



Press Clips

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FROM THE OC REGISTER**Angels trade Ian Kinsler to Red Sox for two prospects**

By Jeff Fletcher

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The Angels traded Ian Kinsler to the Boston Red Sox on Monday night for two pitching prospects, the team's second deal in five days to unload an impending free agent.

Kinsler, 36, follows Martin Maldonado, who was sent to the Houston Astros, as the Angels appear to continue to look toward the future.

The Angels got right-hander Ty Buttrey and left-hander Williams Jerez from the Red Sox. Both were at Triple-A. Buttrey, 25, had a 2.25 ERA in 32 games out of the bullpen. Jerez, 26, had a 3.68 ERA in 33 games in relief.

"I really think the world of (Kinsler)," General Manager Billy Eppler said. "It was difficult, but we're excited about the players we're getting back and the potential for their impact at some point here in the future."

The Angels also reportedly sent the Red Sox \$1.8 million in cash to help cover the remainder of Kinsler's salary for 2018, which is about \$3.6 million.

Kinsler helps fill the void left by Dustin Pedroia, who has been injured for most of the season. Although Kinsler got off to a slow start offensively, he hit .286 with an .866 OPS over the past two months.

David Fletcher is likely to move over to become the everyday second baseman in Kinsler's absence, although Eppler said only that they would announce their plans on Tuesday. Kaleb Cowart, who was pulled from the game at Triple-A Salt Lake on Monday, is expected to come to the majors to fill Kinsler's roster spot. If the Angels do move Fletcher to second, they could use some combination of Cowart, Luis Valbuena or Jefry Marte at third.

Taylor Ward, one of the Angels' fastest-rising prospects this season, also could be promoted to play third at some point over the season's final two months. Ward has hit .350 with a .991 OPS this season, splitting his time between Double-A and Triple-A.

Buttrey was named the Red Sox organization's 19th best prospect recently by MLB.com. This season he has struck out 64 times and walked 14 times in 44 innings with Pawtucket, Boston's Triple-A team.

Eppler said Buttrey "looks pretty darn close to major league-ready." He added that he throws 96 mph, and tops out at 99 mph, and has a solid slider.

Jerez was named the 23rd best prospect in the Boston system by MLB.com. He has 67 strikeouts in 51-1/3 innings. Jerez throws 95 mph and touches 100 mph, Eppler said. He also throws a slider and a changeup.

Neither of the relievers has yet reached the majors, which means the Angels could have a full six years of major league control over each. Both pitchers have options remaining for at least one more year, which gives them valuable flexibility.

They are the second and third pitchers added to the system in the past week, joining 21-year-old Patrick Sandoval, who came in the Maldonado trade.

Although the Angels were expected to compete for a playoff spot this year, they have slipped to 54-53, 9-1/2 games out of the race for the second AL wild card.

The Angels could continue moving players before Tuesday's 1 p.m. PT non-waiver trade deadline, although the rest of their attractive players are all under control for next year, which means the Angels would be more inclined to want to keep them.

A 'pesky' hitter and slick fielder, David Fletcher has risen from Cypress High to the Angels' everyday lineup

By Jeff Fletcher

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — David Fletcher was a junior at Cypress High the first time he took ground balls in front of Jason Gill, the baseball coach at Loyola Marymount.

Gill watched for a few minutes and turned to his assistant who handled recruiting.

"That guy could be our everyday shortstop today," Gill told him. "Do whatever it takes to get him here."

Fletcher did end up playing at Loyola Marymount, and he ended up starting every game at shortstop for two years. He was draft-eligible after this sophomore year because he turned 21 about a week before the draft.

Throughout Fletcher's college career, Gill told him constantly that he was going to be a big leaguer.

Last month, he finally was. The Angels promoted him and put him at third base, a position he'd played only eight times in his life, all this year at Triple-A. He's handled it well enough that he's now an everyday player, having bumped Luis Valbuena to the bench. Fletcher has played mostly third, although he's likely to move to second in the wake of the Ian Kinsler trade.

Gill has watched with pride, but not a hint of surprise.

"It's like he was born to play," Gill said. "The most comfortable place he is on the planet is on a baseball field or in the batter's box. There's no other place he'd want to be."

Throughout Fletcher's ascent through the Angels' farm system, coaches constantly lauded him for the perfect way he did everything.

Chad Tracy, one of his minor league managers, two years ago said that Fletcher was “the best *baseball player* I’ve managed in two years I’ve done this. His knowledge of the game and intangibles, he seems to be a step ahead of everybody he’s playing against.”

That showed up exactly one game into his major league career. In his June 13 debut – remember, the ninth game of his life at third – a throw from left field pulled catcher Martín Maldonado about 30 feet from the plate, which was left uncovered. Fletcher hustled toward home, took a flip from Maldonado on the run, and tagged out the runner, saving a run.

“It’s like Magic Johnson on a basketball court,” Gill said. “That’s David Fletcher on a baseball field.”

Now Fletcher plays alongside Andrelton Simmons, a two-time Gold Glove winner who is also credited for seeing the game on a higher level. Simmons joked that he is happy Fletcher seems so comfortable at third, “so he’s not going to take my job right now.”

Fletcher, 24, took Valbuena’s job mostly because of his bat. He’s hit .298 with a .339 on-base percentage and only 15 strikeouts in his first 125 plate appearances. If there were any questions during a two-week stretch when he hit .147, they have been answered by hitting .429 in the two weeks since.

Fletcher didn’t put much stock in either the cold stretch or the hot stretch that followed.

“I kind of stay with the same thing every day,” he said. “I haven’t really made any adjustments. Just let the results take care of themselves.”

Simmons said Fletcher provides a spark by being “pesky” at the plate.

“It doesn’t matter what pitch, he finds a way to put a barrel on it, and probably find a hole,” he said. “It’s a great plus. I like seeing him hit. He’s just focused on squaring the baseball up. Very simple. Very effective.”

About the only thing he doesn’t do is hit for power, which is why his future is probably as a second baseman or a utility player.

Still, the offensive package has drawn comparisons to David Eckstein, who was Fletcher’s favorite player when he was growing up in Orange County.

Scioscia, who penciled Eckstein in as his shortstop on their World Series-winning team in 2002, sees the comparison, but also wants to see Fletcher make his own name.

“I think he’s going to be his own player,” Scioscia said. “He’s a good player, but if you’re comparing him to David Eckstein, that’s not a bad comparison. For the right reasons. I think he’s got the same baseball IQ. David Fletcher is a talented young man.”

Fletcher appears to have been comfortable in the big leagues from the start. In two big league spring training camps, he played regularly and performed well. Although he is quiet – to the point of it being an amusement for his teammates – he is not too shy to sit and play cards with Albert Pujols or crack the occasional joke.

He is, by all accounts, just a guy who knows how to act in every situation, on and off the field.

“He’s very respectful,” Simmons said. “He doesn’t walk like he pretends he’s The Man. He’s willing to learn and listen. He doesn’t step on anybody’s toes. I have high hopes for him. I think he’s legit.”

UP NEXT

Angels (LHP Tyler Skaggs, 8-6, 2.62) vs. Rays (RHP Ryne Stanek, 1-3, 2.43), Tuesday, 4 p.m., Fox Sports West, KLAA (830 AM)

Top Angels prospect Jo Adell promoted to Double-A

By Jeff Fletcher

Outfielder Jo Adell, the Angels’ top prospect, has been promoted for the second time this year, moving to Double-A Mobile (Ala.) less than 14 months after the Angels drafted him out of high school.

Adell, 19, hit .290 with 12 home runs and an .891 OPS at Class-A Inland Empire. He played 57 games there, after hitting .326 in his first 25 games of the season at low-A Burlington, Iowa.

Adell played earlier this month in the Futures Game. He was listed as the 16th-best prospect in baseball by MLB.com. Baseball America ranked him 11th.

The Angels took Adell with the 10th pick in the 2017 draft.

FROM LOS ANGELES TIMES

Angels trade Ian Kinsler to Red Sox for two minor league pitchers

By Mike DiGiovanna

The Angels appeared to further raise the white flag on the season, trading veteran second baseman Ian Kinsler and cash to the Boston Red Sox on Monday for triple-A relievers Williams Jerez and Ty Buttrey.

With last week’s trade of catcher Martin Maldonado to Houston, the Angels have dealt two impending free agents from an injury-ravaged 54-53 club that is 9 1/2 games behind Seattle for the second American League wild-card spot.

“My responsibility is to do what’s best for the organization and make mindful decisions that also put us in position to compete this year and in future years,” general manager Billy Eppler said.

“We have to weigh the remaining impact Kinsler can have, which is positive — no doubt, what he does on the field, in the clubhouse ... there’s a reason people gravitate toward this guy — but we have to weigh that against the potential impact [of the two prospects] and the duration of that impact.”

Rookie David Fletcher will likely replace Kinsler as the everyday second baseman, with Luis Valbuena, Jefry Marte and Kaleb Cowart, who is expected to be called up from triple A, sharing third base duties.

The Red Sox have a major league-best 75-33 record but felt they’d be better positioned for a World Series run with a defensive upgrade over second basemen Eduardo Nunez and Brock Holt, who have been filling for injured veteran Dustin Pedroia, who has been limited to three games because of a knee injury.

Kinsler, 36, a 2016 Gold Glove Award winner who was acquired from Detroit in December, struggled for three months, hitting .218 with a .669 on-base-plus-slugging percentage, 11 home runs and 22 runs batted in through June.

He is batting .320 with an .860 OPS, two home runs and 10 RBIs in 21 games in July to raise his average to .239. The Angels reportedly sent \$1.8 million of the remaining \$3.6 million on Kinsler’s contract to the Red Sox to keep them under the maximum \$237-million luxury-tax threshold.

“It was a difficult decision,” Eppler said, “but we’re excited about the players we’re getting back and their potential impact.”

Buttrey, 25, was Boston’s 19th-best prospect, according to MLB Pipeline. The 6-foot-6, 230-pound right-hander was 1-1 with a 2.25 earned-run average in 32 games, striking out 64 batters and walking 14 in 44 innings.

Eppler said Buttrey’s fastball averages 96 mph and touches 99 mph. His changeup was deemed by Baseball America as the best in the Red Sox system.

“He looks pretty darn close to major league ready,” Eppler said.

Jerez, 25, was ranked 23rd by MLB Pipeline. The 6-4, 200-pound left-hander was 2-1 with a 3.68 ERA in 33 games, striking out 67 and walking 24 in 51 1/3 innings. He mixes a fastball that averages 95 mph and has touched 100 mph with an above-average changeup and an average slider.

Orange County native Patrick Sandoval now is chasing big league dreams with the Angels

By Jeff Miller

He already pitched for the Angels. As an 8-year-old.

He already appeared at Angel Stadium. As a football player.

He already scripted his Angels debut. As a fan.

“That would be an absolute dream come true,” Patrick Sandoval said. “I look over at first and there’s my boy [Albert] Pujols. That’d be crazy.”

Baseball’s trade deadline is all about teams trying to find fits. Every now and then, the fits found are perfect.

The Angels dealt Gold Glove catcher Martin Maldonado to Houston last week for Sandoval, a 21-year-old left-hander who grew up in Orange County and starred at Mission Viejo High.

Sandoval made his first start for his new organization Sunday. He struck out nine batters and gave up no runs in 4 2/3 innings with Class-A Inland Empire against San Jose.

He couldn’t have been much more steady, which was notable for someone who, when he was told he’d been traded to the Angels, began shaking.

“Just really excited,” Sandoval explained. “All of this seems unreal.”

That’s certainly how it felt to his mother, Robin, who, when she heard the news, thought her son had to be joking. From the other end of the line, Patrick was pretty sure she was fighting back tears.

But soon enough there Robin was, just before midnight on the day of the trade, picking him up at the Ontario airport, driving him home for a few hours of sleep and then shuttling him back out to Inland Empire to catch the team bus departing at 8 a.m. for San Jose.

“We had two car rides worth of conversation,” Robin said, “a couple hugs and back on the road.”

A mother dropping off her son so he could go play baseball, the most quaint of parental exercises and one by which this family, thanks to the trade, continues to mark time.

Though the Dodgers were the ones Sandoval rooted for more as a kid, nearly every game he attended came at Angel Stadium.

Clayton Kershaw remains someone he loves to watch, Sandoval admitting he tries to channel Kershaw’s hard mentality, the aggression he shows in attacking hitters.

Yet, Sandoval never wavered on the subject of his favorite player, even if he’s still not certain why he was drawn to a power-hitting first baseman who, at the time, was playing in St. Louis.

When he was assigned a book report in third grade, Sandoval chose a Pujols biography. He so wanted to be like Pujols that, in Little League, he copied his batting stance.

“Wide legs,” Sandoval said. “Big arms. The hands moving up and down. Just crushing balls, you know? I was dug in. I was in deep.”

With three years remaining on Pujols' contract after this season, the possibility exists that Sandoval could eventually be teammates with a player he once envisioned facing only as a fantasy.

Then again, there could be more than just a cold baseball business decision guiding the direction of this story.

After the trade, Sandoval's thank-you to the Astros on social media included a picture of him, in full windup and preparing to unleash a fastball, in an Angels uniform.

OK, so he was only 8 when the photo was taken, and it was just coincidence that his team ended up with that name.

But that also was the first year Sandoval tried pitching, the skill that with 13 years of refinement would bring him so much closer to wearing genuine Angels red.

He also shares a compelling distinction with the members of the most fondly remembered team in franchise history. Sandoval, too, celebrated a championship at Angel Stadium.

He was a receiver and punter on Mission Viejo's CIF-winning football team in 2014, Sandoval's leg credited with continually pinning deep Vista Murrieta's offense.

"It really is unbelievable," Robin said. "To think that he's maybe going to have a chance to play there in the major leagues is pretty amazing."

Since her son signed with the Astros in 2015, Robin has been able to watch him play only twice. That will change now, starting Saturday, when Sandoval is scheduled to make his first home start for Inland Empire.

He nearly played at USC before Houston unexpectedly lured him away with a \$900,000 signing bonus, an enormous commitment for an 11th-round pick.

Sandoval already had purchased a laptop for school and was set on exploring his affinity for the Trojans, an attraction that dated to attending USC football games when he was young.

But all of Sandoval's plans abruptly changed with one significant decision by the Astros, not unlike what happened again last week.

Instead of being in Potomac, Md., for a Carolina League doubleheader, he was suddenly on a plane bound for home and two long car rides with his mother before a six-hour-plus bus trip into a brightening future.

"Yeah, that was a long travel day for me," Sandoval said. "But I had a smile on my face the whole time."

FROM ANGELS.COM

Halos get 2 Minor League pitchers for Kinsler

Buttrey, Jerez acquired as veteran 2B heads to Boston

By Maria Guardado

ST. PETERSBURG -- Four days after trading Gold Glove catcher Martin Maldonado to the Astros, the Angels continued to operate as sellers, shipping veteran second baseman Ian Kinsler and cash considerations to the Red Sox in exchange for pitching prospects Ty Buttrey and Williams Jerez on Monday night.

General manager Billy Eppler said the decision to trade Kinsler was a difficult one, as the 36-year-old veteran had endeared himself to many within the clubhouse with his gritty and hard-nosed style of play. Still, Eppler felt that the opportunity to add a pair of young, hard-throwing relievers who can potentially help the Angels soon was too good to pass up.

"It was a tough conversation," Eppler said on Monday night during a conference call with reporters. "He was very thankful for his time here. I told him that I really appreciated getting to know him. I really think the world of him. That was difficult, but we're excited about the players that we're getting back and the potential for their impact at some point here in the future. This was just a decision that was best for the organization at this time."

The Angels acquired Kinsler from the Tigers in December as part of a series of offseason roster improvements that they hoped would help spur them to their first postseason appearance since 2014. The acquisition of Kinsler, coupled with the retention of Justin Upton and the additions of Shohei Ohtani and Zack Cozart, seemed to put the Angels in position to contend, but an unrelenting crush of injuries ultimately hindered their competitiveness.

The Angels placed an MLB-high 22 players on the disabled list in the first half of the season and saw Garrett Richards, JC Ramirez, Cozart, Keynan Middleton and Blake Wood go down with season-ending injuries. They enter Tuesday's non-waiver Trade Deadline one game over .500 at 54-53, 12 1/2 games behind the first-place Astros in the American League West and 9 1/2 games behind the Mariners for the second AL Wild Card spot.

Kinsler entered Monday posting career lows in batting average (.239) and OPS (.710), but he had recently started to heat up and compiled an .860 OPS in July. His departure will break up one of the best middle infields in baseball, as he had teamed up with fellow defensive wizard Andrelton Simmons to help the Angels turn an MLB-high 284 double plays this season.

Kinsler is owed \$11 million in his final season before free agency. The Angels are sending \$1.8 million to the Red Sox to cover the remaining \$3.6 million of his 2018 salary, according to MLB Network insider Ken Rosenthal.

Kinsler is set to step in for the injured Dustin Pedroia at second base for Boston. The pair had been teammates at Arizona State, where Pedroia took over Kinsler's starting shortstop position in 2002. Kinsler then transferred to Missouri the following year.

"What he does on the baseball field, what he does in the clubhouse, there's a reason people gravitate to this guy," Eppler said. "I know I did, and I was only around him for less than a calendar year. We have to weigh the impact that he brings versus the potential impact and the duration of that impact on the players returning in the deal."

Buttrey was ranked as Boston's No. 19 prospect, per MLB Pipeline, lands at No. 27 on the Angels' list, and is "pretty darn closer to Major League ready," according to Eppler. The 25-year-old right-hander has gone 1-1 with a 2.25 ERA and a 1.14 WHIP over 32 relief appearances with Triple-A Pawtucket this season and has struck out 64 while walking 14 over 44 innings.

"He's been dominating this season for them," Eppler said. "Averages 96 mph, he's up to 99 mph. His strong quality is the fastball, and our reports say [he has] a solid-average slider. Looks like a guy that has a lot of upside. He's young, he throws hard and he performs at the highest domestic level here besides the Major Leagues."

Jerez went 2-1 for Pawtucket with a 3.68 ERA and 1.38 WHIP across 33 bullpen outings. The 26-year-old left-hander was a second-round Draft choice as an outfielder in 2011 before switching to the mound in '14.

"He had an above-average performance, just like Ty, in Triple-A this year," Eppler said. "His fastball averages 95, he touches 100. Really like the characteristics of his fastball and average slider and what looks like an average to well-above-average changeup. It looks like there's some ceiling to him as well. We're hoping these guys eventually take that next step."

Kinsler's departure may create an opening for rookie David Fletcher to move to second base, his natural position. Fletcher, 24, has primarily played third base since making his MLB debut on June 13 and has impressed the Angels by batting .298 with a .742 OPS in 37 games.

"Have you seen that guy play? It seems like he can do anything," Eppler joked. "In all seriousness, he's played a lot of second base, so that is one of the things that we're kicking around right now."

Eppler wouldn't say who the Angels will call up to replace Kinsler on the roster, though infielder Kaleb Cowart was pulled in the first inning of Triple-A Salt Lake's game on Monday.

FROM THE ATHLETIC**The Angels keep selling, but maintain 2019 core in sending Kinsler to Red Sox**

By Fabian Ardaya

The Angels made a run at being competitive in 2018, the antepenultimate season in which they have Mike Trout. They locked down Justin Upton to a long-term extension at the beginning of free agency. They traded for Ian Kinsler. They signed Zack Cozart and bought in on the two-way sensation that is Shohei Ohtani.

It hasn't been enough, at least given the actual results and injuries that have cropped up. Cozart is out for the season after undergoing shoulder surgery. Garrett Richards, JC Ramirez, Keynan Middleton, Blake Wood and John Lamb are all out for the year with Tommy John surgeries. Matt Shoemaker has only made one start this season. Ohtani has been contained to being solely a hitter the last two months as he deals with his own elbow ailment.

Through 107 games, the club is 54-53 with a double-digit deficit in the division while hanging out in the outskirts of contention for the second wild-card spot. They indicated a lean toward selling on Thursday, dumping impending free agent Martín Maldonado to the Astros. They added onto their fire sale Monday, trading second baseman Kinsler and sending cash to the Boston Red Sox.

The Angels' postseason window is firm, at least if you have the idea in mind that the postseason run would inevitably come with Trout. The 26-year-old Trout is under contract through the 2020 season, effectively giving Angels general manager Billy Eppler two more cracks at it. In eight seasons in the big leagues, the two-time MVP Trout has played just three postseason games. In choosing to ship off their expiring assets first, including sending a reported \$1.8 million of the \$3.6 million owed to Kinsler, Eppler and Co. retain flexibility and what they believe to be a strong nucleus in 2019.

"I really think the world of (Kinsler)," Eppler said. "It was difficult, but we're excited about the players we're getting back and the potential for their impact at some point here in the future."

It's apparent in the package the Angels received from the Red Sox: left-hander Williams Jerez, 26, and right-hander Ty Buttrey, 25, are a pair of minor-league relievers already in Triple-A and who both could easily be in the big leagues soon (Patrick Sandoval, the return in the Maldonado trade, is a 21-year-old left-hander in High-A ball).

Eppler said in a conference call Monday evening that Buttrey (2.25 ERA in 32 appearances for Triple-A Pawtucket) is "darn close" to being ready for the majors with a mid- to high-90s fastball to pair with a slider. Jerez, a converted pitcher, (3.68 ERA in 33 appearances for Pawtucket) provides another high-velocity arm, this time from the left side — a role thin in depth behind José Álvarez. Buttrey and Jerez were the Red Sox's No. 19 and No. 23 prospects, according to MLB Pipeline, and present controllable options since neither has yet to reach the big leagues.

That's not to say the Angels wouldn't ship off controllable assets — say, relievers Blake Parker or José Álvarez, each of whom have been linked to trade speculation — if there's a substantive return before Tuesday's non-waiver trade deadline. But it's clear, there's a finish line with this core.

The fit for Kinsler with Boston makes plenty of sense, even beyond the natural coincidences behind it. Red Sox President of Baseball Operations Dave Dombrowski has had an affinity for Kinsler, acquiring him from Texas back when he was in Detroit. Kinsler will join former Detroit teammates J.D. Martinez, David Price and Rick Porcello as guys Dombrowski has brought with him to Boston.

He'll also run into ex-college teammate Dustin Pedroia, who has battled knee issues that have sidelined him essentially the entire year and who Kinsler will be replacing at second base. Pedroia and Kinsler shared a middle infield for a season at Arizona State, with Pedroia playing shortstop and Kinsler second until Kinsler transferred to Missouri looking for a chance to play short. Now, they're teammates again in an interesting twist of fate.

Kinsler, 36, is in the midst of just the second below-average season of his career per wRC+ (97), posting a .239/.304/.406 line with 13 homers in 391 plate appearances. Since June 1, those numbers are .259/.320/.471 with 10 homers and a 119wRC+. His glove, however, still provides value that Boston is looking to extract. He's been the Angels' fourth-most valuable position player by Fangraphs' version of Wins Above Replacement (2.0), in part due to his 10 Defensive Runs Saved that rank as the second-most in baseball among second basemen.

Boston's primary options at second base this season have been Brock Holt and Eduardo Núñez, who have combined to total -15 DRS this season.

In Kinsler's wake, the Angels will likely shift rookie David Fletcher from third base to second base. The 24-year-old has posted a 106 wRC+ while showing positional versatility in his first go-around in the big leagues.

"Have you seen him?" Eppler joked. "He can do anything."

At third, expect to see Luis Valbuena (61 wRC+) and Jefry Marte (76 wRC+) to at least split some of the at-bats, along with Kaleb Cowart, who will likely be recalled Tuesday after being pulled early from Triple-A Salt Lake's game Monday night. Cowart, who Angels manager Mike Scioscia said has a "Gold-Glove caliber" level of defense at third base earlier this year, is still looking to come around with the bat.

Luis Rengifo, who the Angels acquired in the C.J. Cron trade, has also produced (126 wRC+ in Triple-A, 38 stolen bases across three levels this season) and can bounce around the infield if he earns a call-up. Taylor Ward, the Angels' 2015 first-rounder, has a .350/.447/.544 line with 14 homers and 57 RBI across two levels this season while acclimating to the move to third base from behind the plate. Both should potentially see time in the big leagues this year.

FROM BLEACHER REPORT**When Will the Angels Face Harsh Reality They May Need to Trade Mike Trout?**

By Zachary D. Rymer

It wasn't long ago that it would have been unthinkable for the Washington Nationals to put Bryce Harper on the trading block. But all of a sudden, that idea is now extremely thinkable.

Thus, a thought experiment: When might the Los Angeles Angels be in the same position with Mike Trout?

Certainly not imminently. There's been *zero* buzz about the Angels trading Trout ahead of this year's non-waiver trade deadline. That presumably has to do with how they're not rebuilding and with how he's achieving peak Mike Trout.

The seven-time All-Star and two-time American League MVP is hitting .310/.462/.621 with 29 home runs and 20 stolen bases. Per Baseball Reference, he leads everyone in wins above replacement by a considerable margin:

- **1. Mike Trout: 7.9 WAR**
- **2. Jose Ramirez: 6.8 WAR**
- **3. Mookie Betts: 6.6 WAR**

With 62 career WAR to his name, Trout is all but certain to surpass Ty Cobb (63.4) for the most WAR ever through a player's age-26 season by the end of the year. When we look back years from now, it should be just another chapter in the story of Trout becoming the greatest player in Major League Baseball history.

The Angels are slated to play a part in Trout's story for at least the next two years. The six-year, \$144.5 million contract extension he signed in March 2014 runs through 2020.

After that, the Angels have no guarantee that he won't test the free-agent waters.

"I don't know the answer," Trout said in June about the possibility of signing on beyond 2020, per Bill Shaikin of the *Los Angeles Times*. "I want to get to the playoffs. That's my mindset. I can't predict the future. So I just take it one game at a time now and see what happens."

The longer Trout continues to not have an answer, the more likely a trade becomes.

This isn't the first time the idea has materialized. A possible Trout trade was a hot topic back in 2016. Although he was en route to his second MVP at the time, the Angels were an injury-riddled mess of a team that was on its way to a 74-88 record.

Instead, the Angels held on to Trout and committed to building a better team around him. Thanks to key additions such as slugging outfielder Justin Upton and two-way marvel Shohei Ohtani, the effort hasn't been a total failure.

Nor, however, has it been a rousing success. The Angels fell short of .500 last year. If they hold to their .388 winning percentage since May 11, they'll end up right there again this year.

The Angels will be hard-pressed to spend their way out of mediocrity. Their payroll is at \$174.4 million. Per Baseball Reference, they're projected to spend \$168.7 million in 2019 and \$197.1 million in 2020. The \$33.3 million they'll pay Trout in 2019 and 2020 is a good deal, but it's offset by the \$87 million they'll owe what's left of Albert Pujols between 2019 and 2021.

Likewise, the Angels' farm system may not be the solution. It's better than it used to be, but it still only ranks as Bleacher Report's No. 20 system following the 2018 draft. Its best player is uber-athletic outfielder Jo Adell, and he's just 19 and has advanced only as far as High-A.

Meanwhile, there's the Mike Scioscia factor. He's been managing the Angels since 2000, but the 10-year contract he signed in 2009 is up at the end of this season. If the Angels go in a new direction with a new manager this winter, perhaps they'll also commit to a rebuild.

For that, Step No. 1 might be cashing in Trout's tremendous trade value.

Despite being the highest-paid player in MLB, he still checks in at No. 4 among the most valuable trade chips, according to Kiley McDaniel of FanGraphs. In theory, the Angels could dump his remaining contract *and* get multiple elite prospects back for him if they were to put him on the block this offseason.

In reality, it might not be that simple.

Although this winter's free-agent class has lost some of its shine, it's still going to offer Harper, Manny Machado, Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, A.J. Pollock, Nelson Cruz, Eduardo Escobar, Josh Donaldson, Brian Dozier, Craig Kimbrel, Andrew Miller, Zach Britton and, if they opt out of their current deals, Clayton Kershaw and David Price.

Amid that much readily available talent, some teams may just as soon spend loads of money rather than enter into a bidding war for Trout that'll cost them loads of money *and* loads of prospects.

Besides, the Angels might give contending another shot no matter who's in the manager's chair for 2019.

They'd be betting on better things being in store for a lineup built on Trout, Ohtani, Upton, Andrelton Simmons, a reborn Kole Calhoun and a hopefully healthy Zack Cozart. Provided that Ohtani's balky elbow holds up, a rotation with him, Andrew Heaney, Tyler Skaggs and Jaime Barria could do some damage.

If the Angels do go that route, however, it'll be a case of trying the same thing and expecting different results. Because the Houston Astros, Seattle Mariners and Oakland Athletics figure to still be relevant, the American League West probably isn't going to give them any more leeway than they've had in 2018.

If things were to go south again in 2019, the Angels might not have much choice but to put Trout on the market either that summer or the ensuing winter. On the chance they hold on to him for one last push

in 2020, him sharing a lineup with a past-40 Pujols and past-30 versions of Upton, Simmons and Cozart could ultimately necessitate a midsummer trade.

All told, it's hard to place a bet on exactly when the Angels will determine that they need to trade Trout. But barring a series of miracles, that time sure seems to be coming.

Stats courtesy of Baseball Reference. Payroll and contract data courtesy of Spotrac.

Report: Ian Kinsler Traded to Red Sox; Angels Receive Williams Jerez, Ty Buttrey

By Scott Polacek

The Boston Red Sox have reportedly added a four-time All-Star prior to Tuesday's non-waiver trade deadline.

On Monday, Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic reported the American League East leaders acquired second baseman Ian Kinsler from the Los Angeles Angels. Jon Heyman of Fancred reported on the return package, noting the Angels received pitchers Williams Jerez and Ty Buttrey.

According to Rosenthal, Los Angeles also provided the Red Sox with \$1.8 million of the remaining \$3.6 million Kinsler is owed this season.

Heyman speculated this move suggests Boston is concerned with second baseman Dustin Pedroia, who has played a mere three games this season. Boston manager Alex Cora didn't rule out a 2018 return for Pedroia even though he underwent cartilage restoration surgery on his knee before the season and is on the disabled list with knee inflammation, per Lauren Campbell of NESN.

Even without Pedroia, the Red Sox have built a healthy lead in the American League East and are six games ahead of the New York Yankees.

Adding Kinsler only makes Boston stronger, including on the defensive side. He won a Gold Glove in 2016 and is responsible for 10 defensive runs saved this season, per FanGraphs.

Offensively, Kinsler is slashing .239/.304/.406 with 13 home runs and 32 RBI. Those aren't the type of numbers indicative of much of his career, which features five seasons with at least 20 home runs—including the last two—and two with more than 30 from when he was on the Texas Rangers.

Still, Chad Jennings of The Athletic noted Kinsler is a worthwhile addition even with a dip in offensive production.

As for the Angels, they are in fourth place in the American League West and at least ensured a return package with Kinsler set for unrestricted free agency following the season.

Boston has its eye on a playoff berth and more, and Kinsler gives it a postseason-experienced veteran (37 playoff game appearances) who can help anchor the infield defense and provide timely hitting.

FROM SPORTING NEWS**MLB Trade Grades: Red sox trade for Ian Kinsler answers and raises questions**

By Joe Rivera

'Twas the night before the trade deadline, and all through Fenway, not an executive was stirring, except Dave Dombrowski. Sorry, that doesn't rhyme.

Dealin' Dave continued his trading ways Monday, acquiring Angels second baseman Ian Kinsler for a few minor league guys.

Here's how the trade worked out for both sides.

Red Sox: B

This is a move that makes sense and doesn't at the same time.

The Red Sox couldn't afford to keep going without infield help at second base with Dustin Pedroia looking more and more likely to miss the rest of the season with knee issues.

Ian Kinsler is having a down year offensively, playing to a .710 OPS (95 OPS+) in 91 games with the Angels. He's been better since the start of June, though, hitting to a .259 clip with 10 dingers in 48 games. That's more of the Kinsler fans have come to expect.

Even though the bat is lagging, Kinsler is still a great defensive second baseman, posting 10 defensive runs saved in 2018, per Baseball Reference.

The 36-year-old is also a free agent after the season, but the Red Sox won't have to worry about second base for the future — Pedroia is still under contract through 2021 and there are plenty of infield options who will be available in free agency.

Here's where it doesn't make sense: Kinsler has been very, very bad against lefties in 2018. He's hitting just .200 with a .515 OPS in 43 games (106 plate appearances), and while the Red Sox have been better vs. lefties of late, it's still the weakest point of their offense.

Brian Dozier seemed like the better trade target for the Red Sox, considering he has an OPS of .722 vs. lefty pitching in 2018. But defense plays, and Kinsler is a far better defender than Kinsler. The question to be asked: Is the defense worth the trade-off? Obviously, the Red Sox thought so and hope Kinsler continues his resurgence.

Of the available second baseman, Kinsler makes a lot of sense based on his reputation and career numbers, and the Red Sox are certainly hoping he can provide more power and Kinsler-esque numbers in the bandboxes of the AL East.

Angels: B+

With the way the Angels' farm system has suffered through the years, any time they can pluck a pitching prospect from another team is a victory.

Trading Kinsler, a free agent after the season, was a no-brainer for the Angels. This offseason shows some second base free-agent options — Daniel Murphy, Asdrubal Cabrera, Neil Walker, to name some — and they also have a top-five prospect in Jahmi Jones potentially ready to break through to the majors within the next year.

Ty Buttrey, a minor league reliever the Red Sox sent to Anaheim, is already on L.A.'s top 30 prospect list per MLB Pipeline (No. 27). He boasts a high-90s fastball but no true out pitch by way of breaking ball. He's had issues with control in the past, and scouts believe he'll end up as a middle reliever at the major league level.

Also acquired was Williams Jerez, a 26-year-old who has yet to make it to the majors. He's pitched to a 3.63 ERA with the Pawtucket Red Sox this season and doesn't rank on the Angels' top 30 list.

The Angels know where they're at in 2018 — another mediocre year, once promising given the dominance of Shohei Ohtani and some guy named Trout. They don't have much else to move, so this will probably be the biggest deal they make at the deadline.

Overall: B

Dombrowski did what was necessary to reinforce the infield, which is refreshing for a team that's playing near-.700 baseball. It's exactly what you want a GM to do: identify a weakness and fix it heading into the dog days of the season. While there may have been better options available, the Red Sox didn't give up too much to secure Kinsler.

The Angels parted with a free-agent-to-be and picked up some prospects, including one that slid into their top 30. While the Angels still don't have a great farm system — it's middle of the pack by most rankings — GM Billy Eppler knows what he has to do to replenish it, and this is a good start.

FROM FORBES.COM

Emotions Overwhelm New Cooperstown Class

By Dan Schlossberg

Jeff Idelson was right when he referred to Cooperstown as the heartbeat of baseball.

The president of the Baseball Hall of Fame also referred to the annual induction ceremonies as the most festive day on the baseball calendar.

This year's event underscored those descriptions.

In a sun-splashed day more typical of San Diego than Central New York, six new Hall of Famers delivered emotion-choked speeches that were valentines to spouses, managers, teammates, and fans.

But the loudest and longest standing ovation went to the oldest man on the stage, 84-year-old Hank Aaron, the soft-spoken but hard-hitting lifetime leader in total bases, extra-base hits, runs batted in, and home runs – since there's some question whether the superior total of Barry Bonds should be legitimate.

There were no controversies Sunday, when the players pretended it was Valentine's Day and the fans rewarded them with cheers, cowbells, clapping, and chanting.

In the vast open field adjacent to the Clark Sports Center, high school girls sold hot dogs, Dominicans waved flags, and the entire mass of humanity resembled baseball's version of Woodstock.

Some 52,000 spectators, second only to the 82,000 Tony Gwynn and Cal Ripken, Jr. drew in 2007, celebrated the three-hour event, which was actually considerably longer for spectators who came early. Many baseball notables, including active managers Bruce Bochy (Giants) and Paul Molitor (Twins), watched the feel-good ceremonies, which included player introductions by Hall of Fame CEO Jane Forbes Clark and the first public reading of new plaques, by Commissioner of Baseball Rob Manfred.

With wife Taylor due to give birth at any minute, Chipper Jones led off for the first time in his career, announcing he would name the new baby Cooper in honor of the day.

He praised his parents, promoted former teammates Andruw Jones and Fred McGriff as future Hall of Famers, and teased John Smoltz, already enshrined, for covering his bald pate with a black wig during his 2015 induction. "That was an embarrassment," Jones said with a wink.

Trevor Hoffman, whose exploits as a closer convinced writers to elect him, also appeared earlier than he did during his playing days. The sizable San Diego contingent, many dressed in Hoffman jerseys, reacted wildly Sunday to the sound of "Hell's Bells," the musical announcement that a game had reached Trevor time.

One of four new inductees who signed as a shortstop, Hoffman said he appreciated the unusually-balmy Central New York weather, noting that it felt like summer in San Diego.

Like Hoffman, Vladimir Guerrero parlayed the Southern California climate into a Cooperstown plaque. Moving from Montreal to Anaheim resulted in an instant MVP trophy in 2004 and the first appearance of the Angels logo on a Hall of Fame plaque.

In fact, the club's Spanish-language broadcaster, Jose Mota, served as the interpreter for Guerrero's speech. A boisterous support group saluted the fact that Guerrero is the first Dominican position player to reach Cooperstown (pitchers Juan Marichal and Pedro Martinez, both on the dais behind him, got there earlier).

Jack Morris provided the day's best anecdotes. One of two former Tigers, along with Alan Trammell, elected by the Veterans Committee, he said he was also the third St. Paul native (with Molitor and Dave Winfield) to reach the Hall.

The 1991 World Series MVP recalled his major-league debut in Boston. "I was facing Carl Yastrzemski in the first inning," he told the crowd. "I threw a perfect pitch and the umpire called it ball one. Then threw another perfect pitch and that was called ball two. Then I threw one on the black and the umpire said ball three. I knew I had to throw a strike so I put one right down the middle. Yaz hit it off the Green Monster.

"Ron Luciano, the umpire, marched out to the mound and said, 'Son, that was Carl Yastrzemski. Welcome to the big leagues.'"

The humble Morris, who won four World Series rings while playing for three different teams, impressed the audience with a kind comment about the Atlanta Braves, whom he defeated, 1-0, with a 10-inning shutout to complete the '91 Fall Classic. "It was great to have such evenly-matched teams," he said.

Long-time Morris teammate Alan Trammell, unlike the pitcher, spent his entire career with the Tigers. His list of thank-yous included the late Sparky Anderson, the first manager to win World Series in both leagues. "He took a young club and turned it into a contender," said Trammell, later a Tiger manager himself.

When Jim Thome took the podium, he revealed that he and his dad visited Cooperstown 10 years ago to deliver his 500th home run ball to the museum. "I think this day is just a little bit better than that," he said with a smile.

The former Cleveland first baseman, who finished with 612 lifetime home runs, came back to the Hall of Fame earlier this year to see where his plaque would hang. "I found out the dream I had as a little boy did not live in my head; it lived in my heart," he said.

The Sunday ceremonies began when Thome's daughter Lila delivered a stirring rendition of The National Anthem.

Witnesses to the 2018 induction included 51 incumbent Hall of Famers and their families.