



# ***Press Clips***

**(June 13, 2018)**

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**FROM THE OC REGISTER****For the second night in a row, Mike Trout's two homers not enough for Angels**

By Jeff Fletcher

SEATTLE — Mike Trout did everything he could to carry the Angels on Tuesday.

But a baseball team, as it turns out, is pretty heavy.

Trout couldn't do it by himself. The Angels lost 6-3 to the Seattle Mariners, despite Trout's second straight two-homer game and his spectacular run-saving catch.

Unfortunately for the Angels, the hitters besides Trout came up empty too often in the clutch, and four of the five pitchers gave up runs, including four homers.

After winning six in a row, the Angels have now lost three in a row, including the first two of this series against the AL West-leading Mariners.

"It's tough," Trout said. "We were playing good games. It seems like we go through a stretch and then have a couple bad games. (The Mariners) are hitting the ball well and they're pitching good."

The Mariners have done enough to beat the Angels, even though they haven't been able to stop Trout. He is now 14 for 22 with five homers against Seattle this season. His 31 homers against the Mariners in his career are his most against any opponent.

"That's a good club over there and they have a pretty good player on their team too," Mariners manager Scott Servais said. "We saw it again tonight. Mr. Trout is really tough to pitch to. Some of the pitches he hit out tonight were kind of where we wanted to throw them and he still does damage."

Mike Leake threw Trout an 0-and-2 slider below his knees in the fifth, and he hit it out. In the seventh, Ryan Cook threw a 2-and-2 changeup over the inner half, and Trout blasted it 412 feet. His two-run homer pulled the Angels within 4-3.

Those were all the Angels runs, though.

"We're more than Mike," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "One guy can't carry you. Mike is swinging the bat very well, but we need some other guys to get into their game."

The rest of the Angels combined for three hits, although they also hit a few balls hard that were right at fielders. Luis Valbuena had two of the hits, and he wasted one when he was thrown out at second trying to stretch his leadoff single in the sixth.

The Angels were 1 for 7 with runners in scoring position, with Trout's second homer being the only hit.

“We just didn’t get anything going tonight,” Zack Cozart said. “Usually you have a couple guys in a slump and everyone else is carrying everything. Right now it feels like it’s more than a couple guys (in a slump), myself at the top of the list.

“We’ll get it going. Our pitchers have been keeping us in the game so much. We can’t keep relying on them. We’ve got to start getting some stuff going offensively.”

It wasn’t such a great night for the Angels pitchers either.

Jaime Barría got hit hard over his five innings, and he was fortunate to get out of the game with only three runs allowed. The Mariners hit nine balls at 100 mph or harder against Barría. Two of them were homers by Mitch Haniger, a solo shot in the first and a two-run blast in the fifth.

Barría would have given up at least one more run if Trout didn’t grab Nelson Cruz’s drive with a leaping catch at the fence in the third.

“Jaime had to work hard,” Scioscia said. “Some of the mistakes caught up to him.”

## **SoCal product David Fletcher gets first promotion to Angels after sizzling start at Triple-A**

By Jeff Fletcher

SEATTLE — David Fletcher’s torrid season at Triple-A finally earned him his first promotion to the major leagues.

The Angels recalled Fletcher on Tuesday after they placed Jefry Marte on the disabled list with a sprained left wrist.

“David has come a long way,” Manager Mike Scioscia said. “He had great springs for us, for a couple years, and he really put some things together in Triple-A. He’s done a lot of things well on the baseball field. Hopefully, he’ll come up here and contribute.”

Fletcher, a 24-year-old product of Cypress High and Loyola Marymount, was hitting .350 with six homers and a .953 OPS at Salt Lake City.

Fletcher, who hadn’t even arrived at the ballpark by the time the Angels began batting practice, was not in the lineup on Tuesday. He is likely to start when the Angels face a left-handed pitcher on Wednesday. They are also expecting to see at least one lefty over the weekend in Oakland.

Fletcher is primarily a second baseman, but he can also play shortstop and third. At the moment, third seems to be where he’s needed, with Zack Cozart moved over to shortstop to fill in for injured Andrelton Simmons.

“I think he’s the best guy for this situation,” Scioscia said. “He will certainly add a lot of depth to our infield with his versatility. He will get a chance to play.”

Other than Cozart and Ian Kinsler as the current everyday players up the middle, the Angels now have a variety of options at the corners. They have left-handed hitters Luis Valbuena, José Fernandez and Nolan Fontana, and the right-handed Albert Pujols and Fletcher.

Although many fans would certainly love to see Fletcher get a shot to play every day, considering his success at Triple-A, that doesn’t seem to be in the cards at the moment.

You might say it’s not ideal to have young players who aren’t out there hitting every day, but there is still a role for them to help us win games,” Scioscia said.

As for Marte, Scioscia said he’s not sure how long he will be out. He hurt his wrist on Monday night when he reached into the running line of Dee Gordon to make a catch at first base. Marte was in a splint Tuesday. He will be re-evaluated when the Angels get back to Southern California next week.

#### **ALSO**

Eduardo Paredes was optioned to make room for Jaime Barría, who was activated to start on Tuesday. ...

Blake Wood was transferred to the 60-day disabled list to clear a spot on the 40-man roster for Fletcher. Wood had season-ending elbow surgery last month. ...

The Angels will have their second Facebook-only telecast of the season on Wednesday afternoon.

#### **UP NEXT**

Angels (Garrett Richards, 4-4, 3.26) at Mariners (Marco Gonzales, 7-3, 3.28), Wednesday, 1 p.m., Facebook Watch, KLAA (830 AM)

## **Angels’ Mike Trout begins march toward another All-Star Game**

By Jeff Fletcher

SEATTLE — Mike Trout, who has been selected to the All-Star Game in all six of his previous full seasons, is second in voting among American League outfielders, according to the first results, which were released on Tuesday.

Trout has 639,822 votes, which is second to Mookie Betts (748,872). Aaron Judge is third, with the top three vote-getters starting the game, which will be July 17 in Washington.

Trout is hitting .304 with 21 homers and a 1.094 OPS. He leads the majors with a WAR of 5.2, according to FanGraphs, which has him on pace for one of the best seasons in major league history. Trout has

played in five All-Star Games and won the game's MVP twice. He was selected for the team last year but missed the game with a thumb injury.

First baseman Albert Pujols (fourth), shortstop Andrelton Simmons (fifth) and catcher Martín Maldonado (fifth) were also among the top five at their positions. Simmons is currently out with a sprained ankle, but he is expected back by the All-Star Game.

Shohei Ohtani, who is on the ballot as a designated hitter, is in third place. Although Ohtani is now almost certainly unable to play because of a grade 2 sprain of his ulnar collateral ligament, there was some speculation that he could be voted into the game anyway because of his popularity and support from Japan.

Online voting continues through July 5. All-Star rosters are typically announced two Sundays before the game, which would be July 8, although the announcement is not set this year.

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

## **That's no sound of silence for Angels against Mariners**

By Jeff Miller

Sometimes in baseball, things don't look good.

Other times, they don't sound good.

And Seattle made a racket Tuesday against Jaime Barria in what became a 6-3 Angels loss.

To the rookie's credit, the score was still tied 1-1 into the bottom of the fifth inning despite the Mariners rocketing balls all over Safeco Field.

In that inning, however, something that felt inevitable proved to be just that, Mitch Haniger finally driving a shot to a place where no Angel could get it, his two-run home run launching Seattle to victory.

All the chaos from the home team trumped another night when Mike Trout was a one-man sound machine.

For the second consecutive game, Trout homered twice, driving in all the Angels runs during a series in which they haven't scored yet without homering.

Trout leads the majors with 23 home runs and, remember, he began Monday with two hits in his previous 19 at-bats, manager Mike Scioscia answering questions about what was wrong with the center fielder.

The four home runs in consecutive losses feeds as a fitting snapshot into the narrative of this franchise wasting the best seasons of the game's best player.

"We're not swinging the bats as a team," Scioscia said. "That puts the pitchers under a lot of pressure. We're more than Mike. One guy can't carry you."

Trout's second home run brought the Angels to within 4-3 in the seventh inning, Seattle reliever Ryan Cook aiding a potential comeback by walking Ian Kinsler with two outs immediately before Trout came up.

As bad as that sounds, it's even worse when considering that Kinsler this season is one for 24 against the Mariners.

Barria (5-2), who doesn't turn 22 until next month, has been one of the Angels' biggest surprises in 2018. He entered Tuesday tied for the team lead with five victories, despite being repeatedly shuttled back to triple-A Salt Lake.

Scioscia has repeatedly praised Barria's poise and his ability to keep things together when they appear to be on the verge of crumbling.

Barria was doing that again against the Mariners but was unable to prevent the carnage this time.

Before Tuesday, baseball's advanced metrics identified Angels pitchers as being the best in the game at missing bats.

That wasn't the case for Barria, who struck out two batters in five innings and gave up eight hits, many of which nearly left vapor trails.

"I couldn't locate my pitches," Barria said through an interpreter. "Especially the fastball."

After two innings, the Mariners led the Angels 1-0 and must have been leading everyone else in average exit velocity. Five of the first nine balls put in play against Barria left Seattle bats in excess of 100 mph.

Yet, he benefited from double-play groundouts in the first and second innings, the latter ending a bases-loaded threat.

As it was, the Mariners opened that second inning with two singles and a double from their first four batters and still didn't score.

The next inning, they didn't score only because Trout reached to the top of the wall in center field to take back what would have been at least a run-scoring double for Nelson Cruz.

The run Barria gave up early came on a Haniger first-inning home run.

He then negotiated his way through three scoreless innings before Haniger struck again with two outs and after a catcher's interference call on Martin Maldonado gifted Seattle a baserunner.

## Angels promote infielder David Fletcher

By Jeff Miller

**David Fletcher** had consecutive impressive springs for the Angels.

Team officials decided Tuesday to see what he can bring as summer approaches.

The 24-year-old from Cypress High and Loyola Marymount was promoted from triple-A Salt Lake to take the roster spot of **Jefry Marte**, who was put on the 10-day disabled list because of a sprained wrist.

“He’s the best guy for this situation,” manager **Mike Scioscia** said of Fletcher. “He certainly adds a lot of depth to our infield with his versatility. He will get a chance to play.”

Ranked by mlb.com as the Angels’ No. 21 prospect, Fletcher was leading the Pacific Coast League in hits, doubles and runs, and was third with a .350 batting average.

His primary position is second base, but he also has played third and shortstop this season.

Scioscia suggested Fletcher, who bats right-handed, will see time particularly against left-handers. The Seattle Mariners are set to start one Wednesday in **Marco Gonzales**.

“David’s come a long way,” Scioscia said. “He really put a lot of things together down in triple A. Hopefully, he’ll come up here and contribute.”

The Angels took a long look at Fletcher in spring training, when he tied with **Justin Upton** for the team lead in at-bats. He hit .308. In the spring of 2017, Fletcher batted .357.

Given their roster situation — Marte became the 11th Angel on the DL — team officials appear comfortable for now having still-developing prospects not playing daily.

“You might look at it and say it’s not ideal where you have young players who aren’t out there hitting every day,” Scioscia said. “There’s still a role for them to help us win games.”

Marte was injured Monday in a collision at first base with Seattle’s **Dee Gordon**. He’ll be re-examined when the Angels return to Southern California.

### Short hops

Reliever **Eduardo Paredes** was sent to Salt Lake to make room for **Jaime Barria**, who started Tuesday against the Mariners. ...Reliever **Blake Wood** was transferred to the 60-day disabled list to open a spot for Fletcher on the 40-man roster.



FROM ANGELS.COM

## Trout homers twice, tops MLB with 23 in loss

*Mariners counter with 4 blasts as Angels drop 3rd straight*

By Maria Guardado

SEATTLE -- Despite another herculean effort from **Mike Trout**, the Angels lost their second straight game to the Mariners, 6-3, on Tuesday night at Safeco Field, slipping a season-high 6 1/2 games back of their division rivals in the American League West.

After homering twice in Monday's series opener, Trout crushed another pair of home runs on Tuesday to account for all three of the Angels' runs and secure back-to-back multihomer games for the first time in his career. Trout now leads the Majors with 23 home runs.

Trout's second home run of the night, a two-run shot off reliever **Ryan Cook**, cut the deficit to 4-3 in the seventh, but it still wasn't enough to topple the red-hot Mariners, who used two homers from both **Mitch Haniger** and **Ryon Healy** to cruise to their 10th win in their last 12 games.

"We're not swinging the bats as a team," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "It puts our pitchers under a lot of pressure to make pitches. Any mistakes we made tonight, they hit out of the park, so give those guys a little bit of credit. But we're more than Mike, and one guy can't carry you. Mike is swinging the bat very well, but we need some of our other guys to start to get into their game."

Rookie **Jaime Barria**, who was recalled from Triple-A Salt Lake on Tuesday and is expected to fill the void in the Angels' rotation left by the injured **Shohei Ohtani**, was charged with the loss after yielding three runs (two earned) on eight hits over five innings in his first MLB start since June 1.

"I wasn't locating my pitches today," Barria said in Spanish. "I couldn't locate my fastball on the outside corner, so that was it, more than anything."

Barria entered Tuesday with a 2.48 ERA over his first seven starts for the Angels, but he wasn't as crisp against the Mariners. In the first inning, Barria surrendered a solo home run to Haniger, which gave Seattle a quick 1-0 lead. He faced more trouble in the second, allowing the Mariners to load the bases with one out, though he avoided damage by inducing a 6-4-3 inning-ending double play from **David Freitas**.

After **Dee Gordon** singled to lead off the third, Barria retired the next two batters he faced and then received an assist from Trout, who made an impressive leaping grab at the right-center-field fence to rob **Nelson Cruz** and record the final out of the inning.

Cruz's drive had an exit velocity of 105 mph and a launch angle of 31 degrees, a combination that resulted in home runs approximately 86 percent of the time from 2015-17, according to **Statcast™**. The ball had an overall hit probability of 88 percent.

"Incredible," Barria said. "He's a phenomenon. Every day he surprises us with his play."

The Angels, meanwhile, struggled to solve Seattle right-hander **Mike Leake**, who blanked them through four innings before Trout homered to tie the game, 1-1, in the fifth. Trout fell behind, 0-2, before golfing a low-and-away slider out to left-center field for his 22nd home run of the year.

"That's a good club over there," Mariners manager Scott Servais said. "They have a pretty good player on their team, too. We saw it again tonight. He's really tough to pitch to. Some of the pitches hit tonight were kind of where you wanted to throw them and he still does damage."

The Mariners regained the lead after Haniger went deep for a second time off Barria in the fifth. After Freitas reached on catcher's interference, Haniger blasted a changeup to left-center field for a two-run homer that made it 3-1. Healy added a solo shot off **Cam Bedrosian** in the sixth to give the Mariners a three-run lead.

Trout's second homer brought the Angels within one in the seventh, but the club's bullpen couldn't hold off the Mariners, who received a pair of insurance runs on **Jean Segura's** RBI double and Healy's leadoff home run in the eighth.

The Angels have now lost three consecutive games following a six-game winning streak. Aside from Trout, the lineup mustered only three hits on Tuesday and has slowed after the injuries to **Andrelton Simmons** and Ohtani. Over their last three games, the Angels have hit just .148 (4-for-27) with runners in scoring position and have left 25 men on base.

"It's tough because we're playing good games," Trout said. "It just seems like we go through a good stretch and then have a couple bad games. But [the Mariners] are hitting the ball well and they're pitching good... We've just got to keep battling. It's a long season."

#### **SOUND SMART**

Trout now has 20 career home runs at Safeco Field, surpassing Mark Teixeira (19) for the most by a visiting player at the ballpark. He is batting .636 (14-for-22) with eight runs, three doubles, one triple, five home runs, eight RBIs, three walks and one stolen base against the Mariners this season.

"That guy has been unbelievable," Haniger said. "Unfortunately he's on the opposite team from us, but nothing but respect for what that guy can do."

#### **UP NEXT**

Right-hander **Garrett Richards** (4-4, 3.26 ERA) will take the mound on Wednesday afternoon as the Angels and Mariners close out their three-game series at 1:10 p.m. PT at Safeco Field. Richards will be opposed by Seattle left-hander **Marco Gonzales** (7-3, 3.28 ERA). Richards has pitched to a 2.09 ERA over his last seven starts, but the Angels have gone just 3-4 in those games. He is 6-4 with a 2.91 ERA in 19 career appearances (11 starts) against the Mariners. Wednesday's game will air **exclusively on Facebook Watch**.

## Marte (wrist) heads to DL; Fletcher gets callup

By Maria Guardado

SEATTLE -- The Angels placed infielder **Jefry Marte** on the 10-day disabled list with a left wrist sprain on Tuesday and called up prospect David Fletcher from Triple-A Salt Lake for his first stint in the Majors. To clear a spot for Fletcher on the 40-man roster, the Angels transferred reliever **Blake Wood** (Tommy John surgery) to the 60-day disabled list.

Fletcher, a 24-year-old infielder who is ranked the club's **No. 21 prospect** by MLB Pipeline, has been one of the top hitters in the Pacific Coast League this season, batting .350 with a .953 OPS, six home runs, five triples and 35 RBIs over 58 games. He ranks first in the PCL in hits (89), doubles (25) and runs (55) and third in batting average. A native of Orange, Calif., Fletcher was the Angels' sixth-round Draft pick out of Loyola Marymount in 2015.

"David's come a long way," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He had a great spring for us for a couple years and really put a lot of things together down in Triple-A. He's doing a lot of things well on the baseball field, and hopefully he'll come up here and contribute."

Fletcher is a natural second baseman, but he can also play shortstop and third base. A right-handed hitter, Fletcher could platoon with **Luis Valbuena** at third and draw playing time against left-handed pitchers. He did not start on Tuesday, but he could be in the lineup to face Mariners lefty **Marco Gonzales** on Wednesday.

"I think he will definitely get some looks, especially against some left-handed pitching," Scioscia said. "He can play a number of positions, so he can fit in. We'll take a look. We'll just take a look at things and see where he can get an opportunity to get some looks."

Marte hurt his wrist after **Dee Gordon** ran into his glove at first base on Monday night and is currently sporting a splint. The 26-year-old corner infielder was batting .262 with a .752 OPS and three home runs in a reserve role this season. Scioscia said the Angels won't have a sense of how long Marte will be sidelined until he is re-examined by the club's doctors in Southern California.

Marte is the 11th Angel to land on the disabled list this season, joining **Shohei Ohtani** (right UCL sprain), **Kaleb Cowart** (left ankle sprain), **Andrelton Simmons** (right ankle sprain), **Kole Calhoun** (right oblique strain), **Rene Rivera** (right knee inflammation), **Keynan Middleton** (Tommy John surgery), **Wood**, **JC Ramirez** (Tommy John surgery), **Matt Shoemaker** (right forearm strain) and **Alex Meyer** (right labrum surgery).

The Angels also optioned reliever **Eduardo Paredes** to clear a roster spot for **Jaime Barria**, who was recalled from Triple-A Salt Lake and started against the Mariners on Tuesday.

## Trout on pace for 7th straight All-Star nod

By Maria Guardado

**Mike Trout** is well on his way to earning his seventh consecutive All-Star nod, as the Angels' star center fielder ranks second among American League outfielders in the first 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Ballot update that was released on Tuesday.

Trout (639,822) has garnered the third-most votes among AL players, trailing only the Red Sox's **Mookie Betts** (748,872) and the Astros' **Jose Altuve** (701,236). Trout is in line to receive his sixth straight fan election at the 2018 MLB All-Star Game at Nationals Park on July 17.

The 26-year-old is hitting .304 with a 1.094 OPS and 21 home runs, tied with **J.D. Martinez** for the MLB lead.

Two-way phenom **Shohei Ohtani**, who landed on the disabled list on Friday with a Grade 2 sprain of the ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow, ranks third among AL designated hitters with 218,981 votes. Ohtani trails Martinez (513,415) and the Yankees' **Giancarlo Stanton** (231,885).

**Albert Pujols** is fourth among AL first basemen, while **Martin Maldonado** and **Andrelton Simmons** are fifth among catchers and shortstops, respectively. Simmons is sidelined with a Grade 2 right ankle sprain, but he has a strong case for his first All-Star selection, as he's hitting .330 with an .860 OPS and has twice as many walks (24) as strikeouts (10).

Fans may cast votes for starters at MLB.com and all 30 club sites -- on computers, tablets and smartphones -- exclusively online using the **2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Ballot** until Thursday, July 5, at 11:59 p.m. ET. On smartphones and tablets, fans can also access the ballot via the MLB At Bat and MLB Ballpark mobile apps. Each fan can vote up to five times in any 24-hour period, for a maximum of 35 ballots cast.

Following the announcement of this year's All-Star starters, reserves and pitchers, fans should return to MLB.com and cast their 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Final Vote for the final player on each league's roster. Then on Tuesday, July 17, while watching the 2018 All-Star Game presented by Mastercard live on FOX, fans may visit MLB.com to submit their choices for the Ted Williams Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet with the 2018 MLB All-Star Game MVP Vote.

The 89th Midsummer Classic, at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C., will be televised nationally by FOX Sports; in Canada by Rogers Sportsnet and RDS; and worldwide by partners in more than 180 countries. FOX Deportes will provide Spanish-language coverage in the United States, while ESPN Radio and ESPN Radio Deportes will provide exclusive national radio coverage of the All-Star Game. MLB Network, MLB.com and SiriusXM also will provide comprehensive All-Star Week coverage. For more information about MLB All-Star Week and to purchase tickets, please visit **AllStarGame.com** and follow @MLB and @AllStarGame on social media.

## Tuesday's top prospect performers\*

By William Boor

- **Angels' No. 7** prospect Griffin Canning continues to impress for Double-A Mobile. The right-hander put together another scoreless start -- his sixth over his past eight games -- as he struck out six over 5 2/3 innings. Canning, who has a 1.97 ERA through 10 starts with Mobile, walked one, hit one and gave up two hits.

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

## Underdog battles injury, becomes 21st-round pick

*Righty Reyes trained himself at former high school for 5 years*

By Avery Yang

ANAHEIM -- Cristian Reyes would cry himself to sleep, wondering if it was the end of his baseball career.

After a labrum tear in his right arm nearly derailed his career, necessitating a nearly five-year recovery process, Reyes, 23, was drafted by the Angels on June 6 with their **21st-round selection**. His Draft card read "No School." Reyes had not played a collegiate baseball game since 2016, when he pitched just 5 1/3 innings. Overall, he pitched just 6 1/3 innings over three seasons of collegiate ball.

Reyes' journey started in 2013, at Broward Community College, after a four-year stint at Hialeah Gardens (Fla.) High School, where he was a No. 3 starter for a district-winning team. At the time, his fastball topped out at 84 mph on his best day. Just one inning into his freshman season at Broward, Reyes tore his right labrum, starting a laborious and all-encompassing rehabilitation process. A few months into his rehab, he turned 19, and his insurance expired, forcing him to end formal professionally-aided therapy.

Without the proper regimen, Reyes' right shoulder never quite returned to its natural range of motion. He tried his own methods over the course of the next two years, returning to his high school stomping grounds to train using regimens he learned via YouTube. For two and a half years, Reyes would go to Hialeah Gardens every other day and work, mostly by himself, occasionally with his older brother, bringing a bucket of balls to throw against a net, doing long-toss, doing stretches and lunges hours before the high school team would take the field for practice.

There were plenty of days when Reyes' right arm wouldn't feel adequate -- when he would have to stop after just a few throws, when he felt like quitting and abandoning baseball. Those were the days he would cry himself to sleep -- the days where he'd be running the track, crying every step of the way.

"I'd cry, I'd be in tears at times on the track, running, saying, 'I don't know what's happening. I don't know what's wrong with me.'" Reyes said. "I would cry myself to sleep at times. I felt like, 'That's it, I'm done.' It was multiple times I felt like quitting like that. But the next day, I would be like, 'No, I can't.'

"I just loved the game so much that I needed to try it again. I always told myself that if I wanted to leave this game, I wanted someone to tell me I'm not good enough. I didn't want to leave the game because of injuries."

So Reyes continued, and in 2016, three years after his labrum tear, he took the mound at Kishwaukee College in Illinois, another junior college that rolled the dice on him, despite the fact that he was still throwing just 84 mph. He threw 5 1/3 innings that season, with pain still permeating his right arm. Reyes' strength and range of motion were not even close to 100 percent, three years after his initial injury.

Reyes continued to do his throwing and stretching regimen four times a week at Hialeah Gardens after the 2016 season concluded. He joined a Sunday league, the Federal League out of Fort Lauderdale, where he played up until the 2018 Draft. For the '17 season, Reyes was due to play at ASA College in Miami, but he was out of eligibility because, technically, he played two years at his first community college, and he thought that Broward had given him a medical redshirt for what should have been his sophomore year, which would have enabled him to play at ASA during the spring of '17. Broward did not do so.

"I felt cheated because I thought the team would have done it automatically," Reyes said.

So Reyes went back to the drawing boards once again, bureaucracy rearing its ugly head, preventing him a much-needed chance to rehab and showcase his abilities. Another year of self-training it was. At that point, his right arm had begun to feel better -- he was throwing around 91 mph. A few months after he was declared ineligible to play at ASA, in the fall of '17, his former high school coach Tino Burgos reached out, saying that he had a spot available at Florida Memorial University, where Burgos now coached. Reyes transferred in, ready to start playing again in the spring of '18, but again, there was another academic-related snafu -- he didn't have enough credits from community college to be eligible. He fell just a few short of the 48 needed to suit up.

Back to Hialeah he went, sprints, then lunges all over again. Reyes continued playing with the Federal League, with no feasible end in sight. But at that point, he felt hungrier than he ever had. His velocity was steadily increasing, now up to 96 mph -- touching 98 at times.

"I guess my arm got used to all the work after all those years of stretches and throwing," Reyes said. "My arm just started getting super loose out of nowhere."

His representative, Christian Perez, a former high school teammate, reached out to a scout with the White Sox, convincing him to observe a bullpen session. The scout was blown away by Reyes' velocity. Perez then contacted scouts from the Angels and Marlins, who were equally wowed.

Scouts then showed up to the Federal League in droves, ready to see if an obscure Sunday leaguer who had pitched less than a game's worth of competitive baseball in the past five seasons actually had what it takes to get drafted into the Major Leagues.

Evidently, this Sunday leaguer did.

"I think there's a lot of excitement," Angels scouting director Matt Swanson said. "It's a very old-school way of scouting a player [when] there's so much information these days."

Reyes was drafted with the 631st overall pick in the 2018 MLB Draft. Had you told that fact to his coaches from high school after Reyes' labrum tear in 2013, as he was coming in every other day, struggling to merely throw the ball, they wouldn't have believed you.

"No way," said Carlos Garcia, then-assistant coach, now head coach, for Hialeah Gardens High School. "I get goosebumps just thinking about it right now. It just shows my young guys now that anything is possible, as long as you put your mind and your hard work to wanting to get it done."

If you had told Reyes, he'd express the same disbelief.

After all of that, Reyes had to have been excited to get drafted by a Major League team, right? Not really. Just 30 minutes after he was selected in the 21st round, there he was, on the track of Hialeah Gardens High School, getting in his throws, just like he had since '13.

"I was like, 'What the hell, he just got drafted,'" Garcia said. "Me, Carlos Garcia, I would have been celebrating. He's like, 'Nah, coach.' Instead of partying or celebrating, he came to his alma mater to throw, run and continue to do what he's been doing to get to this point right now."

"I'll be happy when I get to the big leagues," Reyes said. "At any moment, in this game, you could get released. I still have to be focused. My main goal is not to be drafted; my main goal is to make it to a Major League team, make it in the big leagues. The day that I'm in Angel Stadium, on the hill, pitching, with my jersey on, is when I'll be excited."

## FROM THE ATHLETIC

### **Stark: How MLB expansion could lead to realignment, a new playoff format, a universal DH and more**

By Jayson Stark

*"I want to be clear about expansion. ... We've made clear we have two big issues — Tampa Bay and Oakland — that need to be resolved before we think about it. But the fact of the matter is, we're blessed. We've got cities out there that want to have Major League Baseball. And I think Major League Baseball has to show some receptivity to that because down the road, we are interested in it."*

-Commissioner Rob Manfred, to the Athletic's Ken Rosenthal last month

Close your eyes and imagine baseball in the year 2025. Close your eyes and imagine baseball after Rob Manfred's expansion dreams come true.

Imagine a sport that could look dramatically different with 32 teams instead of 30.

Imagine a realignment, based almost solely on geography, that could blow up the structure of the leagues and divisions as we've always known them.

Imagine a postseason that could also expand, to 12 or even 16 teams.

Imagine a totally overhauled schedule, with fewer games and saner travel.

Imagine a sport where every team would use the designated hitter, possibly because there could be no such thing anymore as a National and American league.

Yes, it's a funny thing. When the commissioner utters that magic word, *expansion*, the first question most people tend to ask is: "Where?" But in some ways, that's the *least* interesting question revolving around expansion these days.

When people inside the game discuss where expansion is heading, they're gazing far beyond the geography. What they see is expansion as a powerful vehicle that could open doors to untold possibilities, whenever the stars line up to make it all possible.

"The benefits of having 32 teams are so clear," says one baseball official, "that at some point, we've got to get to 32 – whether it's in two years or 20."

That question – when? – is probably the hardest to answer. But those other questions? Let's take a look at them, informed by extensive conversations with people around the sport.

### **WHICH CITIES HAVE THE BEST SHOT?**

Let's just assume that one of these decades, the stadium situations in Oakland and Tampa Bay actually get resolved. Crazy idea, we know. But let's go with that – and assume that neither the A's nor the Rays wind up relocating.

That opens the expansion field to every major city in North America that currently lacks a big-league baseball team. We've explored all the cities that have been connected with MLB at any point. Here is how we would rank those cities, based on our own reportorial instinct:

1) PORTLAND, ORE. – It's the 22<sup>nd</sup> largest media market in America, with a metropolitan area that is home to nearly 3.2 million people. One baseball official described Portland as the most organized of all the cities bidding for a team. So it has that going for it. Its biggest drawback is that it's less than 200 miles away from Seattle, so a team in Portland would face many of the same travel challenges that the Mariners face. But ... if baseball is headed toward realignment (and a schedule) based around geography, having two teams in the Pacific Northwest would actually ease the travel burden in both



Seattle and Portland. And that could be a major selling point, assuming a new ballpark and TV rights deal fall into place.

2) CHARLOTTE, N.C. – One of the fastest-growing cities in America, Charlotte ranks No. 17 among all American cities in population (over 850,000) and ranks as the 23<sup>rd</sup> largest media market. Charlotte actually has a larger population, within its city limits, than Atlanta, Miami, Tampa or Nashville. It's a hotbed of pro and college sports passion. And another team in the Southeast would fit perfectly into baseball's geographic profile. Naturally, it always comes down to money – and building a ballpark. So there's still that. But by any other measure, Charlotte appears well-positioned to be one of the 32.

3) NASHVILLE – Very similar profile to Charlotte, though in a slightly smaller media market (No. 27). Nashville has showered love on the Titans and Predators, has a long and successful minor-league history, and fits the geographical allure of adding a team in the South. It would also need a ballpark and TV deal. But as one longtime official put it, "I've always been surprised that Nashville wasn't higher on this list."

4) MONTREAL – It's the largest city in North America without a baseball team, with an estimated 1.7 million people living in the city and approximately 4 million in its metropolitan area. Plus, it feels as though baseball owes Montreal a second chance, after everything the labor wars of the '90s did to doom the Expos to failure. But there are numerous issues behind the scenes. The prospects for a new stadium and big TV deal are shaky. There are the same tax and currency-conversion challenges the Blue Jays face. And the political enthusiasm for doing what it takes to attract a team doesn't seem to match the energy in Stade Olympique every March, when the Blue Jays stop by for their annual exhibition games. A lot more would have to happen to bring baseball back to Montreal than it might appear from afar.

5) SAN ANTONIO/AUSTIN – The Rangers and Astros wouldn't be big fans of any attempt to install a team in San Antonio or Austin, two of the fastest-growing cities in America. But we found it interesting that they were the first two areas mentioned by one official we surveyed – if only because Austin is the largest city in the United States that has no team in any of the four major professional sports, and San Antonio is the largest with just one team (the Spurs). But MLB would have to make significant concessions to the other Texas franchises to make this happen.

6) LAS VEGAS – In hockey, the Golden Knights just wrote themselves the greatest expansion script ever. The Raiders will arrive in 2020 if all goes according to plan. And when the Supreme Court signed off on the legalization of sports gambling from coast to coast, it removed much of the weight that had always hung over the idea of baseball in Vegas. But Las Vegas would be the smallest media market in baseball (No. 40), even smaller than Milwaukee and Cincinnati. So there would be built-in revenue challenges from Day One. And let's face it: Vegas is one scorching place in the summer, with an average temperature over 100 in June, July and August. So "even with a dome or a retractable-roof stadium," says an official of one team, "I just don't think you have the same energy or commerce in Vegas in the summer as you do during the winter."

7) MEXICO CITY – The commissioner has mentioned Mexico City (population: nearly 9 million) as a potential expansion site numerous times. But there are so many obstacles to putting a team in Mexico, on almost every front, that one source we surveyed went so far as to say: “I think you’d see a team in London before you see a team in Mexico.”

Are there possibilities other than these? Of course. Indianapolis? Oklahoma City? New Orleans? A third team in New York (or North Jersey)? A third team in the Los Angeles/Orange County metroplex? A team in Connecticut? None would be completely impossible. But none would be even remotely close to likely, either. Get back to us in five years.

### **HOW WOULD REALIGNMENT WORK?**

Close your eyes and imagine baseball in the year 2025. Yeah, we know we’ve used that line before. But here is where that flight of imagination begins to carry you to places you never expected to travel.

Imagine the Yankees and Mets, Giants and A’s, Dodgers and Angels, Cubs and White Sox – all in the same division.

Imagine the Astros playing the Red Sox in October – in the World Series.

Imagine if baseball divided its landscape along the geography-based lines of the NBA – as opposed to the artificial, league-based lines drawn up in 1901.

Is *that* really where baseball is headed?

To be honest, it’s way too premature to tell. What we *can* tell you, though, is that baseball’s Strategic Planning Committee has looked at that realignment-by-geography scenario long and hard.

A bunch of different ideas remain in play. But a geographic realignment easily could look like this:

### **MLB EAST**

#### BAMBINO DIVISION

NY Yankees

NY Mets

Baltimore Orioles

Washington Nationals

#### SPLINTER DIVISION

Red Sox

Blue Jays

Phillies

Pirates

#### AARON DIVISION

Braves

Marlins  
Rays  
Charlotte\*

MUSIAL DIVISION

Cardinals  
Tigers  
Reds  
Indians

**MLB WEST**

JACKIE DIVISION

Dodgers  
Angels  
Diamondbacks  
Padres

MAYS DIVISION

Giants  
A's  
Mariners  
Portland\*

BRETT DIVISION

Royals  
Astros  
Rangers  
Rockies

ERNIE DIVISION

Cubs  
White Sox  
Brewers  
Twins

(\*-expansion team)

Now, there are obviously many, many variations on that alignment. It wouldn't be hard to redraw the map to keep Yankees/Red Sox, Cubs/Cardinals, Dodgers/Giants, etc., in the same division, for instance. But you get the idea.

"When we talked about this, it just felt like a very futuristic conversation," says one source who was present for these discussions. "It might seem so radical. But it has so many advantages from a scheduling, fan and attendance standpoint."

And it isn't just him talking. When Rob Manfred sat down with Ken Rosenthal, the first advantage he cited when he began ruminating on expansion was getting to "a more geographically based alignment."

There are other ways to get there, though. Baseball could opt for two eight-team divisions in each league over four four-team divisions. But among the folks we surveyed, there was clearly more support for more, smaller divisions – because of the geography advantages and because it would allow eight teams to tell their fans, "Hey, we won our division."

The most dramatic question of all, however, would be this:

Does baseball really want to blow up the National and American leagues?

It's neat. It's clean. It's efficient – geographically speaking. But doing that means offending the traditionalists – and there are still plenty of them, sitting in owners' boxes and in the bleachers.

Doing that also means bringing the DH to all 32 teams, because there would be no such thing anymore as an "American League." On the other hand, a universal DH could happen with or without any sort of realignment. They're not necessarily linked.

So could baseball realign by geography *without* waving goodbye to the National and American leagues? Well, not as cleanly. But it could go to something like this:

## **NATIONAL LEAGUE**

### NL NORTHEAST

Nationals  
Mets  
Phillies  
Pirates

### NL MIDEAST

Cubs  
Cardinals  
Reds  
Brewers

### NL SOUTH

Braves  
Marlins  
Rays\*\*  
Charlotte\*

### NL WEST

Dodgers  
Giants

Padres  
Diamondbacks

## **AMERICAN LEAGUE**

### AL EAST

Yankees  
Red Sox  
Orioles  
Blue Jays

### AL MIDEAST

Indians  
Twins  
White Sox  
Tigers

### AL SOUTH

Astros  
Rangers  
Royals  
Rockies\*\*

### AL WEST

Mariners  
Portland\*  
A's  
Angels  
(\* - expansion team)  
(\*\* - changed league)

There are several variations on that idea, too, naturally. And something like that might eventually be how this turns out. But whether realignment turns out to be radical or not-so-radical, the ripple effects would be dramatic. Which leads us to ask ...

## **HOW WOULD THIS AFFECT THE SCHEDULE AND POSTSEASON?**

We should make clear that baseball is still years away from having to answer those questions. But all of this will be on the table:

**FEWER GAMES, MORE PLAYOFFS** – We found nobody who didn't see expansion as a trigger for both of the above. The postseason field could expand to either six teams per league or as many as eight. The regular season then would shrink – likely to 154 games – so the postseason could begin sooner and the World Series could end before Thanksgiving.

WHY A 154-GAME SCHEDULE – Lopping eight games off the schedule also cuts about 10 days off the regular season. So an extra postseason round could fit comfortably into that time frame. And the schedule-makers would be eternally grateful for finally having the opportunity to make out a schedule with A) an even number of teams in each league, B) an even number of teams in each division and C) more wiggle room. As one official put it, “What everyone involved with the schedule tells me is that 32 teams and 154 games is the single easiest schedule to make.”

BALANCED OR UNBALANCED – This debate has been going on for two decades. It won’t be going away no matter how baseball realigns. There is so much emphasis now on the importance of winning your division that an unbalanced schedule makes sense – unless you’re ensconced in the wild-card race. Then an unbalanced schedule punishes teams in the best divisions, and that has never seemed very fair. In his interview with *The Athletic*, Manfred suggested that a more balanced schedule “probably” makes sense. But if the biggest selling point of geographical realignment is to make travel less crazy, that swings the scale back toward unbalanced, right? This is a tough one!

HOW GEOGRAPHICAL REALIGNMENT COULD HELP OCTOBER – In his conversation with Ken Rosenthal, Manfred raised a typical postseason scheduling nightmare that he would love to avoid – when a team like the Red Sox plays a team like the Angels in a best-of-five Division Series. Besides the grueling coast-to-coast travel, he said, there’s another problem: “You’re either playing too early for the people in Anaheim or too late for the people in Boston.” But if MLB divided its leagues by geography, NBA-style, it would never face one of those matchups before a best-of-seven round, because the early rounds would be either all-East or all-West matchups. Is it possible to make that happen without blowing up the leagues? Sure doesn’t seem like it. And that could factor heavily into the realignment strategy down the line.

A NEW ROUND OF PLAYOFFS – Does baseball really want to follow the NBA and NHL toward a 16-team postseason field? That would likely mean starting the postseason with *eight* best-of-three-game series. And in a sport that plays every day, that would mean overlapping games – and would probably work only if baseball goes to total geographical realignment. So adding a sixth playoff team seems more likely, leading to an NFL-type format in which the Nos. 3 and 4 seeds among the division winners would host the two wild cards in each league. Would that be a one-and-done game or a best-of-three? Too early to say. Just bear in mind that baseball’s national TV deals with Fox, Turner and ESPN run through 2021. And you know what drives those deals? October.

It’s fascinating to take a step back and see how all these pieces fit together once expansion opens the box to this puzzle. But with 30 teams, doing any of this turns into a sport-wide migraine.

So you can close your eyes and try to picture all of this. But this is no Rob Manfred pipe dream. This is *going* to happen. This isn’t a matter of *if*. It’s a matter of filling in the year – and then filling in all the brave-new-world details that are guaranteed to follow.

**FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS****Trout hits 2 HRs again, Mariners belt 4 in 6-3 win vs Angels**

SEATTLE -- When Mike Trout gets on a power-hitting hot streak like this, it's hard for other teams to watch -- and match.

The Seattle Mariners have been doing just fine the past two games going toe-to-toe with the Los Angeles Angels slugger.

Mitch Haniger and Ryon Healy each homered twice as the first-place Mariners shook off two homers by Trout for the second consecutive night, beating the Angels 6-3 on Tuesday.

Trout took sole possession of the major league lead with 23 home runs. He also hit a pair in the Angels' 5-3 loss Monday and has 20 career homers at Safeco Field, most in any visiting ballpark.

Mike Leake (7-3) allowed one run in six innings for Seattle, which has won three consecutive games and 10 of 12 overall to remain a half-game ahead of Houston atop the AL West.

Edwin Diaz worked the ninth for his big league-best 25th save in 28 tries.

"Everything is kind of clicking," Haniger said.

Yes, fly balls were leaving the ballpark with ease Tuesday, and the Mariners are 5-0 when they hit four or more home runs in a game.

But the play that had everyone talking was Haniger's throw from right field to cut down Luis Valbuena at second base leading off the sixth.

Haniger had just given Seattle a 3-1 lead in the fifth with a two-run homer when Valbuena roped a line drive down the right-field line. By the time Haniger was able to get to it, Valbuena was on his way to second base for what appeared to be a double.

"Luckily, I just got a really good bounce off the bottom of the wall," Haniger said. "Usually you just come up firing, and try and keep your throw low."

Haniger's throw from deep in the corner was high, but traveled more than 240 feet right into the glove of shortstop Jean Segura, who made a no-look, backhand tag on Valbuena as he slid into the bag.

"(Haniger) is a five-tool player," Mariners manager Scott Servais said.

Healy homered in the sixth to extend the lead to 4-1.

Trout answered with his second of the game in the seventh, a two-run drive that hit the scoreboard in left-center to cut it to 4-3.

In two games, Trout has accounted for five of his team's six runs on four homers.

"One guy can't carry you," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Mike is swinging the bat very well, but we need some of our other guys to start to get into the game."

Seattle added insurance runs on Segura's RBI double in the seventh and Healy's leadoff homer in the eighth.

Haniger lined an opposite-field solo shot off Jaime Barria (5-2) in the first to give the Mariners a 1-0 lead. Trout tied it with his homer in the fifth off Leake.

That was the only run permitted by Leake, who gave up four hits while striking out four. It was his 10th win with the Mariners since they acquired him from St. Louis on Aug. 30 last year for infielder Rayder Ascanio.

"It's tough. We're playing good games," Trout said. "They're hitting the ball well and they're pitching good. We've just got to keep battling. It's a long season."

#### THEY COME IN THREES

Segura had his 12th three-hit game Monday, most in the majors, and is on pace for 30 this season -- which has been done only 14 times. George Sisler holds the single-season record of 41 set in 1920.

#### ROSTER RESHUFFLING

Angels: Barria was recalled from the minors to make the start, and Los Angeles optioned reliever Eduardo Paredes to Triple-A Salt Lake.

Mariners: To complete a trade with Boston for left-hander Roenis Elias, Seattle sent outfielder Eric Filia to the Red Sox. Filia began the season serving a 50-game suspension. He was hitting .426 at Double-A Arkansas.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Angels: 1B Jefry Marte (sprained left wrist) was in a splint after being placed on the 10-day disabled list. Scioscia said Marte will be re-evaluated later this week in Southern California. INF David Fletcher was promoted from Triple-A Salt Lake to replace Marte. ... SS Andrelton Simmons (ankle) did some light baseball activities but is not running yet. ... After fouling a ball off his foot Monday, Trout started in center field as usual. ... Relief pitcher Blake Wood (elbow) was transferred to the 60-day DL after Tommy John surgery.

Mariners: Right-handed reliever Nick Vincent (groin) had to cut a 25-pitch bullpen session short Monday and likely won't attempt another one until this weekend at the earliest. ... Servais said reliever Juan Nicasio (right knee) felt better and some of the swelling in his knee has subsided. Nicasio has yet to throw off a mound. ... Right-hander Dan Altavilla (elbow) isn't close to returning to baseball activity, Servais said.

#### UP NEXT



Angels: Right-hander Garrett Richards (4-4, 3.26 ERA) shut out the Mariners for 6 2/3 innings on May 4 for his fourth win. He hasn't won since. After dropping three consecutive decisions to close out May, Richards has given up just two runs in the past 12 1/3 innings.

Mariners: Left-hander Marco Gonzales (7-3, 3.28 ERA) has allowed just three earned runs in his past five starts, a span of 33 1/3 innings. He has gone at least six innings in eight of his last nine starts.

### FROM NBC SPORTS

## Mike Trout had X-rays after fouling ball off leg

By Craig Calcaterra

The bad news: Angels outfielder **Mike Trout** fouled a ball off his leg in the eighth inning of last night's game against the Mariners and it looked like it hurt.

The good news: he stayed in the game and promptly hit his second home run of the night in the same at bat, and it flew 459 feet which is . . . not short.

The bad news: it wasn't enough, the Mariners won and his leg was still bad enough after the game that he needed X-rays.

The good news: the X-rays came back negative and Trout told reporters after the game that he expects to play today.

The bad news: **the X-rays had potassium benzoate.**

Or not. I don't know. I just got carried away. Anyway, here's some dingers:

### FROM CBS SPORTS

## Leaderboarding: In appreciation of the still underappreciated Mike Trout and WAR

*The consensus best player in the game is still nationally underappreciated*

By Matt Snyder

As has been all-too-common a theme in his career, Mike Trout did nearly everything he could to help the Angels win on Monday night and they still lost (to an upstart Mariners team that deserves lots of attention in its own right). Trout was 2 for 3 with two home runs and a walk. He only came to bat once

with runners on base and was intentionally walked. Justin Upton would proceed to strike out to leave the bases loaded.

Just for kicks, here's Trout's second homer of the night:

That tied Trout with J.D. Martinez for the MLB lead in bombs with 21. He's hitting .304/.435/.658 on the season, leading the AL in home runs (again, tied), runs, walks, on-base percentage and, oh yes, WAR.

This past offseason, I included Trout on my All-Underrated Team and was met with some resistance from fans who just couldn't believe I didn't understand that the best player in baseball couldn't possibly be under "rated" as if "rated" means "ranked."

No, Trout is underappreciated by many casual fans in today's game. There are several reasons, but I think I've nailed down the most pertinent:

- Baseball is a regional sport now for most fans. They only watch their own team and if they see a guy on another team getting so much credit from "the media," there's backlash. *"I'm so sick of hearing about this guy!"* Only ...
- The Angels are rarely on national TV and with baseball being such a grind, many people from the eastern half of the US wouldn't bother to check out what happened in a West coast game
- The Angels haven't had a deep playoff run with Trout.
- Lots of people like to claim their generation played the best (insert sport) in the history of said sport. So if we say Trout is doing something similar to Mickey Mantle, people who watched Mantle scoff and claim we're stupid for even making the comparison.

On that note, I'm gonna anger those people more. It's Leaderboarding time, WAR version!

Using the Fangraphs version of WAR (fWAR), Trout is now at 60.2 for his career. Keep in mind, this is a cumulative stat and Trout is only 26 years old. Here's his current company on the all-time fWAR leaderboard among position players:

- 115. Ryne Sandberg, 60.9
- 116. Joe Gordon, 60.6
- 117. Shoeless Joe Jackson, 60.5
- 118. Billy Williams, 60.4
- 119. **Trout, 60.2**
- 120. Frank "Home Run" Baker, 60.1

That's Hall of Fame company (yes, I know about Shoeless Joe, but he's HOF-caliber on stats alone). Again, keep in mind these are career totals in a stat that accumulates. He's already with Hall of Famers at age 26.

Among center fielders, Trout is already 16th. Sixteenth! You still wanna push back on me saying he's historically underappreciated? Here's his company:

- 14. Duke Snider, 63.5
- 15. Kenny Lofton, 62.4

**16. Trout, 60.2**

17. Max Carey, 60.1

18. Andre Dawson, 59.5 (that's career total, he's just sorted in both CF and RF)

19. Richie Ashburn, 57.4

Jumping over to the baseball-reference.com version of WAR (they calculate the defensive component differently), Trout sits in similar fashion.

## All-time bWAR

117. Jim Edmonds, Keith Hernandez, Harmon Killebrew; 60.4

120. Zack Wheat, 60.2

121. Bobby Abreu, 60.0

**122. Trout, 59.8**

123. Mike Piazza, 59.6

Among active position players, Trout is already sixth. Every player above him is at least 35 years old. The only players in the top 10 under age 35 are Trout and 34-year-olds Joey Votto and Dustin Pedroia.

1. Albert Pujols, 99.6
2. Adrian Beltre, 94
3. Miguel Cabrera, 69.3
4. Robinson Cano, 67.6
5. Chase Utley, 65.6
6. **Trout, 59.8**
7. Joey Votto, 57.6
8. Ian Kinsler, 56.2
9. Joe Mauer, 54.9
10. Dustin Pedroia, 52.1

And then there's this: Using Jay Jaffe's JAWS method of determining worthy Hall of Famers, Trout ranks seventh in history among center fielders and he is above average when compared to current Hall of Famers.

1. Willie Mays, 115.0
2. Ty Cobb, 110.1
3. Tris Speaker, 98.2
4. Mickey Mantle, 87.6
5. Ken Griffey Jr., 68.9
6. Joe DiMaggio, 64.5
7. **Trout, 59.3**
8. Duke Snider, 58.1
9. Average HOF CF, 57.9

Yeah, vocal minority -- at least I hope it's a minority -- keep telling me (and yourself) you're tired of hearing about him instead of trying to watch and enjoy greatness. That's a great way to fan.

Keep on keeping on, Trout. It's a pleasure to witness all-time greatness.

### **FROM USA TODAY**

## **Red Sox's Mookie Betts is the top All-Star vote-getter in the AL**

By Scott Boeck

Mookie Betts, who returned to the Boston Red Sox lineup Monday after serving time on the disabled list, is the leading All-Star vote-getter in the American League, according to totals released by Major League Baseball on Tuesday.

The Red Sox outfielder received 748,872 votes -- the most in the majors -- and more than Houston Astros second baseman and reigning AL Most Valuable Player Jose Altuve (701,236) and 2016 AL MVP Mike Trout of the Los Angeles Angels (639,822).

Betts, a two-time All-Star, leads the majors with a .359 batting average and has 17 home runs and 37 RBI and is one of five players in the AL East leading their respective position in vote totals.

At designated hitter, J.D. Martinez of the Red Sox holds a substantial lead (513,415) over Yankees slugger Giancarlo Stanton (231,885) and Angels' two-way phenom Shohei Ohtani (218,981).

The remaining AL leaders include: first baseman José Abreu of the White Sox (267,812); third baseman José Ramírez of the Indians (443,234); shortstop Manny Machado of the Orioles (321,887); catcher Gary Sánchez of the Yankees (336,280) and outfielder Aaron Judge of the Yankees (541,983).

The voting period for the All-Star Game concludes July 5.

### **FROM SPORTS ILLUSTRATED**

## **Andrelton Simmons Is The Hardest Player to Strike Out in the Big Leagues**

By Michael Beller

The following is an incomplete list of events that have taken place in the world of sports since May 2:

- The NBA went from its conference semifinals through its finals, with the Pelicans, Jazz, Rockets, Raptors, 76ers, Celtics and Cavaliers eliminated along the way.
- The Warriors won their second straight NBA championship, and third in four years.
- The NHL went from its conference semifinals through its finals, with the Jets, Sharks, Predators, Lightning, Bruins, Penguins and Golden Knights eliminated along the way.
- The Capitals won their first ever Stanley Cup.

- NFL teams have staged rookie mini-camps, OTAs and mandatory mini-camps.
- Real Madrid won its third straight Champions League final.
- Bryan Colangelo got exposed as a wildly brazen tweeter. Allegedly.
- J.R. Smith forgot the score in Game 1 of the NBA Finals.
- LeBron James had the best performance in a loss in NBA Finals history.
- MLB hitters struck out 8,874 times.
- Andrelton Simmons accounted for one of those 8,874 strikeouts.

That's right, Simmons has fanned exactly once since May 2, a stretch covering five weeks, 31 games (not counting the games the Angels have played since he went on the DL) and 132 plate appearances. One strikeout in 132 trips to the plate translates to a 0.76% strikeout rate. In that time, Simmons has hit .339/.409/.435 with one homer, six doubles, 18 RBI and 14 non-intentional walks.

Simmons has always been one of the toughest players to strike out since making his debut in 2012. In fact, he has been the toughest. His highest full-season strikeout rate was 10.4%, set in 2014 and tied last year, and his career strikeout rate coming into this season was 9.2%. That's the lowest strikeout rate in the majors for any player active in all of those seasons, and Joe Panik (9.7%) and Michael Brantley (9.8%) are the only other players south of 10%.

Still, Simmons has taken it to another level this season. His strikeout rate for the full year is 4.1%, the likes of which we haven't seen since Tony Gwynn was at the height of his powers. The last time a player had a strikeout rate of less than 1% for a full season was back in 1933, when Joe Sewell achieved the feat. It has been a new deal in the majors ever since. Simmons almost certainly has already struck out too many times to match Sewell over the full season, but the fact that he has done it for more than a month is impressive enough, and he remains in exclusive company.

What's confounding, though, is that Simmons hasn't spread what few strikeouts he has had evenly over the whole season. From Opening Day through May 2, he had nine strikeouts in 112 plate appearances. That comes out to a strikeout rate of 8%, comfortably in line with his career norms. Coming into this year, his lowest career strikeout rate for a single season was 7.9%, and he had two more years where it was lower than 8.5%. Through the season's first 30 games, Simmons was striking out at his standard frequency. Since then, he has put the ball in play as often as the average player from the dead-ball era. The simple question is, what has changed?

Sometimes, simple questions have simple answers. Such is the case with Simmons throwing baseball back some 100 years. Remember, Simmons has always been a high-contact guy. Entering this season, he had a contact rate of 87.9% and a whiff rate of 5.6%, which rank 12th and 18th, respectively, in the majors since Simmons' debut in 2012. His lowest contact rate for a season was 87.1%, and his highest whiff rate was 6.3%. Not to belabor the point, but this is a guy who is always going to be among the league leaders in putting the ball in play.

The difference, then, has to do with when he is putting the ball in play. A whiff with fewer than two strikes isn't a big deal. A whiff with two strikes is. Simmons is avoiding two-strike counts with extreme efficiency, in large part by ending his plate appearances before they get to that point.

Simmons' z-swing rate, the frequency with which a hitter swings at pitches inside the strike zone, through May 2 this year was 62.3%, which you can see in the chart below from Brooks Baseball.

That 62.3% z-swing was more or less in line with his career mark of 64.3%. Since May 2, however, it has jumped to 68.2%.

There's the first piece of the puzzle. Simmons isn't taking as many hittable pitches as he had previously in his career.

The second piece fits perfectly with the first. Not only is Simmons more aggressive overall, he's more aggressive early in the count. Simmons has swung at the first pitch in 30.5% of his plate appearances since nearly eliminating strikeouts from his game. Through May 2, his first-pitch swing rate this season was 27.7%.

Now, to be fair, Simmons entered this season with a career first-pitch swing rate of 32.7%. However, he wasn't nearly as discerning with those 0-0 swings as he has been for the last five weeks. His z-swing rate on 0-0 pitches from 2012 through last season was 44.9%. Since May 2 of this year, it's 48.5%. Compare the following two charts, the first of which shows swing rates by zone on the first pitch of all plate appearances for Simmons' career through last season, and the second comprises just the chunk of this season in question.

Pay particular attention to the row across the middle of the strike zone. Look at all those hittable pitches Simmons previously tracked into the catcher's glove. Not only was he eschewing the possibility of doing damage on those pitches, but he was getting himself into far too many 0-1 holes simply by not swinging. He has taken major strides to combat that tendency over the last month.

The same is true of 1-0 counts. Through May 2, Simmons got into a 1-0 count 55 times. He saw 34 strikes in those 55 1-0 counts, swinging at 23 of them, or 67.6%. Since May 2, he has seen a 1-0 count 51 times. Pitchers have thrown him a strike in 24 of those counts, and he has swung 20 times, good for 83.3%. He's 5-for-12 with two doubles, a triple and four RBI on those 20 swings. For the record, he was even better when swinging at 1-0 strikes before he stepped up the aggressiveness, going 6-14 with a homer and nine RBI. The fact that he has changed his approach to swing at more of them portends well for the future.

As you could probably guess at this point of the column, Simmons' lack of aggressiveness on 1-0 strikes over the first month of this season jibes with his career numbers. Through last year, he had 1,161 plate appearances in his career get to 1-0. Pitchers threw him strikes in 652 of them, of which he swung at 413. That translates to a swing rate of 63.3%.

All this early count aggressiveness is keeping Simmons out of two-strike trouble. He has faced two-strike counts in 45 of his 131 plate appearances since May 2, a rate of 34.3%. Before May 2 of this year, he saw 43 two-strike counts in 112 plate appearances, which comes out to 38.4%.

Pitchers are getting better and filthier with each passing year. They have seemingly more options and weapons than ever to put hitters away in two-strike counts. One of the best ways to avoid striking out is to not get to two strikes in the first place. It also has the happy coincidence of more often forcing action on pitches in the strike zone. Simmons has put that all on display over the last month, turning himself into the hardest player to strike out since Tony Gwynn, and arguably in the last 80 years of baseball.

**FROM ESPN.COM**

## **He's on pace to do what!? Big surprises on MLB leaderboards\***

By David Schoenfield

MLB leaderboards are a fascinating thing this time of year. It's too late to completely write off anything surprising as a small-sample-size fluke, but also too early to believe something will hold up just because it's happening now. There are surprising players mixed in among the usual suspects, big names doing even better than you might realize and veterans bouncing back with eye-popping numbers. Here are some things that jump out from the leaderboards right now:

### **Mike Trout, No. 1 in majors with 23 home runs**

After slugging four home runs the past two games at Safeco Field, Trout is on pace for 55 home runs, well above his previous career high of 41 in 2015. Of course, he hit 33 in 114 games last season, a pace of 47 over 162 games. Can he keep it going?

There's nothing in the numbers that screams fluke. His home run to fly ball rate is a career high, but it's only 2.1 percent higher than last season. That rate ranks 12th in the majors, but nobody doubts Trout's power. His chase rate is also at a career low, allowing him to zero in on those pitches he can crush. This looks like his Mickey Mantle 1956 season. Really, the only thing that might slow him down is if pitchers stop pitching to him (and he's already on pace for 129 walks).

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

**FROM YAHOO! SPORTS**

## **Angels' hot Trout tries to prevent sweep by Mariners**

By STATS

Los Angeles Angels star Mike Trout entered his team's three-game series in Seattle mired in a 2-for-19 slump with no extra-base hits, no RBIs and seven strikeouts in his previous five games.

Consider that mini-slump a thing of the past.

Trout has homered twice in each of the first two games of the series heading into the finale Wednesday afternoon. That has boosted his major league-leading total to 23 for the season.

He also made a leaping catch at the wall in right-center field Tuesday night to rob the Mariners' Nelson Cruz of extra bases.

"They have a pretty good player on their team and you saw that again tonight," Mariners manager Scott Servais deadpanned. "Mr. Trout is giving me and our pitching coach (headaches). He's really tough to pitch to. Some of the pitches (Tuesday) were where you want to throw them."

An injury nearly interrupted Trout's power surge.

After homering in the first inning Monday, Trout fouled a ball off his left shin in his next at-bat. X-rays proved negative and he remained in the game to hit another ball over the wall at Safeco Field.

"It's all right. Sore," Trout told MLB.com after Monday's game. "We got precautionary X-rays, but there wasn't a break or anything like that, so that's always good news. It just hit me in a good spot, missed the (shin) guard. It happens. Obviously, it's going to be sore once the adrenaline from the game stops. It just went numb for a little bit. Just got to monitor it, keep icing it and get the swelling out."

Remarkably, Trout's four homers over the past two nights haven't translated into victories.

Cruz homered twice Monday as the Mariners won the opener 5-3, and Mitch Haniger and Ryon Healy both hit homers in Tuesday's 6-3 victory for the home team.

"We're not swinging the bats as a team," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "It puts our pitchers under a lot of pressure to make pitches. And any mistakes we had (Tuesday) they hit out of the park. Give those guys some credit, but one guy can't carry you. Mike is swinging the bat very well, but we need some other guys to step up."

The task of keeping Trout in the ballpark on Wednesday falls to Mariners left-hander Marco Gonzales (7-3, 3.28 ERA), who has allowed just three earned runs over his past five starts.

Gonzales doesn't have a decision in three career starts against Los Angeles with a 4.40 ERA. He pitched six innings against the Angels on May 5, allowing four runs on nine hits with one walk and seven strikeouts in a game the Mariners won 9-8 in 11 innings.

The Angels will counter with right-hander Garrett Richards (4-4, 3.26), who hasn't won since beating the Mariners 5-0 on May 4 when he allowed just four hits in 6 2/3 innings with one walk and eight strikeouts.

Since then, Richards is 0-3 despite giving up no more than three earned runs in any of his six starts.

Richards is 6-4 with a 2.91 ERA in 19 career appearances against the Mariners, including 11 starts.



**FROM THE DAILY HERALD****Owlz bring together two friends from Kansas City on new roster**

By Darnell Dickson

Cole Duensing and Nonie Williams both grew up in Kansas City, Kansas. They started playing summer baseball against each other at the age of 10. Duensing went to Blue Valley Northwest High School in Overland Park and Williams to Turner High School in Kansas City, so they competed during their teens as well.

They were both drafted by the Los Angeles Angels in 2016 and are now teammates for the Angels rookie league affiliate, the Orem Owlz.

What are the chances?

There is a lot that is unfamiliar as the Owlz open the 2018 season with a combination of recent Angels draft picks, young athletes from the Arizona League and a few free agents filling out the roster. Duensing, a pitcher, and Williams, a shortstop who has converted to play center field, are both at a crucial stage in their young careers, so a familiar face can be a blessing.

“It’s kind of crazy,” Williams said. “It’s something that’s kind of rare. For me not only to know Cole but have him be one of my best friends growing up, it’s pretty cool.”

Another familiar face — at least to Orem Owlz fans — is manager Dave Stapleton. He came to the Angels organization in 2014 and led the Owlz to the 2016 Pioneer League championship. He coached the Angels rookie team in the Arizona League last season — he and his family live in Arizona — and was asked to return to Orem this season.

“I like the new faces,” Stapleton said. “It’s about trying to establish a foundation of what the organization wants. I’m fortunate and blessed to have players at this age to work with and communicate with. We want to make sure we set the foundation deep. I enjoy this level and it’s really nice to see growth.”

Duensing, who was selected in the sixth round by the Angels in 2016, posted a 3-6 record after joining the Owlz mid-season last year. That Orem team won the first half of the Pioneer League South, but lost to Ogden in a best-of-three series in the playoffs.

“Last year was really fun,” Duensing said. “We won a lot and it was a great group of guys. When I got here, I felt right at home. I’m trying to help the new guys feel the same thing now. It’s nice that I’ve been through this before so I can help them through certain things, to help them feel as comfortable as possible.”

Williams was drafted in the third round by the Angels in 2016 and has spent two seasons in the Arizona League. He’s confident the position switch will pay off.

“I love playing in the outfield,” Williams said. “I’ve loved the transition and I think I’ve been able to use my speed to make plays. For some reason, it seems like the Angels not only get good ball players, but they get really good people. I’m really excited to be with an affiliate. It just feels more like baseball because we’re competing for a ring.”

Williams chose No. 27 for his first Orem Owlz uniform, a number shared by a current Angels star.

“It got that number last year,” Williams said with a smile. “I guess a guy named Mike Trout in the big league has that number. He’s a pretty good role model. We play the same position and everything.”

The Owlz open the season on Friday, the start of a six-game road trip in Grand Junction, Colorado. The home opener will be against the Ogden Raptors on June 21 at UCCU Ballpark.

That leaves a scant three days for Stapleton and his staff to get things organized.

“I always tell my players, this game is on them,” Stapleton said. “Our job as a coaching staff is to get them ready to be able to advance in the organization. That’s all we talk about and all we think about. This period is all about their development.

“We’ll take a look at them in this three-day mini-camp, but this will be a process that will go on for the next three months. We brought some guys up from extended spring training that we think can make an impact right away.”