing his from Angels legend Tim Salmon.

Nine years earlier, a high school outfielder from Millville, New Jersey named Mike Trout drove to Secaucus, the home of MLB Network’s Studio 42, to witness the draft firsthand. Unlike Monday, when six different prospects waited in the studio to hear their names called firsthand, Trout was the only player there. After all, it was one of the first times it had been an option — the draft wasn’t televised until 2007.

“I just told myself that you only get drafted once,” Trout said of going. “It was an opportunity I couldn’t turn down, to be there at the draft.”

Trout would be selected with the 25th pick, the second of two first-round selections the Angels had that year, drawing a loud reaction from the assortment of family and friends who’d accompanied him. Trout had no mock drafts to see where he’d been selected — the best he’d heard from scouts was that teams were “hot” on him, and he was hoping he’d be taken within the draft’s first three rounds.

Two American League Most Valuable Player awards and six All-Star appearances later, it’s safe to say that draft choice panned out OK for the Angels.

“It’s probably one of the best moments I’ve ever had so far in my career, getting drafted,” Trout said. “Obviously, getting to the big leagues is unbelievable, but you work so hard as a kid, and it comes in stages. You want to get drafted, then you get drafted, then you get to the big leagues. As a kid, you always want to get drafted.

“I was anxious. I mean, I really wanted to get picked. That’s all that mattered. Going up on that stage and holding up an Angels jersey, it was pretty cool.”

In 1981, a lanky right-hander was playing stick ball with friends at the William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia when he heard his father’s station wagon pull up. Mark Gubicza had recently watched his

avored Phillies lose to the Royals in the World Series, but hoped he'd eventually be drafted by his hometown team.

As his father rolled down the window, he let his son know he'd been drafted by the Royals, just one pick after Philadelphia in the second round.

"I was like, 'Oh, no way,'" said Gubicza, now an Angels analyst for Fox Sports West. "But then I was with my dad and he was driving and I was just thinking, 'Wow, I'm going to a team that was just in the World Series,' so that was pretty cool."

Gubicza now does work with the high school baseball program at Chaminade High School in southern California, in addition to his broadcast work, and marveled at the differences in the draft over the years.

"At that point, it was almost more of a cat-and-mouse game, where you had no idea who was drafting you and your expectations were that you weren't going to know which pick you were going to be," Gubicza said. "Now, you have a pretty good idea about everything from signability and slot value and all these different things in terms of money."

"The information they gather is just mind-boggling. Before they'd see you as a projection, just based off what you looked like, and see what the eye test said, as opposed to all these different computers out there."

Five years before Gubicza, another Pennsylvania high schooler, a catcher, was also playing stickball with his friends. He'd had plans to go to college, hopefully to play baseball there and maybe, just maybe, be able to go pro. When he got home, his father informed him of the news.

He, Mike Scioscia, was a first-round pick of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

"I wasn't even aware the draft was that day," said Scioscia, now the manager of the Angels.

The Dodgers didn't even call to try to get Scioscia, the 19th overall pick, to sign. Nevertheless, he did, earning a pair of All-Star appearances and winning two World Series before going into coaching. Since 2000, he's been the manager of the Angels, making him the longest-tenured manager with a single club active in the big leagues.

The changes since Scioscia took the job with the Angels, let alone from when he was playing, are massive.

"It's totally changed," Scioscia said.

"There's much more detailed evaluations you can do on players now, much more biomechanical tests, strength tests that you can look at that are helping scouting directors and organizations gauge the upside and the athleticism of players. It's gotten more intense as the years have gone on. I think now, when teams get to their first-round selection, they're pretty sure about the players that they like."



Had Scioscia been a prospect in say, 2009, like Mike Trout, or 2018, would he have made the drive to Studio 42 to see his name called in person?

“I only had one suit, and one pair of slacks and they didn’t even match, so I’m probably glad I wasn’t,” he quipped.

## **Buy, Sell or Hold? How every MLB team should spend their next two months**

By Jim Bowden

Most major-league general managers tend to break the season down into three parts. The first two months, in April and May, they get to know their team — are they contenders, or do they need to start rebuilding? And what are the organization’s precise acquisition needs? The next two months, June and July, are used to prepare, negotiate and try to make any trades necessary either to contend, to improve chances of winning in the postseason, to rebuild for future years, or sometimes just to maintain the status quo. Then in the final two months of August and September, GMs are preparing for final waiver trades, September call-ups, roster tweaks, postseason rosters, or starting to play younger players to benefit them down the road.

So, with two months of the season gone, and the draft over, it’s a good time to look at all 30 teams to see how each of them should be spending their next two months.

### **AL EAST**

#### **Baltimore Orioles**

##### **BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The Orioles are in last place in the division, already 23 games out of first place and 18.5 games out of a wild-card berth. They have several key free agents, including Manny Machado, Adam Jones, Zach Britton and Brad Brach. If they can’t extend those players’ contracts by July 31, they should trade all of them by the deadline. Of course, Machado will be the headliner, with the most likely landing spots being the Phillies, Cubs, Braves or Cardinals.

#### **Boston Red Sox**

##### **BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The first place Red Sox are in for a tight pennant race all year long with the New York Yankees, and the team that wins at the trade deadline might very well win the division. The Red Sox don’t have a lot of holes on their team, but like every other contender, they could benefit from more bullpen depth.

#### **New York Yankees**

**BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Yankees have the most power of any team in baseball, with arguably the best and deepest bullpen in the game. However, their one glaring need is in their starting rotation where they could use a No. 2-type starter after ace Luis Severino at the top of their rotation. Cole Hamels, Michael Fulmer, Brad Hand and Chris Archer are already names being bandied in the industry as possible targets.

**Tampa Bay Rays****BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The Rays have been selling since spring training, including the trades of Stephen Souza Jr. to the Diamondbacks, Corey Dickerson to the Pirates and most recently Alex Colomé to the Mariners. Next on the agenda will probably be catcher Wilson Ramos, who is in his free-agent year. In addition, despite their denials, the Rays will likely have to listen on their top two pitchers, Chris Archer and Blake Snell, just in case someone (like the Yankees) wants to make them an offer so lopsided in their favor that they have to make a deal.

**Toronto Blue Jays****BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The Blue Jays had the starting rotation to legitimately contend for a wild-card berth, but sub-par years by Marcus Stroman, Aaron Sanchez and Marco Estrada have really dimmed their chances. Combine that with the legal problems of their impact closer Roberto Osuna and the Blue Jays should probably go into sell mode. The most likely candidates to be traded by the deadline are third baseman Josh Donaldson and pitchers J.A. Happ and Estrada, who are all eligible for free agency after the season.

**AL CENTRAL****Chicago White Sox****BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The White Sox are in full sell mode as their rebuilding program is well underway. José Abreu has the most trade value, but it's doubtful the ChiSox will move him unless they are overwhelmed. They really don't have much else to offer contending teams unless someone wants to take a chance on a member of their bullpen that includes relievers Luis Avilán, Nate Jones, Bruce Rondón and Joakim Soria. They'll try to move starter James Shields, too, but it's doubtful there will be any takers.

**Cleveland Indians****BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Indians should have already run away with the division, but their bullpen has been a complete disaster outside of closer Cody Allen and set-up reliever Andrew Miller, who is on the disabled list with a knee injury. The rest of their 'pen doesn't have a reliever with an ERA under 5.06. This aspect of the

team must be improved by the trade deadline if the Indians have any hopes of getting through the first round of the playoffs. Trade targets could include Raisel Iglesias of the Reds, Nate Jones of the White Sox, Jake Diekman of the Rangers, Shane Greene of the Tigers or Craig Stammen of the Padres.

### **Detroit Tigers**

#### **BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The Tigers have exceeded expectations a bit, thanks in part to the strong leadership of manager Ron Gardenhire. But that won't stop them from selling at the trade deadline and continuing their rebuilding program in earnest. The Tigers don't want to trade starter Michael Fulmer, preferring to rebuild around him. However, if they get a chance to "win" a trade for him, they'll have to consider it for the long-term benefit of the team. They're expected to move veteran left-handed starter Francisco Liriano and closer Shane Greene by July 31 for the best prospects packages they can get.

### **Kansas City Royals**

#### **BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The Royals made the mistake of not "selling" at last year's trade deadline, but they can make up for it this year by moving significant pieces, including impact closer Kelvin Herrera, third baseman Mike Moustakas (who continues to rake), and maybe even starter Danny Duffy, who has just started to pitch better. The Royals should be able to garner significant prospects for that trio.

### **Minnesota Twins**

#### **BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Twins are good enough to contend with the Indians for the division and also for the second wild-card berth, especially if they can get four of their most important bats going: Byron Buxton, Miguel Sanó, Logan Morrison and Brian Dozier, all of whom have struggled. The Twins need to attempt to improve their catching situation, which is a little short after the season-ending injury to Jason Castro. Perhaps a trade for the Dodgers' Austin Barnes, the Red Sox's Blake Swihart or the Rays' Wilson Ramos might make sense.

### **AL WEST**

#### **Houston Astros**

#### **BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Astros are the defending World Champions and are the favorites to repeat thanks to the best and deepest starting rotation in baseball. However, that doesn't mean they have a perfect team. They could still use an impact closer and a left-handed specialist. Their top trade targets should include Kelvin Herrera of the Royals, Brad Hand of the Padres and Raisel Iglesias of the Reds.

#### **Los Angeles Angels**

**BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Angels are a top-5 team in terms of runs scored in the AL with the Red Sox, Yankees, Astros and Indians, and are third in the league in team ERA behind only the Astros and Red Sox. If Ian Kinsler can't turn his season around, they could certainly use an upgrade in the leadoff spot and, like everyone else, could use another starter and reliever.

**Oakland Athletics****BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The Athletics' rebuilding program is going well and they're good enough to win more than they lose this year. However, they're still destined to finish behind the Astros, Mariners and Angels in the difficult AL West. Their lineup is good enough to contend, but it's their starting pitching that needs to improve for them to be legitimate contenders in 2019. Jed Lowrie will be their best player to offer in trades at the deadline, with the A's hoping to get good starting pitching prospects back in that type of trade.

**Seattle Mariners****BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Mariners are "all in" as shown by their aggressive trade last week with the Tampa Bay Rays that landed them reliever Alex Colomé and outfielder Denard Span. The next trade target for GM Jerry Dipoto between now and the July 31 trade deadline will probably be a starting pitcher, although that could depend on where they are in the standings at that time. The Mariners have the longest playoff drought of any team in professional sports, but have a chance this year for at least the second wild-card spot.

**Texas Rangers****BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The Texas Rangers have already said publicly they are in "sell" mode and their top assets to trade include starting pitcher Cole Hamels and veteran third baseman Adrián Beltré. However, they'll probably be open to listening to offers on most of their players outside of emerging outfielder Nomar Mazara. This is not a good team overall and a lot of work is needed in all aspects to turn things around. This could include them considering to move some of their solid young core like Joey Gallo, Rougned Odor and Elvis Andrus.

**NL EAST****Atlanta Braves****BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Braves arrived a year early in the division race. GM Alex Anthopoulos is not afraid to deal, as he proved when he was with the Toronto Blue Jays when he traded for both David Price and Troy

Tulowitzki at the July 2015 trade deadline, which helped lead the Jays to the NLCS that season. The Braves have one of the best farm systems in baseball, loaded with starting pitching prospects, and literally will be able to land any big name that is traded if they are set on it. A top-of-the-rotation type starter and a proven closer are the two needs that, if filled, could put this team over the top. I wouldn't rule out a trade for Manny Machado, either, if the prospect price becomes reasonable enough, even though they have top third baseman prospect Austin Riley waiting in the wings at Class AAA.

### **Miami Marlins**

#### **BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The Miami Marlins refuse to call what they are doing "rebuilding" — which is fine. Who cares about semantics? But they need to continue to trade to supplement their drafting and international signings as they build this team up from where it is now — clearly the bottom. The Marlins can continue to dangle catcher J.T. Realmuto, who they will only trade for a gigantic return, especially after the low returns they got in the Giancarlo Stanton, Marcell Ozuna, Dee Gordon and Christian Yelich trades. However, it's more likely they find trade partners for starting pitcher Dan Straily or second baseman Starlin Castro.

### **New York Mets**

#### **BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The Mets are likely a sub-.500 team. Their farm system is barren, and three of the teams in their division — the Nationals, Phillies and Braves — now have better major- and minor-league teams than the Mets. Therefore, they should have no untouchables at the trade deadline, and that includes Jacob deGrom, Noah Syndergaard, Yoenis Céspedes, Jay Bruce, Asdrúbal Cabrera and Todd Frazier. This team needs to sell while they still have trade assets with peak values, or it might end up being a longer rebuilding program than they're anticipating.

### **Philadelphia Phillies**

#### **BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Phillies are for real, and have a legitimate shot at both the division and a wild-card spot. Their pitching staff is third in the NL in ERA, and they're sixth in the league in runs scored. They could use one more big bat for the middle of their lineup to really put them over the top; targeting Manny Machado of the Orioles would certainly make sense, and would put them in a much stronger position for both the regular and postseason.

### **Washington Nationals**

#### **BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Nationals are still the team to beat in the division thanks to their strong starting rotation, led by Max Scherzer, Stephen Strasburg, Gio González and Tanner Roark. They've dealt with injuries to Daniel Murphy, Adam Eaton, Ryan Zimmerman, Jeremy Hellickson, Howie Kendrick and Matt Wieters

extremely well thanks to the shrewd moves by GM Mike Rizzo, who built a strong bench and pitching depth with the acquisition of players like Mark Reynolds and Matt Adams. The Nationals don't have a lot of needs, but believe me they'll be buying whenever they find a way to improve the team, whether it's by inches, feet or yards. Second base, bullpen depth or a No. 5 starter upgrade is definitely possible here with the Reds' Raisel Iglesias and Scooter Gennett as possible matches.

## **NL CENTRAL**

### **Chicago Cubs**

#### **BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Cubs lead their division in both ERA and runs scored, but find themselves in second place behind the Brewers by 2 games and ahead of the Cardinals by 1.5 games. It looks like this is going to be a tight division. The Cubs need a healthy Yu Darvish, and need him to pitch up to his contract, for them to win the Central. They have enough talent on this team to win with what they have, but that won't stop the Cubs from buying at the trade deadline. Although the Manny Machado rumors have recently been silenced by the front office, I still expect them to make a run for him at the deadline. The Cubs previous deadline trade for Aroldis Chapman was an important move to help them win a World Series, even at the cost of future superstar Gleyber Torres. Theo Epstein and Jed Hoyer's long track record of success says they'll be buying again in July whether it's for a bat, starter, reliever or bench help.

### **Cincinnati Reds**

#### **BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The Reds have little choice but to make everyone available at the trade deadline, as they have as much work to do to turn the franchise around as any team in baseball. Their best trade asset is reliever Raisel Iglesias, but they should be able to get strong offers for players like second baseman Scooter Gennett or any one of their outfielders, including Billy Hamilton, Adam Duvall and Scott Schebler. The only players on the major-league roster that they will probably hesitate to move are first baseman Joey Votto (who in any case has no-trade rights and doesn't want to be traded); third baseman Eugenio Suárez (who they just signed long-term); and Gold Glove-catcher Tucker Barnhart (who is important for developing their young pitching staff).

### **Milwaukee Brewers**

#### **BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Brewers have a legitimate shot at the division title, even if they don't make any moves between now and the deadline. Their biggest need, like so many teams, is a top-of-the-rotation starter, but it's unlikely they'll trade the prospect package it will take to get it one. Another way to solve it might just be with the return of a healthy Jimmy Nelson from the disabled list. They *might* even start to think about moving their best pitcher, Josh Hader, to the rotation, where he could develop into a Chris Sale-type of

ace. Of course, if they do the latter, they'll have to trade for a couple relievers to replace Hader's present bullpen value.

### **Pittsburgh Pirates**

#### **BUY OR SELL: SELL**

Pirates fans probably don't want to hear this, but the team's best move at the deadline is probably going to be to sell, in an effort to continue to stay a contender over the next several years. The Pirates could dangle one of their four outfielders — Gregory Polanco, Starling Marte, Corey Dickerson or Austin Meadows — especially if they can land an upgrade to their starting rotation. They also have several other veteran players who they could dangle, like shortstop Jordy Mercer, who's in his free-agent year; starter Ivan Nova; infielder Sean Rodriguez or third baseman/first baseman David Freese. The Pirates did well in making other unpopular deadline trades, like swapping Mark Melancon to the Nationals a few years back for Felipe Vázquez when they were still contending. It won't surprise me if history repeats itself this July.

### **St. Louis Cardinals**

#### **BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The St. Louis Cardinals are capable of getting back to the playoffs, thanks to a tremendous job of rebuilding their starting rotation through their farm system with the development of Alex Reyes, Luke Weaver and Jack Flaherty, along with their shrewd signing of pitcher Miles Mikolas — possibly the game's best offseason free-agent value — who they landed after he had another successful year pitching in Japan. The Cardinals have enough in their farm system, along with outfield depth at the major-league level, to trade for one more infield impact bat that could make a huge difference in their chances of winning the division. Possible trade targets include: Mike Moustakas of the Royals; Josh Donaldson of the Blue Jays; and yes, even Manny Machado of the Orioles.

### **NL WEST**

#### **Arizona Diamondbacks**

#### **BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Diamondbacks were the best team in the National League in April — then completely fell apart when the calendar hit May, losing more games than anyone in the league. Their offense completely collapsed as Paul Goldschmidt seemingly forgot how to hit; A.J. Pollock went on the disabled list after having an MVP-type April; Stephen Souza Jr. went back on the DL with a pectoral injury after hitting only one home run on the year; Jake Lamb, though back from a shoulder injury, is still hitting only .207; and David Peralta hasn't been much better, now at .209. The Diamondbacks can only hope to stay close in the pennant race until they get Pollock and Souza back from the DL and find a way to get Goldschmidt, Lamb and Peralta hitting the way they're capable of. The D-Backs will be buying at the deadline, but it's too early to predict what their biggest need is going to be.

**Colorado Rockies****BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Rockies haven't been able to truly take advantage of the poor starts by the Dodgers and Diamondbacks, but have proven early on that they'll once again be able to compete with them. As expected, Nolan Arenado, Charlie Blackmon and Trevor Story have led the way offensively for the Rockies, but the rest of the offense has been disappointing. Both Ian Desmond and Carlos González look like their decline years have arrived. Their starting pitching has been solid and Wade Davis has been lights-out as closer, while Adam Ottavino — until going on the DL — was dominant. However, the rest of the bullpen overall has been a disappointment, and like just about everyone else, they could use more bullpen depth. The Rockies could also certainly use another bat, preferably at first base, where they are last in baseball in offensive production. They'll be buyers at the deadline.

**Los Angeles Dodgers****BUY OR SELL: BUY**

The Dodgers could have easily been buried in the standings by now after they started the year with injuries to Corey Seager, Justin Turner, Logan Forsythe, Rich Hill and Clayton Kershaw, combined with slow starts by Yasiel Puig, Chris Taylor, Cody Bellinger and even Kenley Jansen. However, the rest of the division wasn't able to create real separation in the standings, and now the Dodgers are getting healthier (though Clayton Kershaw is back on the DL) and their veteran players are starting to perform back at their accustomed levels. In addition, the Dodgers' young pitchers, including Walker Buehler, Ross Stripling and Dennis Santana, look ready to make their mark, which helps give the Dodgers a legitimate shot at winning the division yet again — even with Seager out for the year after undergoing Tommy John surgery. They'll be an interesting team to watch at the trade deadline, and although I'm not expecting them to make a big move like they did last year with Darvish, I do think they'll do their usual fine-tuning, with multiple trades, as long as they can hold on to all of their very top prospects. They are committed to staying under the luxury tax threshold because they want to be in a position to bid on free agents in this year's class, which includes Bryce Harper, Charlie Morton, A.J. Pollock and Patrick Corbin.

**San Diego Padres****BUY OR SELL: SELL**

The Padres will once again be selling over the next couple of months as they continue to rebuild from the bottom up. This year, although they don't want to trade him, they might consider moving Brad Hand if they get overwhelmed by an offer. Left-handed hitters have one hit off him the entire season. A team like the Astros, Red Sox or Braves could really use him, and if the Padres could get a package of top prospects for him, they'd have to consider it. More likely, the players that they trade will include left-handed starting pitcher Clayton Richard and right-hander Tyson Ross, who's having a nice comeback season. They might even consider trading Wil Myers when he comes off the disabled list or one of their bevy of other outfielders.



## San Francisco Giants

### BUY OR SELL: BUY

The Giants probably *should* be selling and doing an all-out rebuild, but ownership and the front office are committed to trying to stay in contention this year, and trying to reboot the team without having to trade any of their core players. With Madison Bumgarner coming off the DL and no teams in the West pulling away, it's likely the Giants will give this team a chance to compete all year. The front office track record is as good as any team over the last quarter of a century at trade deadlines, so I'd expect them to make at least one significant addition.

## FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

### Mike Scioscia says managing Ohtani has been easy so far

Mike Scioscia says managing Shohei Ohtani has been easy so far, as a baseball experiment unlike any other continues for the Los Angeles Angels.

The Angels manager appeared on the "PodcastOne Sports Now" show to talk about handling the Japanese star. He also discusses his first major league hit with co-hosts Tim Dahlberg and Jim Litke and says he doesn't think there's anything wrong with the way baseball is being played these days.

Dahlberg and Litke disagree, and make some suggestions that could make baseball more relevant to the younger generation. They include shortening games, limiting pitching changes and calling strikes between the letters and knees, as the rules specify.

The latest edition of the podcast takes listeners to France to listen to AP Tennis Writer Howard Fendrich discuss the injury that derailed Serena Williams, and to Cleveland where the AP's Tim Reynolds weighs in on whether the Cavaliers have any chance of turning their NBA finals series around.

There's also hockey talk with the AP's Stephen Whyno from the Stanley Cup finals series, and a discussion of the merits — of lack thereof — of bare knuckle fighting.

And, back on the show after a brief absence is a discussion of Korean barbeque.

### Trout helps lift Angels to 9-6 win over Royals

By Dan Greenspan

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Give the Los Angeles Angels enough opportunities and they find ways to score runs.

It's a lesson they have taught the Kansas City Royals plenty of times this season.

Mike Trout had three hits, including a tiebreaking RBI single in the eighth inning, and the Angels beat the Royals 9-6 on Monday night.

"I thought we did a good job in the batter's box all night, and you have to when you're down 5-2 and you come back," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said.

Trout scored three runs and drove in two, Justin Upton and Albert Pujols also had two RBIs, and Jefry Marte went 4 for 4 with a solo home run to help the Angels improve to 4-0 against the Royals this season. Los Angeles has scored at least five runs in each of the wins.

Tim Hill (1-2) couldn't handle a bouncing comeback up the middle from Trout, and the ball had enough on it to carry to center field and allow Maldonado to score for the 7-6 lead.

"That was kind of a crazy one. That guy was pretty funky," Trout said of the hit that produced his 39th RBI. "Once I got the two strikes, I was just trying to put it in play."

Upton and Pujols each contributed run-scoring singles to add to the lead.

Cam Bedrosian (2-1) pitched a perfect eighth to get the win. Blake Parker got the last three outs, striking out Jorge Soler with a runner on first for his fourth save and the Angels' third win in four games.

"That's a team," said Angels starter Nick Tropeano, who gave up five runs in 4 2/3 innings. "We're going to pick each other up, and the offense did it huge. Bullpen picked me up huge, and we got the win, so that's good."

After Soler's two-run double pushed the Royals' lead to 5-2 in the fifth, Upton homered for the second straight game to pull the Angels within two in the bottom of the inning.

Marte added his third homer to start a three-run sixth. Trout drove in Shohei Ohtani, who hit a pinch-hit single, to tie the score 5-5. Pujols gave the Angels a 6-5 lead on a single that scored Trout for his 1,949th career RBI.

However, Salvador Perez tied it with a solo home run to left-center in the seventh.

Mike Moustakas, Alcides Escobar and Jon Jay each had an RBI for the Royals.

"We scored some runs early and I liked our at-bats early," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "Offensively, it's one of those nights where I feel like I don't really lament any opportunities missed."

#### MARTE MASHES

Marte ended an 0-for-16 skid by getting hits in each of his four at-bats, and Scioscia hopes to get more consistency from the backup first baseman.

“This guy, really, he’s got a great approach, especially against left-handed pitching,” Scioscia said. “We saw it a couple years ago and hasn’t really quite surfaced, but you saw it tonight with a great night and hopefully a sign of better things to come.”

#### TIMELY OHTANI

Ohtani had been struggling in his last nine games as the designated hitter, going 5 for 29 (.172), but he came up big in his first pinch-hit appearance at home.

“Got the rally started, so a good time for that there,” Scioscia said of Ohtani, who is 2 for 4 as a pinch-hitter.

Pujols went 2 for 4 as the DH in place of Ohtani, who will make next start as a pitcher Wednesday.

#### TRAINER’S ROOM

Angels: With Kole Calhoun (strained oblique) on the 10-day disabled list, Scioscia said he is comfortable rotating between Chris Young, Michael Hermosillo and Kaleb Cowart in right field. “We can mix-and-match a little bit, and just hopefully hold the fort down until Kole gets back,” Scioscia said.

#### UP NEXT

Rangers: RHP Brad Keller (1-1, 2.13 ERA) will make his first career road start Tuesday. Keller gave up one run in three innings of an 11-8 win over Minnesota in his first start on Wednesday, and the 22-year old has a 2.19 ERA in 11 relief appearances on the road this season.

Angels: LHP Andrew Heaney (2-4, 3.66) has lost two of his last three starts, giving up five runs and eight hits in five innings of a 6-2 defeat at Detroit on Thursday.

**FROM NBC SPORTS**

## And That Happened: Monday’s Scores and Highlights

By Craig Calcaterra

It was a slow night, as Major League Baseball cleared most of the decks so as not to interfere with the draft. Which, being honest, is not a great bit of entertainment so it’s not likely to draw many eyes. I don’t blame them, but on the whole, they probably should’ve just scheduled more games. Oh well.

**Here are the scores**, here are the highlights:

**Angels 9, Royals 6:** **Mike Trout** had three hits, scored three times and knocked in two, and broke a tie in the eighth inning with an RBI single. **Justin Upton** and **Albert Pujols** each drove in two themselves and **Jefry Marte** went 4-for-4 with a solo home run. Trout is on a 50-homer, 138-run pace and has, by far, the highest OPS of his career so far this year. He has two MVPs already — should probably have four

— and is having his best season of his career. They often say “you’re gonna tell your grandkids about him” but your grandkids are gonna obviously know who he is. Spend your time telling them about someone they’ll forget in fifty years. Like, I dunno, **Craig Gentry**. No, I have no idea what you’ll tell them about Craig Gentry. They’re not my grandkids, you figure it out.

**Yankees 7, Tigers 4; Tigers 4, Yankees 2:** **Austin Romine** hit a three-run homer in the first one and is now, somehow, hitting .373/.456/.661. Someone on Twitter yesterday asked me if, in light of him suddenly turning into Yogi Berra, the Yankees should trade **Gary Sanchez**. I am mostly sure they were just being sarcastic. But just mostly. **Luis Severino**, Meanwhile, struck out 10 in eight innings because that’s just what he does, seemingly every dang game he pitches. Wins don’t matter, but that was his ninth and he’s on a 26-win pace right now which I thought wasn’t supposed to happen anymore. The Tigers won the nightcap, thanks in part to them striking out **Aaron Judge** five times. He struck out three times in the first game. Those eight Ks in a twin bill is a new record. Yay? In other news, **Giancarlo Stanton** got hit in the face by **Mike Fiers** a few years back, putting him out for a long, long time with facial injuries. Fiers plunked Stanton in the arm last night. You can imagine that Stanton didn’t care for that too much. Stanton also hit a homer off of Fiers so I guess it’s all good.

**Giants 10, Diamondbacks 3:** **Andrew McCutchen** and **Brandon Crawford** hit back-to-back bombs to start off the fourth inning and **Alen Hanson** and **Buster Posey** each added two-run doubles in that seven-run frame. That effectively ended the contest. With the win, the Giants are back to .500. Two games separate the top four teams in the NL West. The Last place Padres are only 4.5 out. No one has covered themselves with glory in that division this year, but it may be an entertaining race at least.

**Padres 11, Braves 4:** **Cory Spangenberg**, Raffy Lopez, **Eric Hosmer** and **Franmil Reyes** all went deep as the Padres keep up their winning ways. They really thumped Atlanta pitching too, with nine of their 13 hits going for extra bases. Some of that was due to Braves starter **Julio Teheran** coming out of the game early with a bruised thumb, making way for reliever **Luiz Gohara** who came in and promptly allowed six runs on six hits. To be fair, though, Teheran wasn’t exactly setting the world afire himself.

*FROM ESPN.COM*

## Mike Trout’s biggest assist? Helping ‘Sho-Time’ get started

By Jerry Crasnick

Shohei Ohtani traveled more than 5,000 miles from his home in Japan in his quest to make history as a two-way player in the major leagues, so it was only natural for him to feel a knot in his stomach and the burden of expectations several hours before his pitching debut with the Los Angeles Angels.

The tension lingered until Ohtani boarded the bus from the team hotel for the drive to Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum on April 1. As he reached the final step, a voice from the back pierced the silence with a Michael Buffer-like “It’s Sho-Time!” Ohtani burst into a smile, and the entire bus erupted in laughter.

To no one's surprise, the voice from the cheap seats belonged to Mike Trout, future Hall of Famer and the Angels' resident social director.

Since Trout's first full season in the majors in 2012, he has built an airtight case for the designation of Major League Baseball's best player. He has made six straight All-Star Games and finished first or second in Most Valuable Player balloting five times, and he's laying the foundation for a third MVP award even as Mookie Betts and others provide some spirited competition.

Trout's teammates, while appreciative of his greatness, are less than awed by his presence because he's so approachable and gosh-darned authentic. Back home in Millville, New Jersey, the folks at Jim's Lunch, the Razor's Edge barber shop and the Elks Lodge still regard the game's best player as "Mikey." In Anaheim, Trout has the same galvanizing effect on the clubhouse, with his diva-free approach to baseball and life.

"I didn't see Mike play in Little League, but everybody says he's the same guy," said Craig Landis, Trout's agent. "When he was 10 years old, he was the best player, and all he wanted was to win the game and then go get pizza and ice cream with his buddies. That was the perfect day in Mike Trout's life. Fast-forward through all the levels to the major leagues, and though the stakes are much higher, he still acts much the same way. Mike's perfect day is still to win the game and enjoy it with his buddies."

This year, Trout was challenged to take another step in his progression as a leader when general manager Billy Eppler surrounded him with enough talent for the Angels to make a push for their first postseason berth since 2014. While Angels fans have reason to feel let down by the team's 33-28 record, no one would dare lay it on the performance of the two most prominent players.

Trout leads the majors with a 5.3 WAR and 19 homers and ranks among the MLB leaders in runs, stolen bases and numerous other categories. Ohtani is 4-1 with a 3.18 ERA and 11.3 strikeouts per nine innings as a pitcher, and he has a .907 OPS as a hitter. In a season noteworthy for teammate Albert Pujols' 3,000th career hit and the upcoming Hall of Fame induction of former Angel Vladimir Guerrero, Trout and Ohtani are the two most compelling reasons to watch the Angels.

While Ohtani continues to wow Trout with his versatility, Trout has helped create a more welcoming, congenial environment to hasten Ohtani's transition. It's the least he can do, given Ohtani's commitment to improve.

"We see him when he comes in, and he wants to work," Trout said. "He wants to get better at pitching and hitting. As a team, we're a big family here, so we want to make him feel comfortable."

The roots for baseball's best buddy movie began to take hold in December, when the Angels enlisted Trout in their effort to beat six other finalists for Ohtani. Trout connected with Ohtani via FaceTime and gave his recruiting pitch, and he was at his wedding rehearsal dinner when he learned that Ohtani had signed with the team.

"He basically explained to me how great the Angels were," Ohtani said at his introductory news conference in Anaheim. "He said we have a great clubhouse and how much he would enjoy having me here. I took those words to heart, and I'm here."

Ohtani elicited some laughs during the news conference, when he joked that he was hoping to wear Trout's No. 27 jersey. In spring training, Trout commandeered a golf cart and buzzed around the grounds at Tempe Diablo Stadium with Ohtani riding shotgun and teammates Justin Upton and Kole Calhoun in the back. Trout added a comedic flourish when he turned the steering wheel and threatened to take out a group of photographers who were following Ohtani around camp.

"I think that kind of symbolizes the type of friendship they have," said Grace McNamee, the Angels' Japanese media liaison. "Mike has done a really great job breaking the ice for Shohei, and he's such a great role model. Here's somebody who's such a great player and super successful in the major leagues, and he's so humble and kind and fun. You can see a connection between the two."

Trout referred to his new teammate as "Shohei" before shortening it to "Showy." When Ohtani decided to ditch his pronounced leg kick at the plate, hitting coaches Eric Hinske and Paul Sorrento worked with him to find a quicker trigger mechanism, and Trout offered some suggestions. People around the team have also noted that Ohtani -- conscious of Trout's flair for fan outreach and accessibility -- has been quicker to mingle with fans and sign autographs in recent weeks.

The synergy between the two stars is largely unspoken. Trout and the other Angels have tried to mix some Japanese phrases into the conversation, with minimal success.

"Everything I say, he just laughs," Trout said. "I don't know if he even knows what I'm saying. But he's a good dude."

McNamee, when pressed on Ohtani's grasp of English, can think of only one phrase that's printable.

"I think he knows how to say 'weak sauce,'" she said with a laugh. "I don't know if Mike is the one who taught him."

When the Angels signed Ohtani, it was intriguing to contemplate how the two elite talents would play off each other. One school of thought: Ohtani might ease the burden on Trout because he would siphon some of the attention that typically falls on Trout as the Angels' franchise face.

That has been true, to a point. But Trout still doesn't receive as much national acclaim as his talent and achievements warrant. He plays on the West Coast, for the second-most popular team in the Los Angeles market, for an organization that has played a total of three postseason games during his tenure. When MLB released its list of best-selling jerseys in October, Trout ranked eighth. According to the latest sales figures from MLBShop.com, Ohtani ranks eighth in jersey sales this season, and Trout is 11th.

Trout's milquetoast public image helps feed the narrative that he's bland. Fans know that Trout is unfailingly pleasant, signs autographs with the best of them, dabbles in meteorology and roots for Philadelphia sports teams. But Trout generally speaks in clichés in his media interviews, and he plays baseball with old-school sensibilities and an aversion to showmanship.

"That's why he doesn't get attention," Angels second baseman Ian Kinsler said. "He's not flipping his hair. He's not flinging bats everywhere or smacking his hands and throwing dirt and pounding his chest. He's just playing baseball, man. He comes to win the game, to be the best he can be, and that's it."

When onlookers shower Trout with compliments, he'll shuffle his feet and change the subject. Self-aggrandizement is not high on his list of priorities. One recent winter, Trout was scheduled to appear on the MLB Network as a finalist for the AL MVP Award. As the TV cameras set up in his house, Trout texted home with assurances that he would return in plenty of time from his hunting trip. He arrived in time for the broadcast but not before making the studio hosts and technicians squirm a little bit.

"Every time you put a stat out there, he's either compared to Joe DiMaggio or Ted Williams or Mickey Mantle or Willie Mays, or he's beyond them," said Mark Gubicza, the Angels' TV color man. "You almost laugh because it's not even a human being when you see what he's doing. But you can't even say those type things to him because it won't get a whole lot out of him. He'll just change the subject and say, 'Hey, man, the Eagles made a pretty good pickup.' Or 'Trust the process.' It's pretty funny."

Trout's public persona is a world removed from his demeanor in the clubhouse. Angels teammates and club employees describe him as a prankster and incessant trash-talker. He's the driving force behind NCAA March Madness pools and fantasy football drafts, and he's quick to corral everyone from teammates to coaches to the media relations staff to play H-O-R-S-E on the portable hoop in the clubhouse. When the Angels have spring training golf outings or postgame barbecues, he's invariably part of the dynamic.

Everything in Trout's world turns into a competition. Reliever Blake Parker said the Angels were taking the bus to Yankee Stadium during a recent series in New York when Trout began playing around with some city signs and a game of "competitive naming" broke out. Two years ago, Gubicza was dragging his luggage into Angel Stadium before a road trip when he felt a commotion and a noise behind him. He turned to see Trout and pitcher Garrett Richards whipping along on electric scooters and laughing as they nearly steamrolled him.

"They're major leaguers, and they're racing to see who would get to the locker room first," Gubicza said. "I felt like I was watching my son."

Trout's inclusive approach transcends racial and ethnic barriers. The Angels' 25-man roster includes players from the U.S., Venezuela, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Curacao and now Japan, and everyone is part of Trout's orbit. Teammates don't have to understand all the dialogue to be amused by his running banter with Richards, his former minor league roommate and good buddy.

"He's not safe in here because he's Mike Trout," Upton said. "Everybody is on the same even playing field in here. He gives it, and he takes it, too. Whatever the topic is, he'll go at somebody, and they're going right back at him."

"When your best player brings energy, it helps the entire clubhouse. You can be the greatest player in the world and not talk to anybody or just come here and play the game and go home, but that doesn't help anybody else get better. The way he approaches it -- and the energy he brings to the clubhouse -- that definitely helps."

Gubicza, who was a longtime Kansas City Royals pitcher, has bonded with Trout over their mutual affinity for Philadelphia sports. Gubicza is a product of Penn Charter, the same high school that produced Matt Ryan and Ruben Amaro Jr., among others, and he shares the same passion and fatalism as Trout, whose boyhood home in Millville is less than an hour from Philly.

They've cultivated certain rituals through the years. During football season, Gubicza will monitor the Eagles' score and pass along updates to Trout in the dugout or on-deck circle with a thumbs-up or by flapping his wings. Trout responds with a fist pump or reciprocal wing flap.

During an off-day last August, Trout took Gubicza to an Eagles preseason game as a birthday gift, and they stood on the sideline at Lincoln Financial Field when the Eagles ran out to play Buffalo.

"I'll never forget this," Gubicza said. "Carson Wentz and Zach Ertz are walking up and giving him hugs, and Malcolm Jenkins comes over and gives him a fist bump. I'm like, 'Are you kidding me?' Even though it's a preseason game, they're going into battle, and you never know how they're going to react. And they're running out of the tunnel and giving him hugs."

Before the Eagles played New England in the Super Bowl, Trout was on the flight to Minnesota with his father, brother and friends when the plane broke into an impromptu rendition of "Fly Eagles Fly." He sang along with the crowd and recorded the moment and texted it to Gubicza.

That lack of pretense is manifested in countless daily interactions at the ballpark. Angels officials tell stories of fans who flag down Trout for photos at spring training, fumble with their phones in his presence and gratefully allow him to take the phone and shoot the selfie. YouTube is filled with clips of young fans tearing up with joy after individual encounters with Trout.

"Other than Cal Ripken, I've never seen anybody that good at understanding how much you can make someone's day or life if you just take a moment to go over and say hi," Gubicza said. "It's not like he just signs for the kid, the dad, the mom or daughter and doesn't even look at them. He makes eye contact and makes people feel as if they're friends."

"People say, 'Well, he doesn't have much personality,' and I say, 'You just don't know him.' He's still a kid, and he acts like a kid, and that's what makes him so much fun to be around."

In this pivotal season for the Angels, Trout and Ohtani are linked by their transcendent skills and ambitious agendas. While one player probes the limits of a novel international experiment, the other is consumed with putting the finishing touches on perfection.

Each year, Trout identifies a personal shortcoming or two and vows to get better. One of his goals this year was to play better defense. Two months into the season, he's tied for fourth among MLB center fielders with plus-7 defensive runs saved. He also wanted to be more disciplined at laying off high fastballs this season. He has done that well enough to amass more walks (51) than strikeouts (48) through his first 60 games.

"We all work hard," Kinsler said. "We all prepare. If there's one thing different about Mike, it's his mental sharpness. He always seems ready. He always seems on top of it. He always seems to be in his own zone. In sports, they say, 'The guy is in a zone.' Or in basketball it's, 'This guy is unconscious shooting.' Mike stays in that frame of mind, always. That's probably the one thing that sets him apart."

Trout has found a kindred spirit in Ohtani, whose work ethic and single-mindedness have given him some extra latitude in the clubhouse. When manager Mike Scioscia gives Ohtani a day off or delays one of his starts because of "workload management," the other Angels refrain from grousing or rolling their



eyes because they understand the physical, mental and emotional demands of his two-pronged assault on baseball tradition.

"You just forget that he's a pitcher when he's hitting, and when he's pitching, you forget that he's a hitter," Kinsler said. "When you take a step back and look at the situation, you realize he's doing something super special."

Kinsler is quick to correct the public perception that Ohtani is trying to do something unprecedented.

"He's not *trying*," Kinsler said. "He's really good at it. There are a lot of major league baseball players that could try to do that, and none of them are doing it."

It can only help Ohtani's self-esteem, credibility and comfort level to know that the team's best player is so supportive of his mission. Since that Easter Sunday in Oakland, Trout has maintained his ritual of yelling "Sho-Time!" each time the Angels' new international sensation boards the bus.

As long as Ohtani continues to show up and work hard, he'll be a popular figure in the Angels clubhouse. Only one offense is egregious enough to put him on the outs with Trout.

"In spring training, we were joking about some of the things Shohei liked to do in Japan, and he said he plays fantasy football," Gubicza said. "I told him, 'You better pick a bunch of Eagles, or Trout is never going to talk to you again.'"

## **FROM THE SPORTING NEWS**

### **How superstars Mike Trout, Shohei Ohtani became fast friends in L.A.**

By Travis Durkee

Luckily for Shohei Ohtani, when he decided to bring his two-way prowess to Major League Baseball he signed with an Angels team that has arguably the best player in the world, Mike Trout, to help share some of the pressure and spotlight.

And not only has Trout helped the Japanese phenom adapt to life as one of the more hyped players in baseball, but as a member of a big-league clubhouse, as well.

According to ESPN.com, Trout effortlessly made it a point to ingratiate Ohtani with the team early in spring training, as illustrated by an afternoon golf cart ride with outfielders Justin Upton and Kole Calhoun.

"I think that kind of symbolizes the type of friendship they have," Grace McNamee, the Angels' Japanese media liaison, told ESPN.com. "Mike has done a really great job breaking the ice for Shohei, and he's

such a great role model. Here's somebody who's such a great player and super successful in the major leagues, and he's so humble and kind and fun. You can see a connection between the two."

Trout said: "We see him when he comes in, and he wants to work. He wants to get better at pitching and hitting. As a team, we're a big family here, so we want to make him feel comfortable."

Ohtani has certainly appeared comfortable against top competition with a 4-1 record and 3.18 ERA on the mound, while batting .289 with six home runs and 20 RBIs. As for his English, that's still a work in progress.

"Everything I say, he just laughs," Trout said. "I don't know if he even knows what I'm saying. But he's a good dude."

According to McNamee, Ohtani has picked up on a few questionable phrases.

"I think he knows how to say 'weak sauce,'" she told ESPN.com. "I don't know if Mike is the one who taught him."

Regardless of whether or not we can blame Trout for that one, the two-time AL MVP seems to have been a great resource for Ohtani on and off the field.

## **FROM HIGH SCHOOL OVERTIME**

### **LA Angels draft Green Hope's Jordyn Adams in first round**

By Nick Stevens

**CARY, N.C.** — Green Hope High School senior Jordyn Adams will have a big decision to make soon.

Adams, a two-sport athlete at Green Hope, has signed with UNC to play football and baseball next school year, but the outfielder was drafted by Los Angeles Angels with the 17th pick in the first round on Monday.

In 24 games this season, Adams posted a .453 batting average and in 75 at bats, he had 34 hits with 15 RBIs and 29 runs scored. Adams hit one home run this season. Once on base, Adams recorded 31 stolen bases.

In the outfield, Adams had a fielding percentage of .978, putting out 42 batters on 45 chances. He also had two assists with just one error.

Adams helped Green Hope to a championship game appearance at the National High School Invitational at the USA Baseball Complex in Cary, hitting .286/.412/.500.

The question now becomes whether Adams will decide to his professional baseball career or if he will attend UNC and continue playing both football and baseball. Adams excels at both sports, named an all-American in both.

Representing football, Adams participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl in January. Last summer, he played in the Under Armour All-American Game for baseball where he hit the game-winning hit.

As a wide receiver in football last fall, Adams caught 54 passes for 1,060 yards and 12 touchdowns.

**FROM AL.COM**

## **Los Angeles Angels pick St. Luke's SS Jeremiah Jackson No. 57 overall**

By Ben Thomas

Jeremiah Jackson's life changed in an instant Monday night.

The 6-foot, 170-pound St. Luke's shortstop and Mississippi State signee was drafted No. 57 overall by the Los Angeles Angels on Monday night in the 2018 MLB First Year Player Draft.

The No. 57 pick in the 2018 draft carries with it a recommended signing bonus of \$1,196,500, according to MLB's slotting system. Jackson told AL.com he will forego his college career and play pro baseball immediately.

"We had a monetary number in mind and, if it was below that, I was going to go to college," Jackson said. "The number turned out to be above it so it was a no-brainer."

Jackson is the first Alabama high school middle infielder taken within the first three rounds of the draft since the New York Yankees took a second-round flyer on shortstop Bo Jackson - yes, that Bo Jackson - in 1982, according to MLB.com.

"This is absolutely insane," Jeremiah Jackson said. "This has been my dream and now it's here. It's just a blessing."

Jackson was the first Alabama high school player taken in the 2018 draft and the third player with state connections overall drafted. Auburn pitcher Casey Mize went No. 1 to the Detroit Tigers and South Alabama outfielder Travis Swaggerty went No. 10 to the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Jackson has been St. Luke's starting shortstop since the seventh grade and has been committed to Mississippi State since the summer before his sophomore year. In his six-year varsity career, he hit .439 with 34 home runs and 199 RBIs. He walked 152 times and helped the Wildcats to a pair of state titles.

"What sticks out to me is his tremendous bat speed and his tremendous power to all fields," said Wildcats' coach Mike Szymanski, a 30-year coaching veteran. "Jeremiah is one of these guys that just has

baseball instincts. He knows without hesitation when to take that extra base. In the field, he is so smooth and just makes unbelievable plays look routine."

As a senior, Jackson powered St. Luke's to the Class 2A semifinals. He hit .637 with 15 home runs and 49 RBIs in 34 games. In the Wildcats' last series of the year, eventual state champ G.W. Long intentionally walked Jackson 11 times in 13 at-bats.

"He's a unique player," said former St. Luke's coach Josh Eddington, now an assistant at Daphne. "I've never been around someone like him, someone with the makeup that he has. He just has that it factor."

Jackson was ranked as high as No. 33 overall at one point in a mock draft by Fangraphs.

The web site described him this way: "The top prep prospect in Alabama, Jackson brings an impact bat to the table and wasted no time putting it on display this spring, when he hit a home run - rumored to be more than 400 feet - in his first at bat of the year for St. Luke's."

MLB.com, which ranked him No. 57 recently, wrote: "An advanced hitter with a nice right-handed swing, Jackson already uses the whole field and manages the strike zone. His quick bat and wiry strength could translate into 15 or more homers per season, and he's showing the ability to drive the ball to the opposite field this spring."

Both sites said, though Jackson has the talent and athleticism to play shortstop in the pros, he could also end up at second or third base.

"His solid arm strength works at shortstop and would be an asset turning double plays at second," MLB said. "If he has to move to the other side of the bag, he has the tools to still profile well offensively."

A year ago, McGill-Toolen outfielder Bubba Thompson became the first player from Mobile or Baldwin County drafted in the first round straight out of high school. Jackson is still in elite company as a second-round pick.

Only five other Mobile/Baldwin County high school players have been taken in the second round dating back to 1965. They are Murphy SS Jim Mason (1968), Davidson RHP Wade Boyette (1968), B.C. Rain SS Gary Blackwell (1972), B.C. Rain LHP Jim Loftin (1974) and St. Paul's OF Destin Hood (2005).

Jackson's mother, Monica Beasley, said the family's advisor called about two picks before the Angels were to pick No. 57 with the news.

"It was a very nerve-racking night," Jackson said. "It was very emotional, but we knew everything happens for a reason. We never got too low or too high, and it all worked out in the end. We are in a good spot."

The Angels were one of several clubs Jackson worked out with during the last two weeks.

"I love them," he said. "They've got a good ball club with a bunch of stars. I'm excited to get in there and meet some of those guys and then work as hard as I can to join them one day."

Jackson said he didn't know what his travel schedule would be and when and where he would start first. He hoped to find out more information Tuesday.

## **FROM ASAHI SHIMBUN**

### **MLB / Japanese firms help Ohtani with special spikes, diet control**

By Ryuhei Tsutsui

Shohei Ohtani's spectacular "two-way" feats with the Los Angeles Angels in his rookie season may be obscuring a key tool in his arsenal: his "two-way" feet.

The technology and know-how of Japanese companies are contributing to the phenomenal success of the 23-year-old pitcher-sluggger.

For example, Ohtani's spikes in red, the team color of the Angels, were manufactured by Asics Corp.

He also wore Asics spikes when he played for the Nippon-Ham Fighters. But he used one pair of spikes on the mound and a different pair at the plate. The pitcher's spikes need protection around the toes against abrasions from being rubbed against the mound.

To save Ohtani the trouble of changing shoes and preventing discomfort, a team of Asics developers in summer 2016 began studying spikes that can be used both on the mound and in the batter's box.

They came up with spikes covered on all sides with polyurethane resin, the first of their kind developed for baseball players.

The chemical material is stronger than artificial leather, the conventional material, but it lacked pliability.

The developers overcame that problem by reducing the resin's thickness except at the toes.

"Our spikes can withstand the pitching motion and bend pliantly in line with the swing movement of a hitter," said Yuma Komoto, a 29-year-old developer on the Asics team. "They are precisely 'two-way' spikes."

The corrugated surfaces of the shoes are designed to evoke images of a Japanese rock garden.

When Ohtani saw the shoes, he was quoted as saying, "I will never forget the Japanese mentality" while playing in the United States.

Meiji Co., a food company that offers protein supplements under the Savas brand, also provides dietary support to professional athletes.

Ohtani has signed a contract with Kei Omae, a 50-year-old registered dietitian at Meiji.

Ohtani is 193 centimeters tall, weighs more than 90 kilograms, and constantly trains to keep in top form. He needs nearly 200 grams of protein a day, about three times the requirement for an average male, to maintain his muscle mass, officials said.

He had to prepare his own meals before the start of the season.

In February, the month when Ohtani joined spring training camp, Omae went to the United States and worked with a cooking expert to find an ideal diet for the pitcher-hitter.

She prepared 90 sets of small-portion packs containing chicken breast, beef tenderloin and other sources of efficient protein that allow Ohtani to easily calculate nutritional values on his own when he prepares meals for himself.

Omae said she believes there is no need to be concerned about all the ups and downs of Ohtani's first season in the major leagues.

"We are looking toward two decades to come," Omae said. "Our mission is to help him build up a body that allows him to remain a globally active player over a long time."

## FROM SB NATION

### What the Vegas Golden Knights could mean for MLB expansion

*Vegas' success helps set a price tag for new baseball teams*

By Daniel R. Epstein

Every once in a while, a sports story transcends genres. Not many people follow swimming regularly, but *everyone* paid attention to Michael Phelps in the Olympics. American Pharoah captivated the nation with the horse racing triple crown in 2015. Every February, millions of people around the world watch the **Super Bowl**, even if it's the only football game they view all year.

Even if you're not a hockey fan, the Vegas **Golden Knights** are impossible to ignore. An expansion team reaching the championship is an unprecedented accomplishment in any sport. No expansion team in baseball has even come close to the playoffs, much less the **World Series**.

Clearly, Vegas has set a new bar for modern expansion teams. Zach Crizer of Baseball Prospectus recently looked at how a hypothetical **baseball expansion team could build a championship roster**. (It's awesome and you should read it.) But for an expansion team to make a postseason run, it first has to *exist*.

Ready to Grow

Baseball is way overdue for expansion. The **Rays** and **Diamondbacks** are turning 21-years-old (older than **Juan Soto!**). Previously, MLB had never gone more than 15 years between expansions since the first admission of new franchises in 1961. Increasing the number of teams to 32 would also make scheduling easier with several feasible alignments. For example, there wouldn't have to be an interleague series at all times.

However, baseball is first and foremost a business. One of the reasons for the expansion dry spell has been the success of MLB Advanced Media (MLBAM). Teams share revenue evenly from their extremely profitable advanced media enterprise, and expansion means two more mouths to feed. Baseball won't add teams unless the 30 existing franchises profit from the addition.

This is why the Vegas Golden Knights matter to MLB. How much money a new hockey team is worth could hint at the value of a new baseball team, which could sway Rob Manfred's decision on whether to add two new franchises.

#### Franchise Values-Hockey

This hockey season, the Vegas Golden Knights became the 31st NHL team. Owner Bill Foley paid a \$500 million expansion fee to the league for the right to start a new franchise. This immediately made them a **middle-of-the-pack value in the NHL**. Hockey teams are less valuable overall than baseball teams and more bunched together. The most valuable team, the **New York Rangers**, was assessed at \$1.5 billion, while the least valuable, the **Arizona Coyotes**, are worth \$300 million.

There are lots of factors that determine a team's value, such as their stadium/arena situation, average attendance, and local media deal. But the biggest factor is almost always market size. Conveniently, this is also the easiest to measure!

#### Value Per Person

The Television Bureau of Canada **compiles data on market size** for all major US and Canadian media markets. Dividing each team's value by its market size creates a value per person metric. The average hockey team is worth \$94.65 for every person in their media market.

This is an important number because it can predict an expected value of each team, which then shows how much more or less valuable the expansion Vegas Golden Knights are worth than their expected value. However, this data has two important problems that need to be cleaned up first.

The first one is the secondary market effect. There are three NHL teams whose value is way lower than it ought to be based on their markets: the Anaheim Mighty **Ducks**, the **New York Islanders**, and the **New Jersey Devils**. They're *only* worth between \$395-\$460 million despite playing in the Los Angeles and New York markets. The reason is that they are the secondary (or tertiary) teams in those markets. The Rangers (\$1.5 billion) and **Los Angeles Kings** (\$750 million) fit much more closely with their market size. As such, we have to throw secondary market teams out of our data.

The second complicating factor is the value of Canadian teams. As it turns out, Canadians love hockey (duh). As a result, all Canadian teams are worth way more per person than their American counterparts. For example, the **Edmonton Oilers** are the 12th most valuable NHL franchise (\$520 million) despite

playing in the 51st largest media market in North America. The average Canada-based NHL team is worth \$188.91 per person, completely skewing the data.

Removing the secondary market teams and Canadian teams, the average value of the remaining NHL franchises is \$104.02 per person. Now we have a figure we can use to calculate expected franchise values.

#### Hockey xValue

As it turns out, the Las Vegas media market is pretty small- only 1.9 million people. The only US city with an NHL team smaller than Sin City is Buffalo. (Edmonton, Calgary, Ottawa, and Winnipeg are also smaller, but Canadian teams play by a different set of value rules as we've already established.) Because of the small market size, the expected value is only \$193 million.

Of course, the team was actually purchased from the league for \$500 million. That's an insane 259% of the expected value (xValue)! In theory, this means any expansion team (baseball included) could be worth about 2.5 times it's xValue!

That's almost too crazy to believe. In fact, you probably *shouldn't* believe it. Las Vegas is a unique metropolitan area because it's surrounded by mostly uninhabited desert. There are no sprawling suburbs, which is where a lot of modern baseball and hockey consumers come from. Fortunately, there could be an even better bellwether forthcoming.

#### Selling Seattle

31 is a weird number for a sports league; 32 is much cleaner. The NHL is on the verge of adding yet another expansion team shortly, most likely in Seattle. Emily Kaplan of ESPN reported that the league is **looking for a \$650 million dollar expansion fee** this time around.

Seattle is a metropolitan area with about 4.7 million people. The xValue for an NHL team in the Emerald City would be \$484 million. \$650 million is a 34% markup. This is probably a more accurate measurement for valuing a baseball expansion team.

#### Franchise Values-Baseball

Baseball teams are **far more valuable** than hockey teams. The average MLB club is worth \$1.64 billion, which is more than even the highest valued NHL team. They range from \$4 billion at the high end (**New York Yankees**, naturally) to \$900 million at the bottom (the Tampa Bay Rays).

Using the same value/market size formula, the average baseball team is worth \$249.15 per person. Yes, every single one of your friends, neighbors, and colleagues is worth about \$250 to your local baseball team, simply by existing in their media market.

However, if we use this figure to determine xValue for MLB, we have a familiar problem. The lowest performing xValue teams are the **New York Mets**, **Los Angeles Angels**, Oakland A's, and **Chicago White Sox**. The secondary market teams skew the data yet again! For more accurate xValue data, we have to



discard these four teams. (The Canadian markets aren't a measurable factor in baseball because there's only one Canadian baseball team, RIP Expos!)

With the four secondary market teams removed, the remaining baseball teams are worth a staggering \$286.57 per person. Now, we're ready to look at baseball xValue for potential expansion sites.

Baseball Expansion xValue

Last summer, Jesse Spector of The Sporting News **hypothesized there are 8 potential landing sites** for MLB expansion:

- Charlotte, NC
- Las Vegas, NV
- Mexico City
- Montreal
- Nashville, TN
- Portland, OR
- San Antonio, TX
- San Juan, PR

For the purposes of calculating franchise value, we have to throw away two of these cities: Mexico City and San Juan. The latter is on an island with only about 3.4 million total residents, many of whom aren't able to buy cable TV packages. The former is actually the largest metropolis in North America and the **5th biggest city** in the world. But at an elevation five times higher than Denver with a major air pollution problem, there are just too many quality of play concerns.

The remaining six cities are all viable for an expansion team. Here are their xValues, as well as their xValue multiplied by the Vegas Golden Knights markup rate, and the future NHL Seattle team's markup rate.

Baseball Expansion xValues

City	Market size (thousands)	xValue	Vegas Multiplier: xValue*2.59	Seattle Multiplier: xValue*1.34
Charlotte	2977	\$853M	\$2,212M	\$1,146M
Las Vegas	1854	\$531M	\$1,378M	\$714M
Montreal	4830	\$1,384M	\$3,589M	\$1,860M
Nashville	2587	\$741M	\$1,922M	\$996M
Portland	2977	\$853M	\$2,212M	\$1,146M
San Antonio	2352	\$674M	\$1,748M	\$906M

You can use whichever xValue you want for each city. Personally, I'm inclined to use the Vegas multiplier for Las Vegas and the Seattle multiplier for all other cities.

Should Baseball Expand? YES!!

This puts the value of an expansion team somewhere between \$900 million-\$1.8 billion. Divided by the 30 existing franchises, each team pockets \$60-120 million from two expansion teams.

Last September, MLB **sold half of MLBAM to Disney** for \$1.58 billion. Obviously, this cuts future Advanced Media revenue in half, but **each team cashed out \$50 million**.

The MLBAM sale is pretty relevant to the expansion conversation. Yes, adding a pair of new teams means any shared revenue streams are divided by 32 instead of 30. But that's probably no worse a future revenue hit than selling half of MLBAM. Furthermore, the expected payout of \$60-120 million is even better than that of the MLBAM sale!

Naturally, there are other factors. The commissioner's office likely wants to resolve stadium issues in Tampa Bay and Oakland before expanding. Adding a pair of new teams means two fewer cities the Rays or A's could threaten to move to. Regardless, there would still be four other hungry cities that could be used for relocation leverage.

Expansion makes sense for MLB right now. It's probably a better deal for the existing clubs than the MLBAM sale in present and future value. It's also a great time to be an expansion team in American sports. Just ask Bill Foley how things worked out in Vegas.

## FROM D MAGAZINE

### Warstic Makes a Play to Put the Romance Back in Baseball

*Rocker Jack White, pro ballplayer Ian Kinsler, and Lake Highlander Ben Jenkins are opening a Deep Ellum HQ for their baseball bat company.*

By Alex Macon

Baseball has long been our most romantic sport. The game, once described by writer Michael Chabon as a "great slow contraption for getting you to pay attention to the cadence of a summer day," lends itself to mythologizing. All the cold sabermetrics in the world can't bust the magical allure of Babe Ruth calling his shot, or the awe-inspiring craziness of Dock Ellis' acid-fueled no-hitter, or any of the other curses and superstitions and legends that have piled up around America's pastime over the last century and change.

So you'll allow Ben Jenkins to get abstract, even poetic, when he talks about Warstic, the baseball bat and sports apparel company he founded in 2011 and is now moving into a 7,000-square-foot Deep Ellum brick-and-mortar that will feature a shop, showroom, and batting cage. That kind of talk is, after all, what convinced Jack White—the aesthetically minded rocker who first came to fame in the duo The White Stripes—and Ian Kinsler—the Los Angeles Angels second baseman who used to play for the Detroit Tigers and the Texas Rangers—to become partners and investors in the company in 2016.

A former minor leaguer from Lake Highlands who later got into graphic design and branding with his firm OneFastBuffalo, Jenkins says Warstic is very much a reflection of his life experience. The name itself

is a riff on a Native American idea of the war club as an extension of the warrior and is at least indirectly inspired by his time on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, where he made a thesis film for his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. (Warstic also raises funds for Native American causes through organizations like the Native Wellness Institute and Well For Culture.)

The metal and wooden baseball bats—bold, distinctive, and expensive, coming in a Crayola variety of colors and emblazoned with a minimalist two-stripe logo—are not just “weapons.” They’re works of art, as fit to be swung over home plate as they are to be hung in a bedroom or record store. And beyond the bats themselves, the company must represent something more, or else Pearl Jam frontman Eddie Vedder wouldn’t be wearing a Warstic t-shirt in concert, would he?

Jenkins, who hopes to use the new storefront to host lectures from baseball notables, sports psychologists, and others, thinks it’s a hand-crafted, deliberative attitude that harkens back to an era before modern marketing swallowed so much of our leisure time. Like baseball itself, Warstic requires you to slow down and pay attention.

“If it was just me making pretty bats, (Warstic) didn’t have legs to go anywhere else,” Jenkins says.

Being pretty didn’t hurt. White, along with being a noted baseball fan, has a predilection for strong color schemes. The self-mythologizing bluesman, sharing Warstic’s analog approach and appreciation for vintage objects, has designed his own limited-edition line of maple bats for the company. He helped promote Warstic when he was in Dallas for a pair of shows in April, taking the time to play a sandlot game at Reverchon Park with hosts from the sports radio station The Ticket.

Kinsler, for his part, has been using Warstic at bat and singing its praises to clubmates. Professional baseball players are, as noted above, a superstitious bunch, especially when it comes to bats, but he’s found some new Major League adherents, including Angels outfielder Justin Upton. Kinsler and Jenkins describe an athlete coming into the store, trying out a custom-made bat “like you’re being fitted for a suit.” “There’s no other bat company doing this, that’s for sure,” Kinsler says.

The trio shares ambitious plans for the space, although some of their hopes for the new Warstic HQ sound like longer shots than others, even back in the planning stages in October. There was discussion at one point of transforming the basement into a private speakeasy for the partners and their heavy-hitting clients, and knocking down a wall to uncover what Jenkins thinks may be a long abandoned trolley line. Others, however, are already coming to life. By late April, a 1,500-square-foot temporary showroom had been opened, and patrons could sample the wares by stepping into a temporary demo area with a tee and net.

With the rest coming in phases, Jenkins would like to see the shop finished this fall. Eventually, a bar and restaurant on the roof, with a view of the batting cage. Maybe you come in off the street, have a cold beer, observe the cadence of a hot summer afternoon, watch swing after swing, serene. You don’t have to be a ballplayer to appreciate the romance of that.

**FROM SPORTS ILLUSTRATED****The Table Setter: Let's Embrace the Glory of Mike Trout...Again**

By Michael Beller

The first full week of June is here, meaning we have a little more than two months of the 2018 MLB season in the books. Leaderboards are starting to look a bit more predictable than when we checked in on them after April. Mike Trout and J.D. Martinez are tied for the league lead in homers with 19. Jose Ramirez, Manny Machado and Bryce Harper follow closely behind at 18, with Mookie Betts, Aaron Judge, Edwin Encarnacion, Christian Villanueva and Joey Gallo rounding out the top 10.

No one has driven in more runs than Martinez's 50, with Machado (47), Javier Baez (45), Jed Lowrie (42) and Mitch Haniger (42) filling out the top five. A five-way tie at 41 among Ramirez, Judge, Andrew Benintendi, Scooter Gennett and Trevor Story rounds out the top 10. RBI is really a team stat, so it's no surprise to see representatives from the Red Sox, Cubs, Yankees and Indians, the top four teams in runs per game.

Mookie Betts leads the majors with a .359 batting average. This one gets a little weird, with Matt Kemp (.344), Gennett (.342), Andrelton Simmons (.336) and Nicholas Castellanos (.336) in the top five. Trout is atop the OBP leaderboard at .443, followed by Betts (.437), Freddie Freeman (.432), Nolan Arenado (.417) and Judge (.412). Betts leads the way with a .750 slugging percentage, with Trout (.678) second, Martinez (.648) third, Machado (.633) fourth and Ramirez (.624) fifth.

Finally, Trout leads the majors with 4.8 fWAR by nearly a full win over Betts and Ramirez who check in at 4.1. To illustrate just how incredible Trout has been, consider that Freddie Freeman and Lorenzo Cain are likely both locks for the NL All-Star team, and that they have combined for 4.8 fWAR. Trout continues to operate on an otherworldly level.

**ADVERTISING**

With that, let's get to this week's Table Setter.

**HITTERS TO WATCH THIS WEEK****Mike Trout, OF, Angels**

Where else could we start after that intro? Trout's a hitter to watch every week. Such is life when you're the best baseball player on the planet. His recent exploits, however, deserve special mention. He had five hits, including one homer, in the Angels' three-game series with the Rangers over the weekend. In the last two weeks, he's 17-for-48 with five bombs, nine RBI, three steals, 11 runs and a .456 OBP. He ranks first in the majors in home runs, fWAR, bWAR, and OBP, and second in slugging, wOBA and wRC+, trailing Mookie Betts in those three. Get ready for an AL MVP race for the ages, assuming Betts' abdominal injury doesn't keep him on the DL for too long.

**Brandon Nimmo, OF, Mets**

Nimmo's providing a silver lining for the crumbling Mets, whose 11-1 start to the season feels like a lifetime ago. The Mets were swept by the Cubs in a four-game series over the weekend, but Nimmo did his part, hitting two homers and driving in three runs. He's now slashing .276/.421/.559 with seven jacks, seven doubles, six steals and 14 RBI in 159 plate appearances. This may prove to be another lost season for the Mets, but they may have found themselves a piece of the future in Nimmo.

### **Eddie Rosario, OF, Twins**

We don't have too many rules here in the Table Setter, but one of them is this: If you have a three-homer game, with your third being a walkoff, you get to be one of the hitters to watch. Rosario did just that on Sunday, belting homers in the first and seventh before walking it off with a two-run shot off Cody Allen in the ninth. Rosario is now hitting .317/.352/.573 with 13 homers and 40 RBI on the season.

### **Eugenio Suarez, 3B, Reds**

The league's most underappreciated player continues to do his thing, going 16-for-45 with four homers and 12 RBI in the last two weeks. Suarez leads the NL with a .589 slugging percentage, and is hitting .297 with a .378 OBP, 11 homers and 44 RBI this season. As has been the case with Joey Votto for years, it's a shame to see Suarez doing this for a Reds team that won't come anywhere near a postseason berth this year, and that's only more reason to give him his due. We should see him in Washington as a member of the NL All-Star team next month.

### **Matt Olson, 1B/OF, A's**

Olson suffered through an ugly first seven weeks of the season, but he has finally showed signs of turning the corner. He's 11-for-36 with five homers, five walks and 10 RBI in his last 10 games. In that timeframe, he has raised his slash line to .248/.332/.472 from .236/.320/.410. The A's have quietly kept themselves in striking distance of a wild card spot, and while it's still too early to think seriously about the standings, especially with respect to the wild card, it's impressive that they've done so with Olson struggling for the balance of the season. If his bat is alive for the long haul, they could be a dangerous team the rest of the way.

## **PITCHERS TO WATCH THIS WEEK**

### **Madison Bumgarner, SP, Giants**

Bumgarner will make his 2018 debut on Tuesday, taking the mound against the Diamondbacks. Bumgarner hasn't faced major league hitters since a line drive off the bat of Whit Merrifield broke his pinky finger in the final game of spring training. He cruised through two rehab starts, striking out 15 batters in 8 1/3 innings, and is exactly what the Giants need after sending Brandon Belt to the DL. The ugly NL West has helped keep the Giants in the thick of things, and they just added the best pitcher in the division back to their active roster.

### **Carlos Martinez, SP, Cardinals**

Martinez, too, will get back on the mound Tuesday after a DL stint, making his return against the Marlins. Martinez has missed nearly a month with a strained lat, making his last start on May 8. He got

knocked around in his last rehab start, allowing a pair of solo homers in four innings, but the results were secondary to his health, and Martinez reported no issues after the game. The Cardinals just lost Alex Reyes to a similar injury, though it's believed the rookie's is more severe. The rotation has been a strength for the Cardinals all season, even with Martinez missing nearly a month. He'll take the ball a second time this week, squaring off with the Reds on Sunday.

### **Carlos Rodon, SP, White Sox**

Rodon is nearing a return to the majors after spending the entire season to this point on the DL with a shoulder injury that required surgery last September. He has made four rehab starts, pitching to a 1.53 ERA and 0.96 WHIP with 28 strikeouts in 17 2/3 innings. The White Sox have yet to determine if his next start will come at Triple A Charlotte or with the big league club, but he'll certainly be back in the majors within the next week or two. Rodon's entire career has been beset by injury, but he's still just 25 years old with ample potential. If the team does activate him this week, he'll likely make his season debut over the weekend against the Red Sox.

### **Michael Wacha, SP, Cardinals**

Wacha nearly threw a no-hitter against the Pirates in his last start, making it through eight hitless innings before allowing a single to Colin Moran to lead off the ninth. Wacha has been a true pillar in the St. Louis rotation this season, totaling a 2.41 ERA, 3.31 FIP and 1.10 WHIP with 61 strikeouts in 71 innings. Wacha suffered through ugly campaigns the last two seasons, but his FIP was significantly better than his ERA both of those seasons. It seems his luck is finally evening out. He'll make one start this week, facing the Reds on Saturday.

### **Blake Snell, SP, Rays**

Snell was electric in his last start, striking out 12 Mariners while allowing just two hits in six scoreless innings. He took a tough no-decision, but it was easily his best start of the year. Snell now owns a 2.36 ERA, 3.07 FIP and 0.94 WHIP, with 88 strikeouts in 76 1/3 innings. The 25-year-old looks like the top-of-the-rotation starter the Rays have always expected him to become. His next start will come on Friday against the same Mariners he shut down last weekend.

### **James Paxton vs. Dallas Keuchel, Tuesday**

Paxton and Keuchel face off in the opener of a brief two-game set between the Mariners and Astros at Minute Maid Park. Paxton has been excellent this season, amassing a 3.13 ERA, 2.96 FIP, 1.00 WHIP and 95 strikeouts in 74 2/3 innings. Keuchel, meanwhile, has been up and down all year, resulting in a 3.65 ERA, 3.92 FIP and 1.23 WHIP in 74 frames. He has had a rough go of it recently, with his last three starts coming against the Indians and Yankees. Now he takes the ball against a Mariners team that is tied for eighth in the league in wOBA, and tied for seventh in wRC+. Give the advantage to Paxton and the Mariners in this one.

### **Aaron Nola vs. Jose Quintana, Wednesday**

The Phillies and Cubs get together for a three-game set at Wrigley Field this week, with the Nola-Quintana matchup on Wednesday the headliner. Nola allowed one run or fewer in five of his six starts in

May, getting through seven innings in three of those outings. He's almost certainly ticketed for his first career All-Star Game, with a 2.18 ERA, 2.61 FIP, 0.93 WHIP and 74 strikeouts in 78 1/3 innings. The rumors of Quintana's demise have been greatly overstated. He has taken it on the chin a few times this year, but, to be fair, one of those outings was at Coors Field, and another was in rainy, windy conditions so poor that Joe Maddon said after the game that it shouldn't have been played. Quintana was great in his last start, tossing six shutout innings against the Mets, allowing three hits while striking out six. Unfortunately, Jake Arrieta will not pitch in the Phillies' only trip to Wrigley Field this season.

### **Corey Kluber vs. Brewers, Tuesday**

Two first place teams get together in Cleveland to kick off the week, with the Brewers visiting for a quick two-game series. The Brewers offense has been just about league-average by advanced metrics, but one thing they can do with just about anyone is hit the ball out of the park. Their 74 homers rank seventh in the league, and that's made all the more impressive by the fact that Christian Yelich, Eric Thames and Ryan Braun have all spent time on the DL this year. Travis Shaw leads the team with 13 homers, while Jesus Aguilar is second with 10. Kluber is putting together another excellent season, totaling a 2.02 ERA, 3.11 FIP, 0.84 WHIP and 88 strikeouts against 10 walks in 84 2/3 innings. He faced the Brewers at Miller Park on May 8, allowing three runs on five hits, including homers by Shaw and pitcher Brent Suter, in six innings, striking out four and walking one.

### **Jacob deGrom vs. Yankees, Friday**

Here's the marquee matchup of the week. One of these days the Mets are going to do something novel for deGrom, such as "score more than one run," or "protect a lead once he has left the game." That may not happen on Friday, but it will be an absolute joy to watch him take the ball against one of the best offenses in baseball. He was filthy again over the weekend, striking out 13 Cubs in seven innings, while allowing one run on seven hits. The Mets, of course, gave him just one run of support, and the Cubs won the game 7-1 in 14 innings. He shut down the likes of Kris Bryant and Anthony Rizzo in that one, and he'll have to do the same against Aaron Judge, Giancarlo Stanton, Gary Sanchez and the rest of the Yankees' imposing lineup on Friday.

### **Mariners at Astros, Tuesday and Wednesday**

The Mariners and Astros are in first and second, respectively, in the AL West, and own two of the five best records in the majors. Despite being in the same division, this will be just their second series against one another on the year, which means we're going to see this matchup a lot in the second half. The Astros took three out of four from the Mariners in Seattle back in April, with James Paxton getting the only win for the home team. As we already touched on, he'll start the opener of this series, facing off with Dallas Keuchel. It'll be Wade LeBlanc and Lance McCullers in the finale on Wednesday.

### **Diamondbacks at Rockies, Friday through Sunday**

The bet here is that no team will run away with the NL West, and that it'll be a muddled mess all season. If that is proved wrong, however, it's likely that the Diamondbacks or Rockies will be that team. There's no time like the present to start finding some consistency, and there's no better way to build some breathing room in a division race than by beating your closest competitor. Just like the Mariners and Astros, these two teams have also played just one series this season, and that was the opening series of

the year. The Diamondbacks took two of three, but both teams are much different than they were two months ago. They've yet to officially lock in their starters for the series, but assuming they stay on schedule it'll be Zack Greinke against German Marquez on Friday, Matt Koch against Chad Bettis on Saturday, and Zack Godley against Kyle Freeland on Sunday. In other words, get ready for some offensive fireworks at Coors this weekend.

## FROM THE ATLANTIC

### Shohei Ohtani is proving himself already

*Despite the early skepticism, the 23-year-old Los Angeles Angels pitcher and hitter is exceeding expectations in just the first couple months of his major-league career.*

By Alex Putterman

On the eve of this baseball season, Shohei Ohtani was a mystery. The 23-year-old Japanese phenom had arrived in the U.S. as a highly billed two-way star, supposedly capable of hitting and pitching at an All-Star level, but poor Spring Training stats and a sprained UCL had dampened optimism about his ability to thrive in the majors. Scouts dissed his hitting. Reporters questioned his pitching. Some analysts wondered whether Ohtani belonged not on the Los Angeles Angels' roster, but in the minor leagues.

Just over two months later, there's not much left to doubt. Over the first third of the season, Ohtani has established himself as not only the best hitter-pitcher hybrid since Babe Ruth, but also as one of the premier players in baseball today. He has a higher on-base plus slugging (OPS) than the MVP hitter Bryce Harper, and a lower earned-run average (ERA) than the All-Star pitcher Stephen Strasburg. According to Baseball Reference's ballpark-adjusted metrics, Ohtani has been 48 percent better than league average as a hitter and 30 percent better than league average as a pitcher. Along the way, he has exceeded all reasonable expectations and fulfilled many of the most extravagant ones. He has been, bar none, the biggest story in baseball this season.

Even as Ohtani's name has faded from national headlines following an unforgettable first week of the season, he has continued to excel, posting a 2.16 ERA during the month of May while hitting six doubles and two home runs. Meanwhile, he has looked as impressive on the field as he does on the stat sheet, throwing 100 miles per hour, whacking long home runs, and flashing track-star speed for good measure. As a pitcher, he mixes a blazing fastball with a diving splitter, sending hitters flailing at empty air. As a batter, he employs a sweet left-handed swing to pepper line drives all over the field.

Ohtani hasn't been a perfect player—he has struggled to hit against lefties and doesn't always command his pitches well—but he is, so far, performing in a way baseball last saw when Ruth pitched and played the outfield for the Red Sox in the 1910s. "He's only 23 years old and is going to get better," the Minnesota Twins first baseman Logan Morrison said after Ohtani shut down his team on May 13. "I think he's doing something that nobody has probably ever done and it might be a long time before you see it again."



Even as Ohtani has wowed fans and fellow players alike, his season hasn't been entirely smooth. The rookie had a start pushed back due to rain, was yanked from another due to a blister, and lost a few games to an ankle injury suffered in late April. The Angels have been generally cautious about his workload on the mound, sometimes delaying his starts to offer extra time to rest. The team's plan to have him pitch once a week and hit three or four times a week has proven to be less of a rule and more of a guideline.

But in a sense, that tumult has been reassuring. Many of the big questions Ohtani and the Angels faced entering the season centered on logistics: How would the team balance the 23-year-old's pitching, hitting, and necessary rest? Would he bat often enough to make the two-way gambit worth the trouble? Would bumps and bruises earned at the plate affect him on the mound? The season's first two months have shown that managing Ohtani's workload is plenty possible, with a little thought and some patience, even in the face of injuries and other extenuating circumstances. Maybe he can't pitch full-time while also taking at-bats as designated hitter, but he and the Angels appear to have found a viable equilibrium.

From here, Ohtani's stature figures to grow. Given the uniqueness of his game and the attention he commands, Ohtani was going to be a candidate for an All-Star berth no matter how he performed this season. But based on his output through two months, analysts agree, he figures to reach the Midsummer Classic on merit—an accomplishment few rookies achieve. He could wind up in the Home Run Derby as well, becoming the first-ever participant in that event who can throw a nasty splitter when he's not cranking bombs. After that, a pennant chase beckons. It's possible, maybe even likely, that Ohtani could wind up on the mound in the one-game wildcard playoff, should the Angels qualify.

Of course, Ohtani won't necessarily maintain his historic statistics all season long. His batting numbers have already begun to dip, and his pitching performance could easily fall off as well. But Ohtani has exceeded expectations so dramatically thus far that he could drop 20 points of batting average and add half a run to his ERA and still be an unconditional success and one of the most remarkable baseball players of this decade.

Besides, Ohtani's first two months have provided proof of concept, showing that it is indeed possible for a single athlete to play both ways and to do so at an All-Star level. Whether or not Ohtani eventually becomes an MVP and whether or not he sticks with both hitting and pitching longterm, his opening act alone has redefined what's possible on a baseball field today. For weeks leading up to his signing with the Angels and months leading up to his major-league debut, an entire sport wondered whether he could pull off a feat that has been barely attempted, let alone perfected, over the past 100 years. A third of the way through Ohtani's rookie season, the baseball world has its answer.

**FROM KYODO NEWS**

## **Baseball: Shohei Ohtani's tying run sets up Angels' comeback over Royals**

Shohei Ohtani scored the tying run on Monday that put the Los Angeles Angels on track for a 9-6 comeback victory over the Kansas City Royals.

Ohtani entered the game in the sixth inning as a pinch-hitter and singled in his only at-bat off a fastball from Royals' righty Kevin McCarthy. After McCarthy yielded a walk to the next hitter, Ohtani bolted home from second on Mike Trout's line drive to center and tied the game at 5-5.

Scheduled to start on the mound Wednesday, Ohtani threw a bullpen before the game but said he was prepared to bat if called upon.

"First of all, what's important is today's game," he said after his pitching practice.

"That got the rally started -- good time for it right there," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said of Ohtani's second pinch hit in four tries.

Albert Pujols singled to bring in Trout and take the lead, but the Royals equalized when Salvador Perez homered against Angels' reliever Noe Ramirez in the top of the seventh.

In the eighth, Trout ripped a grounder past submarine lefty Tim Hill (1-2) to notch his second RBI of the game and retake the lead, and Justin Upton and Pujols followed suit to cap the three-run inning to seal the win at Angel Stadium.

Angels' right-hander Cam Bedrosian (2-1) picked up the win for throwing a perfect eighth inning.

Ohtani is 4-1 on the mound with a 3.18 ERA in eight games.

Shohei Ohtani scored the tying run on Monday that put the Los Angeles Angels on track to a 9-6 comeback victory over the Kansas City Royals.

Ohtani entered the game in the sixth inning as a pinch-hitter and singled in his only at-bat off a fastball from Royals' righty Kevin McCarthy. After McCarthy yielded a walk to the next hitter, Ohtani bolted home from second on Mike Trout's line drive to center and tied the game at 5-5.

Albert Pujols singled to bring in Trout and take the lead, but the Royals equalized when Salvador Perez homered against Angels' reliever Noe Ramirez in the top of the seventh.

In the eighth, Trout ripped a grounder past submarine lefty Tim Hill (1-2) to notch his second RBI of the game and retake the lead, and Justin Upton and Pujols followed suit to cap the three-run inning to seal the win at Angel Stadium.

Angels' right-hander Cam Bedrosian (2-1) picked up the win for throwing a perfect eighth inning.

Ohtani, who is 4-1 on the mound, is scheduled to make his ninth pitching start on Wednesday in the series finale against the Royals.