



Press Clips

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FROM THE OC REGISTER**John Lamb looks to make most of second chance with Angels**

By Jeff Fletcher

TEMPE, Ariz. — Left-hander John Lamb had come up the baseball ladder, first as an amateur star and then a highly touted prospect and then a major leaguer.

But in mid-January, he was none of the above. He was a player without a team.

“From the time you’re a kid, there’s always someone who wants you to play for them,” Lamb said. “For the first time, it felt like I was not wanted.”

As Lamb was soul-searching, wondering how much of his unemployment was caused by poor performance and how much because of a drug-related suspension in 2017, he finally got the call from the Angels.

“It only takes one team for me to continue doing what I’m doing what I love doing,” Lamb said, “and it just so happens to be a team I would refer to as my hometown team.”

A product of Laguna Hills High, Lamb signed a minor league deal with the Angels in January, returning to the club that gave him a shot last year.

This year, though, Lamb is determined to make the most of it. After Lamb’s first outing of the spring on Feb. 25, Manager Mike Scioscia said, unprompted, how encouraged he was by the two scoreless innings. He added two more scoreless innings on Friday. A year earlier, Lamb had been in camp, but he never pitched because he was rehabbing from back surgery.

“It was fun to just get out there and be on a big league field with an Angels jersey on my chest,” he said.

The journey to that moment had taken the 27-year-old Lamb from the Kansas City Royals, as one of baseball’s top prospects, to the Cincinnati Reds in the Johnny Cueto trade. After back issues contributed to him never quite living up to his big league potential, Lamb signed with the Angels in November 2016.

Just when he was in the late stages of his rehab from surgery, getting ready to finally pitch in the Angels system, he was slapped with a 50-game suspension for a positive test for a drug of abuse, Major League Baseball announced.

“I know I made a mistake,” said Lamb, who chose not to elaborate on the suspension. “It’s in the rear-view. I want to focus on what’s ahead of me, this team and what we’re trying to accomplish and hopefully me being a part of it.”

It didn't look like that would happen for most of the winter. After Lamb returned from his suspension, he posted a 5.37 ERA with the Angels' Triple-A team. He became a minor league free agent, and then posted a 5.86 ERA in 35 1/3 innings in Venezuela over the winter.

"It was definitely a whirlwind of thoughts of emotions this past winter," Lamb said. "Getting home from Venezuela and not having a job... it was humbling."

The Angels, though, eventually brought him back.

"You are dealing with a guy who has had some success at the major league level and is still pretty much in the heart of his peak years, that 26 to 30 window," General Manager Billy Eppler said. "You see the upside and the ability to reclaim what he had. He's further distanced himself from back surgery, so we took a shot."

Eppler also said the suspension was not an issue: "He's done his time and we move forward."

Lamb currently fits somewhere in the Angels' Triple-A rotation, with a chance to work his way to the majors. He also could be moved to the bullpen. Lamb is hoping that the stuff that once made him a top prospect can carry him back to the majors, especially now that he's done worrying about his back, as he was last year.

"I'm just freed up from that fear I was maybe having," Lamb said. "I didn't think I was going to blow it out, but there were gears that I wasn't getting up to. If it's a six-speed and I'm in fourth or fifth, I'm not reaching top speed."

Lamb also said he's beyond trying to live up to the hype attached to his status as a top prospect.

"It's hard to be do your best when you are looking at yourself under a microscope," he said. "Now it's about the next pitch. I'm not going to live too much in the past or get caught up in the future."

Angels withstand late rally to beat Reds, 7-5

By J.P. Hoornstra

THE GAME: The Angels withstood a five-run eighth inning by the Cincinnati Reds to win 7-5 in front of 2,875 on Monday afternoon at Goodyear Ballpark.

PITCHING REPORT: Left-hander Andrew Heaney threw three shutout innings, allowing two hits and striking out five. Heaney has yet to allow a run in five Cactus League innings. ... Right-hander Parker Bridwell was equal to the task, allowing only a single and two walks in three shutout innings. He struck out two. ... The Reds scored all five of their runs in the eighth inning against minor leaguer Adam Hofacket.

HITTING REPORT: In the second inning, Eric Young Jr. (2 for 4) barely missed a home run wide of the right-field foul pole. On the next pitch, he split the left-center field gap for a triple, scoring Martin Maldonado from first base. ... In the third inning, Colin Walsh (2 for 3) drove in Michael Heramosillo with an RBI single and scored on a single by Albert Pujols. ... It was Pujols' first Cactus League hit. ... Young reached on an error in the fourth inning, stole a base, then scored on a Rymer Liriano double. ... Liriano later scored on an infield grounder, sliding around a tag at the plate. ... Young doubled and scored on a Walsh single in the sixth inning. ... Matt Thaiss hit a ground-rule double and scored on a Juan Graterol single in the ninth inning.

FIELDING REPORT: Shortstop David Fletcher was charged with an error in the third inning when he double-clutched a routine ground ball, allowing Patrick Kivlehan to reach first base. ... Billy Hamilton, who has swiped an MLB-high 230 bases over the past four seasons, was thrown out trying to steal second base by catcher Martin Maldonado to end the sixth inning. ... The bottom of the eighth inning ended when Thaiss made a diving stop of a hot grounder to his right at first base.

UP NEXT: Angels RHP J.C. Ramirez is scheduled to start against the Arizona Diamondbacks (RHP Zack Godley) on Tuesday at noon PT at Salt River Fields (Fox Sports West; KLAA/830).

Veteran slugger Chris Carter has abandoned his all-or-nothing approach with Angels

By J.P. Hoornstra

TEMPE, Ariz. — Somewhere along the way, Chris Carter picked up the nickname "Sleepy." It's easy to see why.

As he chatted with teammates Monday in the Angels' clubhouse, Carter draped his 6-foot-4, 245-pound frame over a folding chair at an angle so low, he appeared to be reclining in a La-Z-Boy. His eyes possess a natural droop. He looked ready for a nap.

"He's always so relaxed, so comfortable," teammate Martin Maldonado said. "He barely gets mad, barely laughs."

It would be easy to sleep on Carter's role with the Angels. He is blocked at first base by Albert Pujols and Luis Valbuena, both of whom are on the 40-man roster. Carter is a non-roster invitee to the Angels' major league camp, but he has opened eyes in a short time.

After a 12-month cascade that saw Carter go from the National League home run leader to an afterthought in a crowded free-agent market, the 31-year-old veteran realized he had to shake things up. He looked at video of his swing over the winter. He didn't like what he saw, especially on the follow-through. Carter concluded he needed to be "hitting through balls more, so I'm not pulling off them as much."

The early returns must be taken with a grain of salt – true for anyone after 10 Cactus League games. Facing a mix of mostly major-league pitchers, Carter has five hits and three strikeouts in 14 at-bats. One of the hits was a home run. It's a small sample, but an unusual one for someone with the profile of an all-or-nothing slugger.

Sunday's game against the Colorado Rockies was instructive. In his first at-bat, Carter doubled to left field against Jon Gray. In his next at-bat, he roped a hard line drive to right field against Scott Oberg for a single. That's two major-league pitchers and two major-league hits, each to a different section of the outfield.

Maldonado, who played with Carter in Milwaukee in 2016, barely recognized Carter's new approach.

"He looks way different now," Maldonado said. "He looks way better. He's making more contact, hitting more line drives. He has unbelievable power. He doesn't have to try to hit homers. He can be thinking line drives."

If Carter's transformation holds, it would be nothing short of remarkable. A total of 203 players have at least 2,500 plate appearances this decade. Carter ranks 203rd – dead last – with a 64.7 percent contact rate.

The Brewers could live with Carter's 206 strikeouts in 2016. He played 160 games and was a 1-win player according to FanGraphs and Baseball-Reference. His traditional stats (41 homers and 94 RBIs) set career highs.

Yet Milwaukee designated Carter for assignment after the season, when he was eligible for arbitration and figured to see his \$2.5 million salary multiply. The move came as a shock. Carter remained a free agent into February of 2017.

Carter eventually got a \$1 million raise from the New York Yankees, but by June he was batting .201 with two strikeouts for every hit. His swing rate was up, his contact rate down. Asked about the first-base position after one loss, Yankees manager Joe Girardi said of Carter, "it's what we have." GM Brian Cashman piled on, saying, "I think he'd like to come up with a better option if we had one and we don't."

Carter was released by the Yankees in July and signed a minor-league deal with Oakland. He spent the rest of the season at Triple-A.

Maybe Carter's exit from Milwaukee was a harbinger of things to come. Last year, Logan Morrison and Mike Moustakas each hit 38 home runs, tied for eighth in baseball, in their free-agent walk seasons. Moustakas is still a free agent. Morrison became a Minnesota Twin just last week.

After a record year for home runs, in a market with more capable sluggers than ever before, the skill seems to have lost value.

"You always wonder why it happens, why they're changing what they value and what teams want," Carter said. "There's definitely a lot more analytics going on in the game right now."

Carter said his contract offers were limited to a handful of teams this winter.

“It was kind of all the same scenario: they already have a guy,” he said.

At least in Anaheim, Carter is closer to his home in Las Vegas. His burden of expectations is lighter than a feather. And the ball is flying straighter off his bat, a good omen for a career that could use a sense of direction.

HEANEY'S ADJUSTMENT WORKING

Left-hander Andrew Heaney said shifting back to the first-base side of the pitching rubber has spurred his early success in camp.

Heaney said he was told to switch to the third-base side of the rubber after returning from Tommy John surgery last season, a move designed to decrease the stress on his arm. He stayed there the remainder of the season.

But the move never felt right to Heaney, and it showed in his results. In five starts spanning 21-2/3 innings, Heaney allowed 12 home runs and was stuck with a 7.06 earned-run average.

“That was a little bit of frustration for me toward the end of the year, thinking ‘this isn’t how I pitch, who I am, what I do,’” he said. “You never want to make excuses or think that what you’re doing is wrong but the game is about adjustments, re-adjusting, then adjusting back. It’s something I messed with this offseason and just got back to where I was in 2015.”

Heaney hasn’t allowed a run in his first five Cactus League innings while striking out six batters.

Asked if Heaney looks like he did in 2015 prior to his elbow injury, Manager Mike Scioscia said, “I think it’s a step forward from even there.”

ALSO

Shohei Ohtani went 0 for 3 against the Cincinnati Reds in his second appearance as the Angels’ designated hitter. He was robbed by center fielder Billy Hamilton on a diving catch in the left-center field gap in the first inning. Ohtani grounded out in each of his next two at-bats. ... Ohtani will be the Angels’ designated hitter on Tuesday against the Arizona Diamondbacks at Salt River Fields. ... His next pitching appearance is expected to come in a “B” game against the Tijuana Toros on Friday at Tempe Diablo Stadium.

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES**Pujols' first hit of the spring helps Angels to a 7-5 victory over the Reds**

By Jeff Miller

The Angels defeated the Cincinnati Reds, 7-5, on Monday at Goodyear Ballpark. The Angels are 6-5 in Cactus League play.

AT THE PLATE: Albert Pujols had his first hit of the spring, a run-scoring single in the third. He left the game in the fifth, after playing four innings at first base. Eric Young Jr. had a run-scoring triple to produce the first run of the game. He probably won't make the opening day roster because the Angels last month signed Chris Young to be their fourth outfielder. Chris Young has been sidelined because of a strained calf muscle. Colin Walsh, who is batting .389, had two hits and three runs batted in. Rymer Liriano had an RBI double.

ON THE MOUND: Starter Andrew Heaney struck out five in three scoreless innings. In the third, after the first two batters reached base, he escaped by striking out the next two batters and retiring former MVP Joey Votto on a fly out. Afterward, Heaney announced that he is injury-free and pleased with his spring. Parker Bridwell, also battling to be a starter, bounced back from a rough outing to pitch three scoreless innings, though he walked two. Veteran Felix Pena pitched a 1-2-3 inning.

EXTRA BASES: Shohei Ohtani did not address reporters en masse after leaving the game. Instead, the Angels had a team employee ask him media-submitted questions, an attempt to ease the public-relations burden on the rookie. ... JC Ramirez will make his second start Tuesday, as the Angels continue to audition for the six projected spots in their rotation.

Shohei Ohtani would welcome a chance to pitch against Japanese countryman Ichiro Suzuki

By Jeff Miller

For one day at least, Shohei Ohtani wasn't the Japanese big-leaguer making the most news. On Monday, it was Ichiro Suzuki, a future Hall of Famer who's expected to sign this week with the Seattle Mariners.

So, after going 0 for 3 as the Angels designated hitter in a 7-5 spring training victory over the Cincinnati Reds, Ohtani was asked about the possibility of facing the legendary hitter this season.

"Hopefully, I'll be on the roster and be able to play against him," he said through an interpreter. "That would make me happy."

Ohtani almost certainly will be on the Angels roster, though it's uncertain if he would be in line to pitch against the Mariners when the teams meet for the first time in early May.

Ichiro, 44, became an option for Seattle when it was learned that outfielder Ben Gamel will be sidelined four to six weeks because of an oblique injury.

In his third spring training start as a hitter, Ohtani grounded out twice against the Reds and was robbed by Billy Hamilton of what would have been an extra-base hit into the left-center gap.

"I was jammed a little bit," said Ohtani, who is now one for seven. "I didn't think the ball was going to fall. It didn't."

Said Hamilton: "I want to take a hit away from anybody. I don't care who it is. ... It just happened to be him, one of the guys who will be a star in this game."

Ohtani is expected to start as the designated hitter again Tuesday when the Angels play the Arizona Diamondbacks in Scottsdale.

He is scheduled to make his third pitching start of the spring Friday in a "B" game in Tempe when the Angels face the Tijuana Toros of the Mexican League. The game is expected to be open to the public.

The Angels' regular Cactus League game Friday is in Mesa against the Chicago Cubs.

This will be Ohtani's second consecutive start in a "B" game, the Angels preferring to better control the environment and his workload. The plan is for him to pitch the equivalent of four innings, throwing about 60 pitches.

Soon enough, manager Mike Scioscia suggested, Ohtani will be back on the mound in a regular spring training game.

"At some point," Scioscia said, "we have to take the water wings off him and put him in the deep end."
Taking sides

Andrew Heaney has moved back to the first-base side of the pitching rubber, a slight shift that he believes will make an enormous difference.

"For me, it's more comfortable," he said after pitching three scoreless innings against the Reds. "I think for hitters, it's more deceptive for sure. I'm throwing from way outside the hitting tunnel."

When he returned from elbow ligament replacement surgery last season, Heaney moved to the third-base side at the Angels' suggestion.

As a left-hander, he was told he had a better chance of avoiding injury since being on the glove-side of the rubber reduces torque.

However, Heaney struggled mightily in his return, going 1-2 with a 7.06 earned-run average in five starts. He gave up 12 homers in 21 2/3 innings.

"At some point, it's like, 'I'm going to be healthy for 15 years and give up a homer every other inning, that's not going to be effective,'" Heaney said. "I'm not just saying, '[Forget] my health. I'm just going to sling it.' But I'm going to go out there and get guys out."

He began pitching on the first-base side during the 2013 Fall League and had remained there until his return in mid-August.

Waiting to maximize his chances of remaining physically sound, Heaney said the decision to follow the Angels' initial suggestion was an easy one. The decision to go back to his former positioning was easy too.

"That was a little bit of frustration for me toward the end of the year, thinking, 'This isn't how I pitch, who I am, what I do,'" Heaney said. "Nothing drives you crazy like giving up 15 homers in 20 innings. That's like historically bad."

Short hops

Scioscia again didn't play most of his regulars Monday. Albert Pujols started at first base for the second time this spring and had his first hit. ... Former Angels Cliff Pennington and Ben Revere started for the Reds and former Angel David Hernandez pitched in relief for Cincinnati.

FROM ANGELS.COM

Angels start three competitors in outfield

Young, Liriano, Hermosillo each vying for same spot

By Owen Perkins

GOODYEAR, Ariz. -- The Angels' outfield on Monday against the Reds featured a trio of players competing for one spot -- at best. **Eric Young Jr.** in center, **Rymer Liriano** in left, and **Michael Hermosillo** in right could all figure into the outfield mix at some point, but there may not be a position for them on Opening Day.

Manager Mike Scioscia is looking at a three-man bench, a result of his six-man rotation, an eight-man bullpen, and the fact that starting pitcher **Shohei Ohtani** can also serve as a DH when he's not pitching.

"Right now, with the template of our roster, you're looking at four outfielders," Scioscia said. "Our bench will need to be versatile, but we need the infielder, we need the catcher and we need an outfielder."

Hermosillo doesn't realistically see himself in the mix for Opening Day, with **Chris Young** slotted into the fourth outfielder slot.

"I know that I'm probably going to start at Triple-A, and I'm definitely not disappointed about that," Hermosillo said. "I understood that would probably be the case. I'm still trying to do whatever I can just to keep [myself] in their mind."

Hermosillo, 23, has been moving quickly through the system, playing at Class A Inland Empire, Double-A Mobile, and Triple-A Salt Lake City in 2017, hitting a combined .267 with nine homers and 44 RBI in 120 games. The Angels likely want to see him playing every day somewhere, and with only 30 games at Triple-A under his belt, he's probably right to set his expectations there.

Eric Young Jr., 32, comes from another perspective. In 2017, Young played 47 games for the Angels, much of it filling in for the injured **Mike Trout**, and hit .264 (29-for-110). It was his best season since 2012, when he hit .316 in 98 games for the Rockies.

"At this stage in my career it doesn't really matter what my role is," Young said. "Just any way I can help the team. Whatever they ask me, I'm ready to do."

Young has the versatility that can come into play on the Angels' bench, with most of his playing time coming in left. He's played 77 games in center, including 15 last season, and he's played 54 games at second base.

"I still take my grounders, so I'm ready for whatever," Young said. "That way the team has options in case anybody gets hurt -- they don't necessarily have to panic. We're capable of doing a lot of things."

With Chris Young nursing a calf injury in Spring Training, the potential to draw on the depth in the system could come into play earlier than expected, and the ability to fill multiple roles will elevate a player's stock.

"Anybody that's going to make our team as a fourth outfielder certainly needs to have the versatility to play all three [positions]," Scioscia said. "Center field obviously becomes a priority. That could be a difference maker if a guy can't play center."

Eric Young is less than five years removed from a 46-steal season split between the Rockies and Mets in 2013, and his 12 steals last year show he's still got legs.

"I'm still moving," Young said. "I'm pretty sure my teammates would say I'm still moving pretty fast, so I'll take it."

While Hermosillo is soaking up the big league atmosphere, picking brains of fellow outfielders like Trout and **Justin Upton** and hoping his number gets called at some point in the season, Young is preparing himself for Opening Day in what would be his 10th big league season.

"You want to work on your timing, get the reps out on the defensive side," Young said. "The main part is staying healthy. You see a lot of guys get banged up in Spring Training. I just want to make sure the body's ready to go on all cylinders when Opening Day comes."

Ohtani returns to lineup as DH

Angels two-way prospect robbed of extra-base hit in first at-bat; Heaney excellent in three scoreless innings

By Owen Perkins

GOODYEAR, Ariz. -- Angels starting pitcher and designated hitter Shohei Ohtani started his third game in the lineup Monday as he continues his first Major League Spring Training camp after five successful seasons in the Japanese Pacific League.

In the first inning of a 7-5 Angels win, Ohtani drove a Sal Romano offering deep into the gap in left-center, and only a spectacular play by Reds center fielder Billy Hamilton kept Ohtani from extra bases. Hamilton sprinted after the ball and caught up to it on a dive and somersault, holding onto the ball for a loud out.

"I was jammed a little bit, so I didn't think the ball was going to fall, and it didn't," Ohtani said. "I was glad I was able to put the bat on the ball."

Ohtani has played in three games now, and after his 0-for-3 Monday, he is hitting .143 (1-for-7) with an RBI single and two walks in the Cactus League. It's a small sample, but Ohtani is happy with the way he is progressing as he adjusts to big league pitching.

"I was able to check the strike zone," he said of the improvement in Monday's game. "I was able to put the bat on the ball. It's been a while, but there's some positive stuff."

Ohtani hit second in the order against the Reds, with Albert Pujols hitting behind him. If hitting in front of Pujols isn't enough to make Ohtani comfortable, it's just a matter of time, according to his new teammate.

"He's got about six weeks here in Spring Training to get adjusted, find his program, find his routine," Pujols said. "He has a good approach at the plate for what he wants to do, and he works at it."

Pujols got his first hit of the spring, an RBI single to left in the third.

"His timing was a little off," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He hit it off the end of the bat. That's what these at-bats are for, just kind of find your timing."

Scioscia had a similar assessment of Ohtani, calling it "a matter of timing" before he starts to click.

"He hit one ball good to left-center," Scioscia said. "Shohei had good at-bats. He swung at pitches that he could hit."

Not that he needed any incentive, but Ohtani heard the news that Ichiro Suzuki may be returning to the Mariners, pending a physical Monday, which means Ohtani and Ichiro could face each other in the big leagues when the Angels travel to Seattle May 4-6.

"Hopefully I'll be on the roster and I'll be able to play against him," Ohtani said. "That would make me happy."

Going the other way

Ohtani is expected to be in the lineup again on Tuesday when the Angels travel to Salt River Fields to face the D-backs, and he is scheduled to pitch on Friday against the Tijuana Toros.

"Unless something changes, it would be the B game," Scioscia said, noting that they prefer pitching him in environments where they can easily control the number of pitches and the "ups and downs" between innings.

"At some point we have to take the water wings off and put him in the deep end," Scioscia said.

Heaney on point

Andrew Heaney threw three scoreless innings and allowed just two hits while striking out five. He's working to get back to the form he had in 2015, and he credits returning to the first base side of the rubber for his success. Heaney heeded to throw on the third base side of the rubber last season with the theory that pitchers stay healthier when they pitch on the arm side of the rubber, as opposed to the glove side, in part as a result of reducing the torque on their arm.

"I'm a rotational thrower, so throwing on the first base side gives me more angle and deception, and more degrees on rotation," Heaney said. "I was a little frustrated at the end of the year, feeling like, 'This isn't how I pitch, this isn't who I am.'"

"Nothing drives you crazy like giving up 15 homers in 20 innings. That was historically bad."

So far the results have been on his side with a return to form.

"Andrew's making some adjustments," Scioscia said. "His delivery has more energy, it's compact, and he's throwing the ball very well right now. I think it's a step forward from [2015]."

Up next

The Angels travel to Scottsdale to face Arizona at 12:10 p.m. PT Tuesday with JC Ramirez taking the hill. The game will be broadcast on FSW and AM830.

FROM USA TODAY**Shohei Ohtani making solid contact, but gets robbed in bid for extra bases**

By Steve Gardner

GOODYEAR, Ariz. -- Shohei Ohtani came oh-so-close to his first extra-base hit of the spring, but almost is what often happens when Billy Hamilton is playing center field.

Serving as the Los Angeles Angels designated hitter on Monday, Ohtani gave the ball a jolt in the top of the first, only to see the Reds center fielder run it down and make a spectacular catch.

"I want to take a hit away from anybody. I don't care who it is, to be honest with you," Hamilton said afterward. "It was one of those plays I feel like I've got to make, and should make. It just happened to be him, one of the guys who will be a star in this game."

Ohtani is DH'ing in between starts on the mound as the Angels try to figure out the best way to deploy their new weapon. After going 0-for-3 on Monday, he has one hit and two walks in nine spring plate appearances. However, he's hit the ball with authority -- and Angels manager Mike Scioscia has hinted he could see more action as a hitter this season than originally expected.

Of course, Ohtani's most important role will be on the mound every sixth day. He's been impressive so far this spring -- striking out eight of 12 hitters he faced in a "B" game in his last appearance on Friday.

Heaney puts up zeroes

Not to be overlooked, Angels left-hander Andrew Heaney tossed three scoreless innings against the Reds in his second spring start.

After missing almost all of the past two seasons due to Tommy John surgery and undergoing minor surgery on his shoulder this offseason, Heaney has been healthy this spring. Against the Reds, he allowed two hits and struck out five.

MLB power rankings: Defending World Series champion Astros begin season at**No. 1**

With the addition of pitcher Gerrit Cole and a full season with former Cy Young winner Justin Verlander, it's not surprising the defending champion Houston Astros are the team to beat in 2018 and No. 1 in USA TODAY Sports' first installment of power rankings.

Nine of the top 10 teams were playoff clubs in 2017. The Milwaukee Brewers, No. 7, aim to disrupt the field with the addition of outfielders Christian Yelich and Lorenzo Cain.

The Miami Marlins, who dumped their entire outfield, including NL MVP Giancarlo Stanton, finished at the bottom of the rankings.

From 1 to 30, how they stack up based on voting from our nine-person panel:

TEAM.

1. Houston Astros

▶ Reigning champions added Gerrit Cole to fortify rotation.

2. Los Angeles Dodgers

▶ Matt Kemp, whose acquisition was payroll-motivated, may actually contribute.

3. Cleveland Indians

▶ Yonder Alonso the new 1B after Carlos Santana's departure.

4. Washington Nationals

▶ World Series or bust for what could be Harper's last year in D.C.

5. New York Yankees

▶ Hit 241 homers and added Stanton – team record is 264

6. Chicago Cubs

▶ Hoping slimmed-down Kyle Schwarber can produce.

7. Boston Red Sox

▶ New addition J.D. Martinez hit 45 homers in 119 games last year.

8. Milwaukee Brewers

▶ Yelich and Cain were huge additions, but what of the rotation?

9. Arizona Diamondbacks

▶ Zack Greinke returned to form after disappointing first year in Arizona.

T-10. Colorado Rockies

▶ Revamped bullpen headlined by new closer Wade Davis.

T-10. Los Angeles Angels

▶ With Shohei Ohtani, could be baseball's most fascinating team.

12. St. Louis Cardinals

▶ Who's going to close?

13. Minnesota Twins

▶ Byron Buxton came on strong in the second half with .300 batting average.

14. New York Mets

▶ Upgraded on offense, but 2018 comes down to rotation's health.

15. San Francisco Giants

▶ Longoria and McCutchen add some (aging) star power to offense.

16. Toronto Blue Jays

▶ Ace Marcus Stroman could miss opening day.

17. Seattle Mariners

▶ Own the longest playoff drought in American pro sports.

18. Texas Rangers

▶ Rougned Odor's average fell to .204.

19. Tampa Bay Rays

▶ Lost tons of power, gained considerable infield defense.

20. Atlanta Braves

▶ Will they arrive a year or two early and sneak into contention this year?

21. Philadelphia Phillies

▶ J.P. Crawford takes over at shortstop after Freddy Galvis trade.

22. Baltimore Orioles

▶ Manny Machado moves to shortstop for contract year.

23. San Diego Padres

▶ Wil Myers moves back to the outfield to make room for Eric Hosmer.

24. Pittsburgh Pirates

▶ Post-McCutchen era begins in Pittsburgh.

25. Chicago White Sox

▶ Lucas Giolito looked terrific in seven 2017 starts.

26. Oakland Athletics

▶ Matt Olson hit 24 homers in 59 games last season.

27. Kansas City Royals

▶ Life without Hosmer, Moustakas and Cain begins.

28. Cincinnati Reds

▶ Righty Anthony DeSclafani returns after Tommy John surgery.

29. Detroit Tigers

▶ Jordan Zimmermann had a 6.08 ERA last season.

30. Miami Marlins

▶ JT Realmuto is still on the team – for now.