



Press Clips

(October 3, 2018)

CLIPS CONTENT

FROM LOS ANGELES TIMES (PAGE 3)

- **Here are five candidates to replace Mike Scioscia as Angels manager**

FROM ANGELS.COM (PAGE 5)

- **GM Eppler hopes to add durability to rotation**

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES**Here are five candidates to replace Mike Scioscia as Angels manager**

By Maria Torres

Angels general manager Billy Eppler sat in Angel Stadium on Monday describing his ideal manager.

Thirty miles away, the Dodgers played meaningful baseball, and by the end of the afternoon had won their sixth consecutive division title.

Eppler has tried and failed to push the Angels into the postseason since his hiring Oct. 4, 2015. The Angels have had losing records during every season of his tenure.

Among other factors, a change in the dugout might help expedite the process.

"We're looking for somebody who can think with a probability-based mindset," Eppler said. "We're going to look for someone who is eager to grow and evolve. Someone that can develop a culture that will put the welfare of the team above any singular person. Those are the criteria that we're going to look for in our next manager."

The Angels aren't alone in their quest.

The Texas Rangers and Cincinnati Reds had interim managers this season who seem poised to earn a promotion, but both teams have begun formal managerial searches. The Toronto Blue Jays have to replace John Gibbons. And the Minnesota Twins joined the list Tuesday after firing Paul Molitor, a Hall of Famer who took over his hometown team in 2014.

The Baltimore Orioles seem likely to go hunting, too. Buck Showalter's contract expired when Baltimore wrapped up the season with a major league-worst 47-115 record.

Here are some candidates that make sense for the Angels to consider.

Brad Ausmus, 49, special assistant to Eppler

Ausmus stepped away from the manager's job in Detroit last fall with grace.

He said then that he wouldn't have felt right accepting a contract extension, especially not after the organization indicated an upcoming rebuild by trading the likes of J.D. Martinez and Justin Verlander.

He also said that he would return to managing if given the opportunity. He only got four years in Detroit, where he won a division title in his first year but had a 314-332 record.

Eppler positioned Ausmus, who caught for 18 years in the majors, in the right place at the right time when he hired him in November as a special assistant. Ausmus spent the season dabbling in player development and amateur scouting, among other things.

Eric Chavez, 40, special assistant to Eppler

Eppler was part of the New York Yankees front office that signed the third baseman in 2012 and 2013. Chavez later joined the Yankees as a special-assignment scout in 2015.

One of Eppler's first moves with the Angels was to hire Chavez as his special assistant. Chavez has handled coaching and scouting.

Soon after reports surfaced in August that Scioscia was expected to step down, Chavez replaced Keith Johnson as the manager at triple-A Salt Lake. The Bees were 10-14 under Chavez.

Although Eppler said experience was not a prerequisite, Chavez may be too green. It may be more effective to transition him into a major league coaching role.

Dino Ebel, 52, Angels third base coach

After 14 seasons in the organization, Ebel may finally get a crack at managing.

Ebel just completed his ninth season as the Angels' third base coach. He managed the final three innings of the season-finale triumph over the Oakland Athletics on Sunday.

He has served as bench coach and third base coach since joining Scioscia's staff in November 2005. He also oversaw the outfield from 2011 to 2015 and this season.

With Ebel back as the Angels' outfield instructor, most-valuable-player candidate Mike Trout turned in the best defensive season of his career. Trout had an ultimate zone rating of 4.0 and an 8 in defensive runs saved. He had negative numbers in each category (-4.4 UZR, -6 DRS) in 2017.

Ebel spent 17 seasons in the Dodgers organization as a minor league player, coach and manager.

"He's one of the best baseball minds I've been around," Scioscia said Sunday.

Joe Espada, 43, Houston Astros bench coach

Espada, a scout for the Yankees in 2014, also crossed paths with Eppler in New York. He became the Yankees' third base coach in 2015, a position he held until the Astros hired him in November.

The Astros became the leaders of baseball's data revolution when general manager Jeff Luhnow hired former NASA engineer Sig Mejdal in 2012 to lead what Luhnow called the department of decision sciences.

Espada was already familiar with analytics when he moved to Houston. A former career minor league player, Espada coached eight years in the Miami Marlins organization.

Conversations with Espada would have to wait until the end of the Astros' postseason run, same as with any external candidates whose teams are in the playoffs.

Josh Paul, 43, Angels bench coach

Paul is a former big league catcher, like Scioscia and Ausmus, but not as accomplished at the major league level, and was a Yankees employee during Eppler's tenure in New York. He was hired as Angels bench coach last offseason.

He spent one year as a coach under Scioscia and also played for the longtime manager in 2004 and 2005.

"The first day we talked to him, I said, 'JP, you come into the dugout every day like you're managing. Prepare like you're managing,'" Scioscia said during his farewell news conference Sunday. "He took it to the nth degree, trust me. He was very prepared."

FROM ANGELS.COM

GM Eppler hopes to add durability to rotation

Angels plan on being active in pitching market during offseason

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- After watching the Angels' rotation once again crater beneath a seemingly endless wave of injuries, general manager Billy Eppler made it clear that one of his priorities this offseason will be to find durable arms who can help fortify the club's pitching staff in 2019.

Los Angeles sent an MLB-high 25 players to the disabled list this season, and a significant chunk of those players were pitchers. Garrett Richards, Shohei Ohtani and JC Ramirez -- three-fifths of the club's Opening Day rotation -- had elbow injuries that eventually required Tommy John surgery. Matt Shoemaker missed more than five months with a forearm injury that was misdiagnosed last year and led to two surgeries. A nagging adductor injury derailed a career season for Tyler Skaggs, while an inflamed right shoulder led to three DL stints for Nick Tropeano.

Only three pitchers ended up making more than 20 starts for the Angels this year: Andrew Heaney, who opened the season on the DL with elbow inflammation but then went on to make 30 consecutive starts, rookie Jaime Barria (26) and Skaggs (24). The crush of injuries forced Los Angeles to scramble for depth, as it used 16 starters to plug the persistent holes in its rotation.

"It was difficult to navigate," Eppler said. "There were some instances where we were looking for starters the night before games sometimes. It tested our depth. We tested the airport; we were in there so much, running guys back and forth. ... The duty is now on our front office. It's up to us to fill those voids. We're going to be able to fill some of it internally, but we're also going to have to go to the marketplace -- trade market, free-agent market -- and bring in some more pitching with an eye toward some reliability."

Eppler said he believes the Angels currently have three locks for the rotation next season. He wouldn't name them, though the two obvious ones are Heaney and Skaggs. Shoemaker, Barria, Tropeano, Felix

Pena, Alex Meyer and Parker Bridwell will also be on the list of internal candidates. Pitching prospects Griffin Canning and Jose Suarez also reached Triple-A Salt Lake this year and could be ready to contribute at some point in 2019.

The class of free-agent starting pitchers this offseason will be headlined by Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel, Charlie Morton and J.A. Happ. The Mets' Zack Wheeler and the Tigers' Michael Fulmer are among the starters who could be made available via trade.

"We're going to be in the pitching market, both in the starting and the relief market," Eppler said. "Is it going to yield a player that we're actually going to acquire? That's hard to predict. But we're going to be in that marketplace and we're going to be having a lot of conversations with the agents of those players in that marketplace."

As for the offense, Eppler said he would like to improve the Angels' team on-base percentage (.313), which ranked 20th in the Majors. While the club ranked seventh in the Majors in home runs (214), it was 15th in runs scored (721).

"A lot of solo home runs," Eppler said. "We need to be on base. We need to be on base. It is the only statistic that correlates with run scoring."

Los Angeles received underwhelming production at catcher (.628 OPS), first base (.644), second base (.668), third base (.648) and right field (.636), but Eppler said he believes they "have a lot of answers internally" on the position-player side.

The numbers in right field are skewed significantly by an extended slump from Kole Calhoun, who batted .145 with a .374 OPS through the first two months of the season before rebounding to hit .242 with an .800 OPS after returning from the DL on June 18. Despite the extreme splits, Eppler said he still expects Calhoun to be the Angels' starting right fielder in 2019.

Los Angeles' infield should also receive a boost from the return of Zack Cozart, whose first year with the club was cut short by season-ending shoulder surgery. Eppler said Cozart recently had an encouraging follow-up appointment and is expected to be cleared to start swinging a bat soon.

"He should be a player that has no restrictions in Spring Training," Eppler said.

Cozart's role remains unclear for now, as he could play either second or third base depending on who rounds out the Angels' infield next year. Eppler said third baseman Taylor Ward and middle infielders David Fletcher and Luis Rengifo, who was acquired from the Rays in exchange for C.J. Cron in February, have all been informed that they will enter Spring Training with a chance to win a starting job with Los Angeles.

Eppler left open the possibility of seeking external help at catcher and first base. Rookies Jose Briceno and Francisco Arcia split time behind the plate over the final month of the season, and Eppler said he was pleased with the way they handled the pitching staff.

"Those two players both established a pretty good rapport with the pitchers," Eppler said. "They're smart. They know the opposing hitters. They know the game plan. They stick to the game plans. I was impressed with both of them kind of getting their first opportunity."

The Angels will likely need someone to help shoulder the workload at first base with Albert Pujols, though prospect Matt Thaiss is a potential option.

"That kind of position player depth, knocking on the door, pushing their way in here, allows us now to direct more focus towards the pitching side," Eppler said. "We've always been opportunistic there. But that depth now gives us comfort that we did not have in previous years."