



Press Clips

(July 2, 2018)

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FROM THE OC REGISTER**Angels shuffle rotation to use best pitchers for series in Seattle**

By Jeff Fletcher

BALTIMORE — It's barely July, but the Angels appear to be putting some extra emphasis on this week's three-game series against the Seattle Mariners.

The Mariners, who are currently sitting in the second wild-card spot, will host the Angels for the first three of nine games between the two teams in July.

The Angels are starting Andrew Heaney and Tyler Skaggs — their two best active pitchers — in the first and last games of the series. Jaime Barría, whose normal turn would have come during the series, was bumped back a few days to instead pitch on Friday, at home against the Dodgers.

The pitcher for the middle game of the series is currently listed as "TBA." However, Garrett Richards came through his rehab outing on Friday with no hamstring issues, Manager Mike Scioscia said. Richards was scheduled for a bullpen session, after which the Angels could decide to have him pitch on Wednesday in Seattle.

Shohei Ohtani also could return to the Angels lineup in Seattle. Ohtani participated in a simulated game, facing live pitching, for a second straight day on Sunday. Scioscia said he was scheduled for another workout on Monday.

Although the Angels have not committed to when he'll return to the lineup, it could be as soon as Tuesday.

Ohtani is out with a damaged ulnar collateral ligament. While he is waiting for the platelet-rich plasma injection and stem-cell therapy to heal the ligament — in the hopes of pitching again this year — he and the Angels have been told that hitting poses no risk to the healing.

ROSTER CRUNCH COMING

Besides Ohtani, the Angels also could be getting Jefry Marte (wrist) back soon. Marte has played two games of his rehab assignment at Class-A Inland Empire.

Adding two position players could lead to some tough decisions for the Angels. They have Kaleb Cowart currently on the roster, and he can be optioned. David Fletcher can also be optioned, but either he or Cowart needs to be on the roster as the backup shortstop. Fletcher has also been playing well in his first month in the majors.

Marte is out of options, so when he's healthy, he needs to be added to the roster or designated for assignment. The Angels can't option Luis Valbuena or Chris Young either.

For a few days, the Angels could go with four starting pitchers and keep Fletcher, Ohtani, Marte, Valbuena and Young. They will need a fifth starter on Saturday, though.

ALSO

Valbuena did not start on Sunday, despite having four homers in nine career at-bats against Baltimore right-hander Kevin Gausman. Cowart started instead at first base. Scioscia said it was just a day off for Valbuena. Valbuena said there was nothing physically wrong with him, and he came in the game for the final two innings...

Skaggs said he was fine a day after he came out of his start early. Skaggs and Scioscia said Saturday that the pitcher was “exhausted” after just 79 pitches on the humid day, with a first-pitch temperature announced at 93 degrees.

UP NEXT

Angels (Andrew Heaney, 5-6, 3.95) at Mariners (Wade LeBlanc, 3-0, 3.38), Tuesday, 7 p.m., Fox Sports West, KLAA (830 AM)

Angels fill-in pitchers have rough day in loss to Baltimore Orioles

By Jeff Fletcher

BALTIMORE — The Angels started a pitcher who has been designated for assignment by two teams this year.

Then they brought in a pitcher who has been DFA'd once, and they followed up by using one who shuttled all year between Triple-A and the majors.

In other words, they lost.

Fill-in starter Deck McGuire was charged with five runs in the Angels' 8-2 loss to the Baltimore Orioles on Sunday afternoon.

After Manager Mike Scioscia had used his 28th pitcher of the year — the most in Angels history through 85 games — he said they still expect to win, no matter how deep they go on the depth chart.

“They’re here because we have the confidence they can make pitches and get outs,” Scioscia said. “For stretches, Deck did this afternoon. We just couldn’t suppress that rally and they put up a six-spot. And (Kevin) Gausman did the rest. He pitched a good game for them.”

After winning the first two games against the lowly Orioles (24-59), owners of baseball’s worst record, the Angels (43-42) had hoped to finish off a sweep to send them into their off day preceding a key series in Seattle.

The Orioles, difficult as their season has been, were due to win one of these days, and a game started by the Angels' No. 12 starter seemed as likely a day as any.

The string of injuries to Angels starters resulted in them giving the ball on Sunday to McGuire, a 29-year-old former first-round pick who is with his sixth organization. He'd been with three just in the past month, having been let go by the Toronto Blue Jays, picked up by the Texas Rangers and then quickly traded to the Angels.

The Angels gave McGuire the start because John Lamb — the Angels' 10th starter — was hurt. McGuire also had a reasonably effective four-inning stint in relief of Lamb on Tuesday in Boston.

They hoped he could simply get through four or five innings and keep them in the game long enough for their hitters to do some damage against a Baltimore staff that has also struggled.

After the Angels got a run in the first on an Albert Pujols RBI single against Gausman, they didn't do much else.

McGuire shut out the Orioles through three, but the magic ran out quickly in the fourth. Adam Jones hit a popup that Ian Kinsler lost in the sun. Manny Machado then belted a two-run homer to put the Orioles ahead. Mark Trumbo followed with a homer. Chris Davis doubled off the right-field fence. One out later, McGuire walked Chance Sisco, and his day was over.

"I made a couple not good pitches in the fourth inning," McGuire said. "I felt like I worked ahead really well. (Catcher José) Briceño did a fantastic job. I just left a couple pitches up and I paid for it."

Next up was Hansel Robles, who had been DFA'd by the New York Mets before the Angels grabbed him a couple weeks ago. He immediately gave up an RBI double. An out later, he gave up a two-run single to Tim Beckham, putting the Angels down 6-1.

Eduardo Paredes, who is up for his eighth stint in the majors this season, then gave up homers to Trumbo and Trey Mancini in the fifth.

Taylor Cole worked the final three inning for the Angels. He'd been signed as a minor league free agent after the start of spring training, and made his debut with the Angels, as player No. 49 and pitcher No. 28.

Cole worked three scoreless innings, facing the minimum nine hitters, so there was that sliver of encouragement to end another disappointing day.

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

As he struggles at the plate, Angels' Ian Kinsler faces uncertain future

By Jeff Miller

He turned 36 last month and is batting .215, with the second of his two consecutive five-year contracts nearing its conclusion.

Like never before in his career, **Ian Kinsler** faces a very uncertain baseball future.

“It definitely enters your mind,” the Angels second baseman said. “I’ve never been in a situation where I didn’t know where I’m going to be the next year. But, as far as it weighing on my performance, that’s not an issue.”

When the Angels acquired Kinsler from the Detroit Tigers in December — a deal that required him to waive his no-trade clause — the expectation was he would bring a steadying influence in the clubhouse and to the top the batting order.

As a veteran in his 13th season, Kinsler’s professionalism has been unrelenting. His offense, though, hasn’t matched projections.

“I’m not happy with the results,” said Kinsler, who was moved down in the order and replaced by **Kole Calhoun** in the leadoff spot Friday. “But I’m going to continue to work hard and compete. There are other ways to impact the game.”

The Angels added Kinsler and **Zack Cozart** in the span of two days to reinforce their infield. Both have struggled at the plate, and Cozart had season-ending shoulder surgery on Friday.

Unlike Kinsler, Cozart is signed for two more years. If the Angels make no moves the rest of this season, they’d go into the winter with the option of playing Cozart at third or second in 2019.

A longtime shortstop, Cozart originally agreed to move to second for the Angels before he then approved a switch to third when the Kinsler trade became a possibility.

Approaching free agency, Kinsler’s case is quite different, particularly seeing how tough last winter’s market was for players just like him seeking work.

“I’m human and I know my situation,” he said. “But if I’m in the batter’s box, I’m not thinking about that. If I’m in the field and there’s a double play that needs to be turned, I’m not thinking about where I might be playing next year.

“My energy right now is on getting this team into a groove and scoring more runs, whether that’s driving them in or touching home plate. I’ll have time to think about all that other stuff when the time’s right.”

Short hops

Andrelton Simmons’ eight-game hitting streak ended Sunday. ... **Mike Trout** failed to reach base for only the 12th game this season. ... Reliever **Taylor Cole** made his Angels debut and second career major league appearance, pitching three scoreless innings.

Angels fall in series finale at Baltimore, but help is on the way

By Jeff Miller

Shohei Ohtani and Garrett Richards are coming back, which is a great point of focus at the moment for the Angels and their fans.

The immediate future for this team has to be brighter than the immediate past, the Angels failing in their attempt Sunday to sweep Baltimore by the warped score of 8-2.

Because injuries have ravaged their rotation, they started Deck McGuire, a player they picked up from Texas last month after the Rangers decided to let him go.

The Rangers are, for the record, behind the Angels in the standings this season.

McGuire was very good for three innings before everything turned in a six-run fourth after the Angels lost a routine popup in the sun.

"They're here because we have confidence in them to make pitches and get outs," manager Mike Scioscia said of the pitchers filling in the vacated roster spots. "For short stretches, Deck did this afternoon. We just couldn't suppress that rally."

Baltimore eventually hit four homers — two apiece off McGuire and reliever Eduardo Paredes — to run away and hide, dropping the Angels to 2-5 on a trip that began with four consecutive losses.

They pounded the Orioles 7-1 on Friday and then used a five-run rally to win again Saturday.

Four batters into the game Sunday, the Angels were up 1-0 when Albert Pujols drove in Kole Calhoun, who had doubled. After that, the highlights were muted for seven innings before Calhoun homered in the eighth.

It was his third homer since coming off the disabled list June 18. In 41 at-bats, Calhoun has 11 hits, including five for extra bases. Before going on the DL, he had three extra-base hits in 173 at-bats.

"He's still moving forward," Scioscia said. "There's still upside. But there's no doubt he's more comfortable now than he was anytime before his injury. Hopefully, he'll continue to keep growing with this. We need him."

The Angels now have an off day before opening a three-game series Tuesday in Seattle, a team they began Sunday trailing by 10 games for the American League's second wild-card spot.

"We just gotta try to win every series, whether it's now or later," left fielder Justin Upton said. "We gotta win series."

The expectations remain that Ohtani and Richards will come off the disabled list and rejoin the Angels against the Mariners.

On Sunday in Anaheim, Ohtani (elbow ligament) participated in live batting practice for the second consecutive day.

He's coming back as a designated hitter as the Angels continue to monitor his condition as it relates to his ability to pitch.

Richards (hamstring) made a rehabilitation start Friday and is scheduled to throw a bullpen session next, indicating the Angels are lining him up to start Wednesday.

Though Scioscia is careful to never publicly put too much emphasis on any particular opponent, it is notable that the Angels have aligned their three best pitchers to start against the Mariners.

After Andrew Heaney on Tuesday and Richards on Wednesday, Tyler Skaggs is scheduled for Thursday. Rookie Jaime Barria's next start has been pushed back to Friday.

The Angels and Mariners play six times in the next 11 days and nine times before the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline. The results of those games could largely determine the direction of the remainder of their season.

"We've got, what, 70 or 80 something, I don't know where we are in the season, that many games left and we gotta try to win as many as we can," Upton said. "Other teams control their destiny. We control ours. We just gotta play better."

Starting Tuesday at Safeco Field, that reality becomes as real as it has been all season.

FROM ANGELS.COM

International signing day: Top prospect tracker

By Jesse Sanchez

Welcome to July 2, the start of the international signing period, and the date unofficially known in baseball circles as "international signing day." It's the day careers are launched and the lives of teenage ballplayers across the globe are changed forever.

As is the case every year, what happens between today and when the period ends June 15, 2019, can help change the trajectory of a franchise. Consider this: **Five of the top six prospects in the game** -- Braves outfielder **Ronald Acuna Jr.**, Blue Jays outfielder Vladimir Guerrero Jr., White Sox outfielder **Eloy Jimenez**, Padres outfielder Fernando Tatis Jr. and Nationals outfielder **Victor Robles** -- were all signed during the international signing period. Players like Yankees infielder **Gleyber Torres** and Nats outfielder **Juan Soto** were also acquired through the international market, and more talent is on the way.

In addition to prospects from traditional baseball hot spots like the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil and the Bahamas, there are also prospects from places like Europe, the Caribbean islands and Asia who have registered and will sign during the period. In all, more than 950 prospects signed during the previous international signing period that started July 2, 2017. That number could increase during the 2018-19 period because there are thousands who have registered to become eligible.

Below is a look at which players from **MLB Pipeline's Top 30 International Prospects list** have agreed to terms with clubs, and for how much. Unless otherwise noted, clubs have not confirmed the deals.

The market is still to be determined for players like No. 9 Osiel Rodriguez, No. 14 Sandy Gaston and No. 29 Denny Larrondo, who have yet to agree to deals. Kevin Alcantara, who is ranked No. 10, Eduardo Garcia (No. 20) and Alexander Ramirez (No. 24) will not be eligible to sign until after July 2 when they turn 16.

Follow [@JesseSanchezMLB](#) and [@MLBPipeline](#) for all of the details.

1. Diego Cartaya, C, Venezuela - Dodgers **More »**
2. Marco Luciano, OF, Dominican Republic -- Giants (\$2,600,000)
3. Misael Urbina, OF, Venezuela -- Twins (2,750,000)
4. Orelvis Martinez, SS, Dominican Republic -- Blue Jays (\$3,500,000) **More »**
5. Richard Gallardo, RHP, Venezuela -- Cubs (\$1,000,000) **More »**
6. Gabriel Rodriguez, SS, Venezuela -- Indians (\$2,100,000) **More »**
7. Noelvi Marte, SS, Dominican Republic -- Mariners
8. Starlyn Castillo, RHP, Dominican Republic -- Phillies (\$1,600,000) **More »**
9. Osiel Rodriguez, RHP, Cuba -- Yankees **More »**
10. Kevin Alcantara, SS, Dominican Republic -- Yankees **More »**
11. Antonio Gomez, C, Venezuela -- Yankees **More »**
12. Junior Sanquintin, SS, Dominican Republic -- Indians (\$1,250,000) **More »**
13. Francisco Alvarez, C, Venezuela -- Mets (\$2,700,000)
14. Sandy Gaston, RHP, Cuba
15. Jose De La Cruz, OF, Dominican Republic -- Tigers (1,800,000) **More »**
16. Alvin Guzman, OF, Dominican Republic -- D-backs (1,850,000)
17. Jose Lopez, OF, Dominican Republic -- Cubs (\$1,500,000) **More »**
18. Eduarqui Fernandez, OF, Dominican Republic -- Brewers (\$1,100,000)
19. Adinso Reyes, SS, Dominican Republic -- Tigers (\$1,450,000) **More »**
20. Eduardo Garcia, SS, Venezuela -- Brewers
21. Jose Rodriguez, C, Venezuela - Rangers (\$2,000,000) **More »**
22. Alejandro Pie, SS, Dominican Republic -- Rays (\$1,400,000) **More »**
23. Eduardo Lopez, OF, Dominican Republic -- Red Sox (\$1,150,000) **More »**
24. Alexander Ramirez, OF, Dominican Republic -- Angels
25. Freddy Valdez, OF, Dominican Republic -- Mets (\$1,450,000)
26. Branlyn Jaraba, SS, Colombia -- Brewers (\$1,100,000)

- 27. Luis Matos, OF, Venezuela -- Giants (\$725,000)
 - 28. Joel Machado, LHP, Venezuela -- Cubs (\$850,000) **More »**
 - 29. Denny Larrondo, RHP, Cuba -- Yankees **More »**
 - 30. Jerming Rosario, RHP, Dominican Republic -- Dodgers (\$600,000) **More »**
- Complete list with scouting reports, grades, video and more »**

The rules:

An international player is eligible to sign with a Major League team between July 2 through June 15 of the next year if he is 17 or will turn 17 by the end of the first season of his contract.

Clubs that receive a Competitive Balance Pick in Round B of the MLB Draft receive a pool of \$6,025,400, while clubs that receive a Competitive Balance Pick in Round A of the Draft receive \$5,504,500. All other clubs receive \$4,983,500.

Teams are allowed to trade as much of their international pool money as they would like but can only acquire 75 percent of a team's initial pool amount. Additionally, signing bonuses of \$10,000 or less do not count toward a club's bonus pool, and foreign professional players who are at least 25 years of age and have played in a foreign league for at least six seasons are also exempt.

Under the previous Collective Bargaining Agreement, teams were allowed to exceed their bonus pool, but would face a penalty for doing so. Under the new CBA, the spending pools are a "hard cap" and cannot be exceeded. However, the A's, Astros, Braves, Cardinals, Nationals, Padres, Reds and White Sox all exceeded their pools under the previous CBA and their penalties were grandfathered in. As a result, none of those teams are permitted to sign an individual player for more than \$300,000 this period.

***Complete bonus rules**

The pools:

\$6,025,400: Reds, Marlins, Brewers, Twins, Athletics, Rays

\$5,504,500: D-backs, Orioles, Indians, Rockies, Royals, Pirates, Padres

\$5,004,500: Cardinals

\$4,983,500: Braves, Red Sox, Cubs, White Sox, Tigers, Astros, Angels, Dodgers, Yankees, Mets, Mariners, Giants, Rangers, Blue Jays, Nationals

\$3,949,000: Phillies

The Teams:

The Blue Jays, Brewers, D-backs, Mariners, Phillies, Rangers, Red Sox, Tigers, Twins and Yankees are expected to be busy as the period opens. The Cubs, Dodgers, Giants and Royals -- teams that will no longer be in the penalty for exceeding their past international bonus pool spending -- are also expected to be very active.

The A's, Astros, Braves, Cardinals, Nationals, Padres, Reds and White Sox are in the maximum penalty, and cannot sign an individual player for more than \$300,000 this period.

Here's a look at players outside the Top 30 who have agreed to deals for \$300,000 or more:

Brewers

Erys Bautista, OF, Dominican Republic -- \$500,000

Cardinals

Malcom Nunez, 3B, Cuba -- \$300,000

Cubs

Rafael Morel, SS, Dominican Republic -- \$850,000

Yohendrick Pinango, OF, Venezuela -- \$400,000

D-backs

Diomedes Sierra, LHP, Dominican Republic -- \$420,000

Abraham Calzadilla, RHP, Venezuela -- \$500,000

Dodgers

Alex De Jesus, INF, Dominican Republic -- \$500,000

Giants

Jairo Pomarez, OF, Cuba -- \$975,0000

Indians

Sterling Romero, OF, Dominican Republic -- \$650,000

Angel Martinez, SS, Dominican Republic - 500,000

Nationals

Yueri Amparo, OF, Dominican Republic -- \$300,000

Jeremy De La Rosa, OF, Dominican Republic -- \$300,000

Padres

Axcel Peralta, 1B, Dominican Republic -- \$300,000

Emanuel Rodriguez, SS, Dominican Republic -- \$300,000

Pirates

Luis Tejada, INF, Dominican Republic -- \$500,000

Oswaldo Gavilan, OF, Dominican Republic -- \$700,000

Sergio Campana, OF, Dominican Republic -- \$500,000

Daniel Lopez, SS, Dominican Republic - \$400,000

Juan Jerez, INF, Dominican Republic -- \$380,000

Rangers

Luisangel Acuna, INF, Venezuela -- \$425,000

Rockies

Warming Bernabel, SS, Dominican Republic -- \$900,000

Pedro Mota, SS, Dominican Republic -- \$900,000

Juan Guerrero, SS, Dominican Republic --\$650,000

Michael James, SS, Dominican Republic -- \$350,000

White Sox

Bryan Ramos, 3B, Cuba -- \$300,000

Harold Diaz, SS, Cuba --\$300,000

Luis Pineda, C, Venezuela -- \$300,000

McGuire folds in 4th as Halos fall to O's in finale

Spot starter chased amid 6-run frame; Calhoun homers late

By Ian Quillen

BALTIMORE -- After pitching six times in relief this year, injuries forced **Deck McGuire** to become his new club's 12th starter of the season on Sunday. In the end, he only lasted as long as some of his bullpen outings.

McGuire couldn't escape a six-run fourth inning after allowing homers to **Mark Trumbo** and **Manny Machado**, and the Halos dropped the series finale at Camden Yards, 8-2, to the Orioles.

"I made a couple not-good pitches," said McGuire (0-1), who also made two starts late last season for the Reds. "I felt like I worked ahead really well. [Catcher Jose] Briceno did a fantastic job calling the game, and [I] just left a couple pitches up and they made me pay for it."

Trumbo and **Trey Mancini** added solo shots in the fifth off reliever **Eduardo Paredes** to help the Orioles to just their second home win in their last 19 games. In the process, they prevented the Angels from securing their third road sweep of the season.

Kole Calhoun scored both Los Angeles runs, connecting for a solo shot off Orioles starter **Kevin Gausman** (4-6) in the eighth after doubling and scoring on **Albert Pujols'** single in the first.

Gausman completed the eighth, going at least that deep for a third time this season. He allowed six hits and walked none.

"He just kept us off balance," said **Justin Upton**, who finished 1-for-3. "He's got a good fastball, so when he had an opportunity to throw his fastball, he did. Kept the ball moving in and out. We couldn't get barrels on it."

The 29-year-old McGuire, acquired from the Rangers' organization on June 19 after beginning the season with the Blue Jays, began the day by retiring nine of the first 11 batters he faced.

He would finish it allowing five runs on five hits and two walks, departing down, 3-1, with two aboard and one out in the fourth. He had worked at least as long in two of his previous relief outings this season.

"That first go-round, he looked really sharp in his first three innings, and then the next time around, he didn't quite get the ball in the location that he would've liked," said manager Mike Scioscia.

Steve Wilkerson greeted reliever **Hansel Robles** with his first career double to make it 4-1 Baltimore, and **Tim Beckham** singled in two runs two batters later.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

McGuire pitched into some bad luck to open the fourth when **Adam Jones** poked what appeared to be a routine popout toward second baseman **Ian Kinsler**. But Kinsler lost the ball in the sun as he looked skyward, and it fell between him and first baseman **Kaleb Cowart**. Jones scored on Machado's blast.

"It's no different than a single to the outfield," McGuire said. "You've just got to go back to competing, and I felt like I pitched Machado tough that next at-bat. I just threw a not-great slider, and he put a good swing on it."

SOUND SMART

Taylor Cole worked the final three innings to make his Angels debut in his second career big league outing. In the process, he became the 28th pitcher to appear for the Halos this season.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Andrelton Simmons saw his hit streak snapped at eight games, but he robbed his shortstop counterpart Machado of another hit in the fifth inning. After scrambling to his right to field Machado's grounder, Simmons jumped and threw across his body to nab the Orioles' slugger by a step.

UP NEXT

The Angels close a 10-game, four-city road trip with a three-game series beginning Tuesday in Seattle. The Halos will start left-hander **Andrew Heaney** (4-5, 3.95 ERA) as they aim to gain ground on the Mariners in their final 2018 trip to Safeco Field after they were swept there in June. Heaney will duel left-hander **Wade LeBlanc** (3-0, 3.38) in the 7:10 p.m. PT start. LeBlanc pitched five innings of two-run ball in a win over the Angels on June 11.

Richards could return to Halos on Wednesday

Ohtani faces live pitching again Sunday; Marte gets day off in Baltimore

By Ian Quillen

BALTIMORE -- The Angels have yet to name a starter for Wednesday's middle game of three against the Mariners, opening the possibility that **Garrett Richards** could return to the Halos' rotation in Seattle.

Richards (left hamstring strain) threw 63 pitches over 3 1/3 innings in a rehab outing at Class A Advanced Inland Empire on Friday night. The 30-year-old right-hander will throw another bullpen session either later Sunday or on Monday, manager Mike Scioscia said.

"Let's wait until he throws his 'pen," Scioscia said when asked if Richards could be a candidate for Wednesday.

Richards, who went 4-4 with a 3.42 ERA for the Angels before hitting the 10-day disabled list, last pitched on June 13, allowing two runs over two innings before departing injured.

Andrew Heaney (4-5, 3.95 ERA) will get the nod in the opener, with lefty **Tyler Skaggs** (6-5, 2.64) set for Thursday's series finale.

Worth noting

- **Shohei Ohtani** will take more batting practice and again face live pitching on Sunday, Scioscia said. Ohtani, who is solely focused on offense while he returns from a right UCL sprain, had 10 at-bats and ran the bases in a simulated game on Saturday.

He could have three consecutive days of live swings by the time the Angels arrive in Seattle, though Scioscia would not commit to a return in that series as a designated hitter. "Let's get by today, see what he does," Scioscia said.

- Scioscia kept infielder **Luis Valbuena** out of the lineup on Sunday despite Valbuena's career 5-for-9 history with four home runs against Orioles starter **Kevin Gausman**. Scioscia insisted the decision was "just a day [off]" and not related to an injury or health issue.

- Infielder **Jefry Marte** (left wrist sprain) went 2-for-4 with an RBI in his second rehab game with Inland Empire on Saturday.

FROM THE ATHLETIC

A beer, a ballgame and a bag of mail: Beer in Wine Country, an Angels game with Boog, plus Mookie vs. Trout and more!

By Eno Sarris

At some point, every one of us is forced to go somewhere we didn't want to go.

I'm not saying I didn't *want* to go to Healdsburg — especially if my wife or her sister asks, I was *totally* into it — but you know, I find myself in wine country and I do my very best to not offend the people around me while I buy beer instead of wine.

I can't drink wine because of all the acid reflux. I can't be alone. These days, more and more people are used to beer people being in wine country.

So I was in wine country, and I drank beer.

I had a nice bubbly red sour, a Frampagne of Beers from Barrel Brothers, during crudos at Chalkboard in Healdsburg, which maybe wasn't unlike the wines being sampled around me — at least it was barrel aged. I tried a 3 Disciples Pulp Fission Hazy IPA at Barrels, Beers and Bites, afterwards, and my wife had a Rosé and the waiter said we were just as on trend as the other. I had a Fogbelt Bamboozle Golden Milk Stout there too, and my wife said there was no equivalent to a blonde stout in the wine world — any wines that look white but taste red? I had a Tartare blond sour at Bear Republic and maybe that's like a dessert wine, a muscat, or maybe it's too tart to compare.

But if you go up to wine world in Northern California, you'll find some beer. Make sure you take part, because those breweries are maybe better — and more independent??? — than many of the other wineries in Northern California.

If you find yourself in wine country in Northern California, here are some breweries you should visit:

- Russian River Brewing Company, Santa Rosa
- Henhouse Brewing, Santa Rosa
- Bear Republic Brewing, Healdsburg
- Cooperage Brewing, Healdsburg
- 3rd Street Ale Works, Santa Rosa
- Fieldwork Brewing, Napa

For the game of the week, I took in an Angels / Red Sox matchup on Thursday, announced by Boog Sciambi, Mark Teixeira, and Rick Sutcliffe. It was a pleasure to hear their perspectives as the game took course. I tried to relax, not do any other work, and take a few notes as they came to me. Here are a few of the thoughts they jogged loose.

At one point, the discussion in the booth turned to the concept of a fastball count. The idea is that the fastball is easier to command, so when the pitcher most needs a strike, he'll turn to the fastball in certain counts. But the league is increasingly filled with pitchers that are willing to throw any pitch in any count in the pursuit of a strikeout, and so it was noted that there was no such thing as a fastball count any more.

Is that true? I thought it would be good to check the math, so I asked my friend Jeff Zimmerman to run the numbers. He split fastball percentage by situation — the pitcher is even, ahead, or behind in the count — and went as far back as the numbers for this sort of thing go.

year	even	ahead	behind
2010	56.2%	46.4%	64.7%

2011	56.7%	47.0%	64.4%
2012	56.3%	47.0%	64.5%
2013	56.9%	47.9%	64.7%
2014	56.7%	48.1%	64.6%
2015	57.2%	48.8%	64.9%
2016	56.3%	48.4%	64.1%
2017	54.4%	46.8%	61.7%
2018	55.0%	46.8%	62.3%

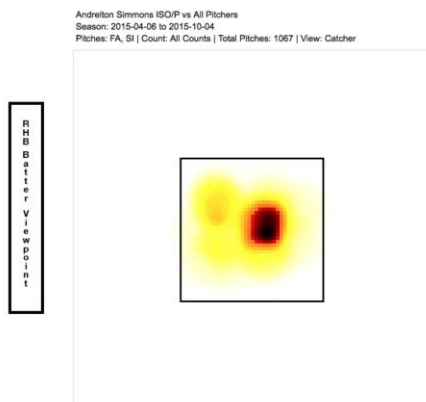
Amazing. Fastball percentage is down two percent when the pitcher is behind. Since this is all pitches in the league, two percent represents thousands of fewer fastballs, so it's significant. And an obvious departure from earlier this decade.

But the fastball rate when the pitcher is behind is also only down two percent and it's mostly down the last two years, and it's not down much more than the other rates, which are also all down. In fact, the difference in fastball usage between being even in the count and being behind in the count is only down around one percent from 2010. They're also using fewer fastballs when they're even in the count.

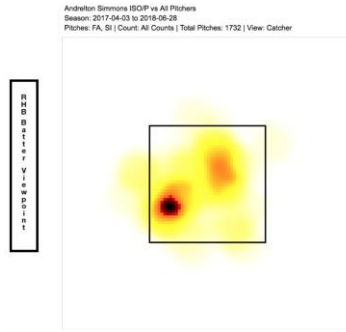
Maybe it's more that there is no longer a fastball count because people don't use fastballs as much?

After this mammoth homer from svelte Angels shortstop Andrelton Simmons, the broadcast team discussed Simmons and how he has more of a plan going to the plate these days. I've talked to him about it before, and I think plate coverage is the key part of that plan.

Simmons was once taught to take fastballs the other way and to use his legs on the basepaths. That made him good on fastballs on the outer half of the plate.



Then someone realized that Simmons has power and that he could pull the ball in the air, too. That made him better on the inside part of the plate. Now he can put a power swing on pitches inside and out.



The pitch he took out was a hanging curveball on the outside part of the plate — not quite the same as pulling an inside pitch into the bleachers — but I do think this new approach has him believing he can cover the plate with more power no matter the pitch. Now he's a more complete hitter, and along with his elite defense, he's on his way to the best season of his career. At 28.

By the way, we've found that the peak age for a baseball player is 25-26, but this is exactly why finding a peak age for a baseball player is so difficult. Our bodies peak athletically fairly early — the peak for sprinters in the 100m, for example, is around 25 years old — but as our bodies begin to decline, we learn more about the game and improve our strategy.

So Simmons is past his peak. Or he's right in the middle of it.

Maybe you could say the same about the crew up in the booth as well.

Will The Braves ever score 3 or more runs again?

They've lost five of their last seven, true. But if you average those numbers — which stops before they scored 11 against the Blue Jays — they've scored 5.1 runs per game. For the year, they're the No. 1 scoring offense in the National League.

And now they're getting Ronald Acuña Jr. back!

I suppose they could try to trade for a starter/third baseman combo to address some of their needs — Danny Duffy and Mike Moustakas would be quite the duo — but that might also be expensive at a time that they're building.

That's a fairly exciting duo, though. What would it cost them?

Mookie > Trout

I just can't get behind this movement. Even if you don't consider defense — because one-year changes in defense are probably full of a lot of noise — Trout beats Betts with the bat once you adjust for their parks. And is giving more on the base paths.

#	Name	Team	G	PA	HR	R	RBI	SB	BB%	K
1	Mike Trout	Angels	81	357	23	62	48	13	19.3 %	19.6
2	Mookie Betts	Red Sox	61	276	20	61	41	14	12.7 %	12.7

Maybe it's a West Coast bias here too, but when I watch them, Trout clearly separates himself as the best player on the field. Or maybe it's because the team around Betts is better — Andrew Benintendi is excellent, and probably better than any Angel standing next to Trout. Very little doubt in my mind that Mike Trout is the best player in baseball.

What's your opinion on the Hand-Verdugo trade that Bowden wrote about?

It's better than the Mitchell White for Jed Lowrie trade I was cooking up because it better addresses their most addressable need. I do think Lowrie could push Muncy to first and Bellinger to center, especially against lefties, but maybe that's not worth selling low on a starting pitcher prospect that people were very into as soon as this past offseason.

Alex Verdugo is absolutely the kind of player I'd like to acquire because he comes with hit tool and has a high floor. He's definitely a major league regular in my mind, maybe an average major leaguer without any power surge. But also the kind of player that could experience a power surge.

The Dodgers seem to have a good group of outfielders and a few more prospects in the outfield to come. I think this is a viable trade idea.

100mph sinker. Is that accurate?

Yeah, it's nuts. But what's even more nuts is how much sink he gets on the pitch. Among the top ten sinkers in velocity, only one pitch gets more sink.

Name	IP	vSI	SI Vertical
Aroldis Chapman	35.0	101.5	8.8
Jordan Hicks	40.1	100.5	4.3
Seranthony Dominguez	26.1	98.5	5.3
Shohei Ohtani	49.1	98.5	8.7
Lou Trivino	34.0	98.5	5.7
Joe Kelly	34.2	98.3	7.7
Noah Syndergaard	64.2	98.2	7.6
Blake Treinen	39.2	97.9	2.6
Nate Jones	24.2	97.8	9.1

Mike Foltyniewicz	84.0	97.5	7.0
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Oh yeah Blake Treinen? He's a witch.

Still worth putting that Treinen comp out there for a couple reasons. For one, this Hicks phenomenon is not unprecedented. But more importantly, the growth that Hicks has shown is very similar to the bumps in the road Treinen underwent as he tried to find a great second piece to complement his fastball and grew into a real pitcher.

Hicks' breaking ball has really improved recently and it's a big part of why his future is so bright. Oh, and yeah, that 100 mph sinker with gross sink.

Phillies. Trade youth for a reliever and try to go for it in 2018, or sit on their hands and wait?

Or, do they really need a LHP? I keep hearing people tell me a home coming for Hamels is crucial for a 5 or 7 game series since they don't have one.

I don't think starting rotations need a certain handedness. I don't think teams that are building necessarily need relievers. I think teams such as the Phillies should find assets that are useful beyond just this year. They should be talking to the Phillies about Brand Hand, to the Rays about Chris Archer, to the Reds about Raisel Iglesias and to the Royals about Danny Duffy.

I guess talking to teams about expiring player contracts, such as Cole Hamels, J.A. Happ and others, is okay but I think the best foot forward for the Phillies, as they build toward the future, is to think about next year *and* this year at the same time by acquiring players with more than one year of control.

which pitcher would make the best outfielder

After Zack Greinke got two singles and then stole two bases in a game this week I doubt the answer can be anyone else. Madison Bumgarner might run into a few more homers, but I doubt he tracks down as many balls out there. Otherwise Shohei Ohtani is an obvious answer: dude has plus speed, could easily be the best defensive outfielder on the bump.

Which MLBer would you most like to have a beer with, why, and what would it be?

To talk about spirituality & music: Recently retired John Jaso.

To talk about hitting & beer: Brewery owner Kevin Youkilis.

To talk about pitching & to laugh: Giants starter Jeff Samardzija.

To talk about pitching & to think: D-backs starter Zack Greinke.

To get into shenanigans: Dodgers outfielder Yasiel Puig.

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**Orioles hit 4 HRs, beat Angels 8-2 to end 7-game skid**

By David Ginburg

BALTIMORE (AP) — Adam Jones took a big swing, and the result was a popup. He slammed his bat to the ground in disgust and dutifully jogged to first base.

Somehow, that seemingly routine out became the catalyst for a six-run inning that carried the Baltimore Orioles past the Los Angeles Angels 8-2 on Sunday.

Manny Machado and Mark Trumbo hit consecutive homers after the Angels lost the popup in the sun, and the Orioles got a strong pitching performance from Kevin Gausman in snapping a seven-game losing streak.

Los Angeles was up 1-0 when Jones led off the fourth against Deck McGuire (0-1) by hitting a ball high in the air. Second baseman Ian Kinsler couldn't catch sight of it, and the ball landed on the dirt between second and first for a gift single.

"Sounds funny to say, but those are the types of things that have been happening to us," Orioles manager Buck Showalter said. "Kinsler's as good a second baseman as there is."

Machado followed with his 21st home run, Trumbo connected, and Steve Wilkerson singled in a run before Tim Beckham capped the surge with a two-run single.

The home runs were lamentable, but the popup was especially galling to the Angels.

"Obviously it's unexpected. It happens," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He thought he had a bead on it and all of a sudden it disappeared in the sun."

Jones got credit for a hit, but it sure didn't feel that way.

"Sure, it's just like an error," Scioscia said. "I don't think (McGuire) was affected by it, but obviously it adds fuel to the fire and starts a rally for them."

Trumbo homered again in the fifth and Trey Mancini also connected to help Baltimore secure its only victory during a seven-game homestand that began with four straight losses to Seattle.

Gausman (4-6) weathered temperatures in the upper 90s to go eight innings, allowing two runs and six hits to end a run of eight straight winless starts.

The Orioles improved to 1-15 against the AL West and won at home for only the second time in 19 games since May 13.

Baltimore still owns the worst record in the majors, but there were plenty of smiles to go around on this day.

“We’re undefeated in July,” Showalter said with a grin. “Sometimes, you have to laugh to keep from crying, right? We have good people. It just hasn’t happened for us, but we have half the season left. That’s the approach we’re taking.”

Kole Calhoun homered and Albert Pujols drove in a run for the Angels, who were seeking the first season sweep of Baltimore in franchise history. They settled for going 5-1, their fewest losses against the Orioles in one year.

THIS AND THAT

LA reliever Eduardo Parades has allowed five HRs in 16 1/3 innings. ... Gausman did not allow a walk for the fifth time this season. ... Wilkerson recorded his first career double, but Showalter said the rookie left with an apparent oblique injury. ... Angels star Mike Trout did not reach base for only the 12th time in 85 games this year.

TRAINER’S ROOM

Angels: DH/RHP Shohei Ohtani (elbow) was scheduled to take live batting practice in California. Asked if the two-way star could be activated for this week’s series against Seattle, Scioscia replied, “Let’s get by today, see how he does.” ... RHP Garrett Richards (hamstring) could be ready to come off the DL on Wednesday to start against Seattle.

Orioles: OF Colby Rasmus was held out with an illness. ... RHP Darren O’Day said he opted for season-ending surgery on his hamstring because there was no guarantee he would be healthy by September. “I need to functionally get it fixed so it just doesn’t happen again,” he said. ... RHP Chris Tillman (back) will need at least one more rehabilitative start after allowing five runs and eight hits in 3 2/3 innings for Triple-A Norfolk on Saturday night.

UP NEXT

Angels: After taking Monday off, LA faces Seattle on the road to launch a three-game series. Andrew Heaney (4-5, 3.95 ERA) is 0-3 with a 6.14 ERA in seven road starts.

Orioles: Following a day off Monday, Baltimore sends Alex Cobb (2-9, 6.75) to the mound in the opener of a two-game interleague series in Philadelphia.

FROM MLB.COM

Most monumental free-agent decisions in MLB history

By Manny Randhawa

When news broke Sunday night that LeBron James had agreed to a four-year, \$154 million contract to join the Los Angeles Lakers, shock waves reverberated throughout the sports world. That got us thinking: what are some of the most monumental free-agent signings in MLB history?

Since the first free-agent signing of the modern era back in 1974, there have been several free-agent deals that shook the baseball world and realigned power across the Majors. Here's a look at several moves that changed the landscape of baseball, and in some cases were downright shocking:

2013-14: Robinson Cano signs with Mariners

Cano had been a Yankee for all nine seasons of his career when he signed a 10-year, \$240 million contract with the Mariners in December 2013. Not only was it a blockbuster move because of the sheer amount and length of the deal, but because Cano left the big stage of New York to join a Seattle franchise that hadn't been -- and still hasn't been -- to the postseason since 2001.

For some time, Cano appeared destined to follow in the footsteps of former teammates Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera and Jorge Posada in spending his entire career with the Yankees. But Seattle's offer reportedly far exceeded New York's in both monetary value and length, prompting Cano to head to the opposite coast. The second baseman has slashed .294/.353/.471 with 101 home runs in four-plus seasons with Seattle, and is currently serving an 80-game suspension after testing positive for a banned substance. He also underwent surgery to repair a fractured right hand in May.

2011-12: Albert Pujols signs with Angels

A Cardinal for his entire 11-year Major League career to that point, Pujols inked a 10-year, \$254 million contract with the Angels in December 2011, a move that stunned the baseball world after it appeared the Cardinals, among a handful of other teams, were favorites to sign the future Hall-of-Fame slugger. The deal was the second-largest in baseball history in terms of average annual value behind Alex Rodriguez's 10-year, \$275 million deal with the Yankees in 2007.

Pujols, the 2001 National League Rookie of the Year Award winner and three-time NL Most Valuable Player Award winner while with St. Louis, has been hampered by injuries since joining the Angels, including foot ailments that have required multiple surgeries. Overall, he's hit .260/.316/.454 with 181 homers in six-plus seasons with Los Angeles after slashing .328/.420/.617 with 445 homers in 11 seasons with St. Louis.

2004-05: Carlos Beltran signs with Mets

Beltran was coming off one of the greatest postseason performances of all-time for the Astros when he signed a seven-year, \$119 million deal with the Mets in January 2005. The Royals traded Beltran to the Astros in June 2004 as part of a three-team deal, and he went on to hit .435 with three doubles and eight homers between the NL Division Series and NL Championship Series as Houston fell a game short of reaching the World Series.

Beltran struck a deal with the Mets just weeks after New York landed free agent right-hander Pedro Martinez, who had just helped the Red Sox win their first World Series title in 86 years. The New York Times reported that it was the Martinez deal that helped convince Beltran to join the Mets.

In his seven seasons with New York, Beltran hit .280/.369/.500 with 149 home runs. In 2011, he was traded to the Giants in the deal that sent **Zack Wheeler** to New York. Beltran then played two seasons with the Cardinals, two-plus seasons with the Yankees and a season with the Rangers before returning to Houston to help the Astros win the World Series in 2017.

2003-04: Ivan Rodriguez signs with Tigers

Coming off a season in which he helped the upstart Marlins defeat the Yankees in the World Series, Rodriguez was a free agent catcher entering his age-32 season with back issues. That caused him to remain on the market through the holidays that offseason, but the Tigers made a surprising four-year, \$40 million offer to the 10-time All-Star. The signing turned out to be the beginning of a rejuvenation for the club, serving as a catalyst for other moves that would follow to take the franchise from a 119-loss season in 2003, to the World Series by 2006.

Rodriguez never went on the disabled list during his five-year run with Detroit, hitting .298/.328/.449 and being named an American League All-Star four straight seasons from 2004-07.

2000-01: Alex Rodriguez signs with Rangers

Rodriguez landed the largest contract in sports history -- doubling the size of NBA star Kevin Garnett's deal with the Minnesota Timberwolves -- when he signed a 10-year, \$252 million deal with the Rangers in January 2001. At age 25, Rodriguez was the brightest young star in the game, having hit .309/.374/.561 with 189 home runs and 133 steals in five full seasons with the Mariners.

Rodriguez put up big numbers, as expected, with Texas, slashing .305/.395/.615 with 156 homers in three seasons before the Rangers traded him to the Yankees. Following the 2007 season, Rodriguez opted out of the final three years on his contract, and later re-signed with the Yankees on a new record 10-year, \$275 million contract. In a 22-year career, Rodriguez finished with 696 home runs and a .930 OPS. He was a three-time AL MVP Award winner and a 14-time All-Star.

2000-01: Manny Ramirez signs with Red Sox

In a truly franchise-altering move, Boston signed Ramirez to an eight-year, \$160 million contract in December 2000. It came as a surprise in many quarters that Ramirez would leave his comfort zone in Cleveland, where he established himself as a slugging star over the first eight seasons of his career. While the Indians' offer to re-sign him was a strong one, Boston won out, and within four years, Ramirez would join with David Ortiz and Pedro Martinez, among other later signings to bring the city its first World Series title since 1918.

Ramirez was the MVP of the 2004 World Series, in which the Red Sox swept the Cardinals. Overall, in eight years with Boston, he hit .312/.411/.588 with 274 home runs. He also helped the 2007 club win the World Series with a sweep of the Rockies.

1998-99: Randy Johnson signs with D-backs

The D-backs were fresh off their inaugural season, in which they lost 97 games, when they signed a 35-year-old Johnson to a four-year, \$52 million contract. The move was considered curious by many, given that Arizona was an expansion franchise and Johnson would be under contract through the age of 38. But the skepticism proved to be wrong when Johnson went on to win four consecutive NL Cy Young Awards and helped lead Arizona to the 2001 World Series title in seven games over the Yankees.

Johnson was named co-MVP along with Curt Schilling for the World Series, coming on in relief during Game 7 after having started Game 6, and tossing 1 1/3 scoreless frames before the D-backs won on a Luis Gonzalez walk-off single off Mariano Rivera in the ninth inning. In all, the Big Unit spent six seasons with Arizona in his first stint with the club (he would return for two more seasons from 2007-08), posting a 2.65 ERA and 11.9 strikeouts per nine innings.

1992-93: Greg Maddux signs with Braves

Maddux was the reigning NL Cy Young Award winner in the winter of 1992, a free agent after spending the first seven seasons of his career with the Cubs. It was expected that the Yankees would land the right-hander, but in a surprise twist, it was Atlanta that inked Maddux to a five-year, \$28 million contract on Dec. 9 during the Winter Meetings. While the contract was for less than what New York was offering, Maddux wanted to join what would become one of the greatest starting rotations in baseball history with Tom Glavine, John Smoltz and Steve Avery.

Maddux would go on to become the best starting pitcher of the 1990s, and indeed one of the best in baseball history. The Hall of Famer won three consecutive NL Cy Young Awards from 1993-95 for Atlanta, making it four straight overall. He helped the Braves win the 1995 World Series over the powerhouse Indians for the franchise's first championship in Atlanta. Maddux also won 10 consecutive NL Gold Glove Awards with the Braves, and in 11 seasons had a 2.63 ERA.

1992-93: Barry Bonds signs with Giants

In a move that was more monumental than surprising, Bonds left the Pirates and joined the team his father, Bobby, had starred with from 1968-74. Bonds' godfather is Giants legend Willie Mays, and Bonds grew up in the Bay Area while his father played for San Francisco. The Giants were nearly sold and moved to Florida following the 1992 season, but a new ownership group purchased the team and kept it in San Francisco, giving it a jump-start by landing Bonds -- a two-time NL MVP Award winner -- with a six-year, \$43.75 million contract.

The Bonds signing was a catalyst in vaulting the Giants to a 103-win season in 1993, and eventually four postseason appearances over the next decade. Bonds would win five more NL MVP Awards and hit 586 of his all-time record 762 home runs in 15 seasons with San Francisco. He was named to 12 All-Star teams over that span, and won six of his eight career NL Gold Glove Awards. During his tenure with the Giants, the franchise built a new waterfront ballpark and came within one victory of winning the World Series in 2002.

1980-81: Dave Winfield signs with Yankees

In what was at the time the richest contract in sports history, Winfield signed with the Yankees for 10 years and \$23 million in December 1980. The big slugger had spent his entire eight-year career to that point with the Padres, having hit 154 homers while stealing 133 bases for San Diego. Winfield hit 205 home runs with an identical 134 OPS+ in nine seasons with New York before the Yankees traded him to the Angels in 1990. Despite his productivity, along with other stars such as Don Mattingly during the decade, the Yankees never made the postseason during Winfield's time with the club after an appearance in the 1981 World Series.

1979-80: Nolan Ryan signs with Astros

Ryan began his career with the Mets and made a name for himself with the Angels, but he returned to his home state by signing a four-year, \$4.5 million contract with the Astros, just 25 miles north of his hometown of Alvin, Texas, in November 1979. With the contract, he became the first player in MLB history to earn more than \$1 million in a single season. In nine seasons with Houston, Ryan compiled 1,866 strikeouts with a 3.13 ERA, setting an MLB record by tossing his fifth career no-hitter on Sept. 26, 1981 vs. the Dodgers. Ryan also anchored the starting rotations of the franchise's first two postseason clubs in 1980 and '86.

Ryan would go on to play five more seasons with the Rangers after his tenure in Houston, and finished his career with seven no-hitters and a record 5,714 strikeouts. Though he played for four different teams in his 27-year career, Ryan's contract with the Astros paved the way for lucrative deals for future free agents after he broke the \$1 million per year barrier in 1979.

1974-75: Catfish Hunter signs with Yankees

Following a dispute with Oakland A's owner Charlie Finley in 1974, an arbitrator ruled Hunter to be a free agent, the first such designation of a Major League Baseball player in more than a century. Hunter ultimately signed a landmark five-year, \$3.75 million deal (with a \$1 million signing bonus) with the Yankees on New Year's Eve, opening the door for what would become MLB free agency over the decades that would follow.

Hunter helped the Yankees restore their fortunes as baseball's best club, reaching the World Series each year from 1976-78, and winning back-to-back titles in '77 and '78. The Hall of Famer finished out his 15-year career with the Yankees, posting a 3.58 ERA over five seasons for New York.

FROM MiLB.COM

Midseason farm system grades: AL

Angels, Tigers, Rays, Blue Jays receive top marks for first half

By MiLB.COM

With about two months left in the Minor League schedule, the MiLB.com staff hands out grades to all 30 farm systems based on their prospect and team performance so far. The American League systems make up the first installment in the series, followed by the National League tomorrow. Sam Dykstra provides the grades here for AL East, Chris Tripodi analyzes the AL Central and Josh Jackson breaks out the red pen for the AL West.

American League East

Baltimore Orioles

Grade: C-

The Orioles placed 24th on **MiLB.com's Farm System Rankings** before the season and haven't done much to change that perception. **Austin Hays**, previously the top prospect in system, has dropped out of **MLB.com's top-100 rankings** altogether after struggling with Double-A Bowie. (He hasn't played since late May due to an ankle injury.) **Hunter Harvey** and **Cody Sedlock**, both first-rounders in the last five years, are also on the disabled list with shoulder issues. There is some good news in that No. 82 overall prospect **Ryan Mountcastle** seems to have figured out Double-A and was recently named an Eastern League All-Star. Also, **Zac Lowther** -- the No. 74 overall pick in last year's Draft -- has been a revelation and was Toolshed's midseason leader for the MiLB Top Starting Pitcher Award, thanks to his 1.42 ERA and 81 strikeouts between Class A Delmarva and Class A Advanced Frederick, and No. 28 O's

prospect **Ryan McKenna** was on his way to being Carolina League MVP before a promotion to Bowie. But those are just three names, and with the system collectively putting together a .499 winning percentage (19th-best in baseball), Baltimore's Major League woes can't be fixed by the farm alone.

Boston Red Sox

Grade: F

Positive news from the Red Sox system has been difficult to find since spring. **Michael Chavis** was suspended 80 games after testing positive for a banned performance-enhancer. **Jay Groome** didn't pitch at all during the regular season before undergoing Tommy John surgery in May. **Tanner Houck**, the club's 2017 first-rounder, has the highest WHIP (1.70) among qualified Carolina League pitchers. **Bryan Mata** has struggled to find the strike zone. **Sam Travis** still hasn't made the leap with Triple-A Pawtucket, forcing the Red Sox to trade for **Steve Pearce** to be the right-handed bat the club needed after the departure of Hanley Ramirez. **Jalen Beeks** (102 strikeouts in 77 1/3 innings at Pawtucket) was the biggest bright spot of the first half, but was lit up in his Major League debut, and it might be a while before he gets another start in The Show. The Sox deserve some credit for developing 2016 10th-rounder **Santiago Espinal** into a player that could be flipped one-for-one for a Major Leaguer in Pearce. For grade purposes, this column won't even get into the fact that 2018 picks **Triston Casas** (thumb) and **Nick Decker** (wrist) have already suffered significant injuries, but they do speak to the type of year the Sox are having in the lower levels. Add in that Boston affiliates have the game's worst collective winning percentage at .429 -- the Braves rank 29th at .445 -- and it's tough to give the system a passing grade.

New York Yankees

Grade: B+

This is all about feeding the Major League club. Remember that Gleyber Torres opened the season at Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, and now might be the frontrunner to win AL Rookie of the Year with Shohei Ohtani on the shelf. **Jonathan Loaisiga**, in his first season on the 40-man roster, is also carving out a spot for himself in the Major League rotation with three solid starts since debuting last month. **Miguel Andujar** and **Domingo German** were technically prospects to begin the season and have since graduated after taking on big roles for the AL East division leader. At the lower levels, pitching has been impressive with **Trevor Stephan**, **Nick Nelson** and **Garrett Whitlock** all making names for themselves. There are a couple things holding New York from the A grade. The club still has four top-100 prospects, but **Justus Sheffield** is the only one of the bunch that's had a standout season. **Estevan Florial** struggled to make consistent contact before undergoing hamate surgery in May, and **Chance Adams** and **Albert Abreu** have been so-so at Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and Class A Advanced Tampa, respectively. From a team standpoint, Yanks affiliates are middle-of-the-road with a .504 winning percentage, 17th-best in the Minors. But the whole point is to develop Major League help from within, and there's no doubt that's happened with pinstriped prospects in 2018.

Tampa Bay Rays

Grade: A-

There are individual clubs that would love to do what Tampa Bay affiliates have done collectively so far in 2018. Rays farm clubs own a .582 winning percentage -- easily the best in the game, beating the Astros handily at .556. There have also been individual success stories. **Willy Adames** and **Jake Bauers** finally made their Major League debuts after proving their readiness at Triple-A Durham, and Bauers in particular has already provided his share of big moments with the Rays. **Brendan McKay** was plugging along in his attempt to be a two-way star before an oblique injury placed him on the DL. (He's expected to miss only three weeks.) **Jesus Sanchez** and **Lucius Fox** have been two of the more exciting players in the Florida State League with Class A Advanced Charlotte, and **Nathaniel Lowe** and **Brandon Lowe** (no relation) have been two of the best hitters in the Minors. Catcher **Ronaldo Hernandez** has been a breakout star at Class A Bowling Green with his above-average offensive skills and plus work behind the plate, while 17-year-old **Wander Franco** is off to a promising start in the Appalachian League. The only thing holding Tampa Bay back here is a lack of top pitching depth; **Brent Honeywell's** Tommy John surgery did them no favors here. After McKay, the next top pitching prospect is **Austin Franklin** at No. 13 in the system. But overall, it's been a positive year so far.

Toronto Blue Jays

Grade: A-

Vladimir Guerrero Jr.'s dominance is most noteworthy, but there are plenty of other reasons to be high on the Blue Jays. **Bo Bichette** has solidified his place as a top-10 prospect with Double-A New Hampshire, and **Danny Jansen** continues to be one of the game's best catching prospects at Triple-A Buffalo. **Kevin Smith** would be the standout hitter in almost any other system with his .338 average, .986 OPS and solid defensive work in the infield at Class A Lansing and Class A Advanced Dunedin. On the pitching side, **T.J. Zeuch** and **Sean Reid-Foley** are holding their own at the upper levels, while **Ryan Borucki** earned a Major League call-up last month. It's not all good news, however; **Anthony Alford** has produced just a .638 OPS with Buffalo and **Nate Pearson** still hasn't returned after taking a liner off his forearm in his FSL debut on May 7. But on the whole, Jays affiliates rank fourth with a .554 winning percentage, showing they're more than just Vlad. (Though for the record, Vlad would be plenty.)

AL Central

Chicago White Sox

Grade: B+

Outfielders **Eloy Jimenez** and **Luis Robert** both got off to late starts this season but **received recent promotions** anyway; Jimenez's numbers do the talking, while Robert has adjusted well in his stateside debut. **Dylan Cease** led the Carolina League in strikeouts in his first taste of Class A Advanced to earn a promotion to Double-A Birmingham. Outfielders **Micker Adolfo** and **Luis Alexander Basabe** each made strides with their approach at Winston-Salem, and Basabe's power surge led to a promotion to the Barons. On the lower rungs of the system, right-handers **Tyler Johnson**, **Lincoln Henzman** and **Jose Ruiz** all impressed to climb the ladder. Control issues have plagued both **Michael Kopech** and **Alec Hansen**, while a **re-torn Achilles** has **Jake Burger's** future in question. Although Chicago's affiliates at the higher levels have struggled, both Winston-Salem and Class A Kannapolis are thriving, which speaks to this system's depth in addition to its high-end talent, some of which is nearly Major League-ready.

Cleveland Indians

Grade: C+

Bieber Fever has energized Cleveland's farm system in 2018. **Shane Bieber** forced his way to the Majors and has held his own while jumping from No. 9 to No. 3 in the Indians system and into MLB.com's top 100 prospects. **Regression to the mean** finally hit top prospect **Francisco Mejia**, who went bonkers in June after a brutal start had his batting average sitting at .189 at the end of May, while right-handers **James Karinchak** and **Eli Morgan** earned quick promotions to Class A Advanced in May. On the flip side, **Bobby Bradley** isn't showing much of a hit tool at Double-A Akron, and **Willi Castro** is struggling in his first taste of the upper Minors. **Triston McKenzie** has been uneven since returning from forearm tightness in June, and **Yu Chang** has experienced a power outage at Triple-A Columbus. Combined with a system-wide record under .500, it's easy to see why Bieber's emergence is easily the highlight for Cleveland's system this season.

Detroit Tigers

Grade: A-

International League home run leader **Christin Stewart** cut his strikeout rate by five percent to earn a bump into MLB.com's top 100 and went from Detroit's No. 10 prospect to No. 5 -- quite a feat considering the impressive arms in the organization. Right-hander **Alex Faedo** became the **fourth player from the 2017 Draft** to reach Double-A after making 12 starts at Class A Lakeland, and **Matt Manning** took Faedo's place with the Flying Tigers after exhibiting much-improved control in June. **Daz Cameron** has hit the ground running with Double-A Erie after a quick 58-game stop in Lakeland, and each of Detroit's full-season affiliates is over .500 with the exception of the SeaWolves. It wasn't all great in the Motor City, as catching prospect **Jake Rogers** struggled out of the gate (though he rebounded in June) and left-hander **Gregory Soto** has dealt with serious control issues, but the positives far outweigh any negatives in the Tigers system.

Kansas City Royals

Grade: C-

Kansas City's top hitting prospects have performed well this season, led by No. 1 prospect **Khalil Lee**; the 20-year-old outfielder improved every aspect of his game except power at Class A Advanced Wilmington to earn a promotion to Double-A Northwest Arkansas. Outfielder **Seuly Matias** leads the South Atlantic League in home runs (he's also the Minor League leader), slugging percentage and OPS in a breakout season, while shortstop **Nicky Lopez** recently **hit for the cycle** and ranked among the Texas League leaders in batting average before a promotion to Triple-A Omaha. The Royals' best pitching prospects, **Scott Blewett** and **Foster Griffin**, have both struggled with the Naturals, and second-ranked prospect **Nick Pratto** is hitting a first-full-season wall at Class A Lexington. There have been a few encouraging signs this season, but with a system-wide record well below .500 and no top prospects close to the Majors or in the top 100, things aren't looking up for the Royals in the Minors (or Majors) this season.

Minnesota Twins

Grade: B+

Minnesota's Class A affiliate in Cedar Rapids **dominated the Midwest League** in the first half. Top prospect **Royce Lewis** is showing power gains despite **playing through an injury** and third-ranked **Alex Kirilloff** led the circuit in several hitting categories and jumped into MLB.com's top 70 prospects before earning a promotion to Class A Advanced Fort Myers, where he enjoyed a **four-hit game** in his second contest. Right-hander **Brusdar Graterol** parlayed an impressive full-season debut into a spot in the top 100 and a promotion of his own, and **Brent Rooker** has improved every month at Double-A Chattanooga and enjoyed a monster June. Left-hander **Lewis Thorpe** and right-hander **Kohl Stewart** have made strides in both their strikeout and walk rates despite brutal batted-ball luck, which has made their muted overall numbers misleading. Struggling starter **Stephen Gonsalves** has already walked more batters in 10 starts at Triple-A Rochester than he did all of last season, while **Lewin Diaz** and **Akil Baddoo** are floundering in new environments. With all of their affiliates hovering around .500 except Fort Myers, which is well below that mark, the Twins earn a solid grade this season, even if it isn't quite an elite one.

AL West**Seattle Mariners****Grade: D+**

The Mariners entered the season ranked by MiLB.com as the, um, **30th-best farm system in baseball**. There's been no vast overhaul since then, but there has been enough good news to keep Seattle a few ticks out of failing range. Top prospect **Kyle Lewis**, who missed the start of the year after arthroscopic surgery in February, got back to Class A Advanced Modesto for May 12 and played well enough to make it into the California League All-Star Game a little more than a month later. He was joined at that showcase by other ranked M's prospects, including **Evan White**, who homered. While the system is still particularly weak in pitching, a few hurlers on that Nuts club put together an excellent first half, including **Wyatt Mills**, **Darren McCaughan** and **Seth Elledge**. Class A Clinton (39-31) was the organization's winningest affiliate through the first half, but only Double-A Arkansas (35-35) clinched a playoff berth.

Texas Rangers**Grade: C**

Leody Taveras, one of the system's two crown jewels, has hit consistently but unspectacularly with Class A Advanced Down East. The center fielder doesn't turn 20 until September, so holding his own at that level is no small accomplishment. **Willie Calhoun**, the Rangers' No. 2 prospect, had 16 home runs through June 24 in the Pacific Coast League last year, but six through the same date this year. His value as a Major Leaguer will depend unduly on his bat, so it will be a relief for Texas fans if he starts driving balls out of the yard again in the second half. Down in the Carolina League, the Wood Ducks' pitching staff has been fantastic -- a real boon for a system that's lost arms like **Cole Ragans**, **Kyle Cody** and **Joe Palumbo** for all or almost all of the year. **Jonathan Hernandez** was especially dominant for Down East, striking out 77 over 57 1/3 inning while posting a 2.20 ERA across 10 starts before heading to Double-A

Frisco. The stateside emergence of **Julio Pablo Martinez** will boost the Rangers system in July and August, but his debut came a little too late to help with the grade here.

Oakland Athletics

Grade: C+

Jesus Luzardo has had a remarkable first half, blazing through the Class A Advanced California League in three starts and continuing to excel in the Double-A Texas League at age 20. If the A's had another prospect or two who was delivering on such high potential as well as Luzardo, they'd have a grade good enough to please any parent. As things are, **A.J. Puk** (Tommy John surgery) is missing the year, **Franklin Barreto** had been not much better than fine before he graduated as a prospect and **Jorge Mateo** has struggled to get on base for Nashville. **Lazaro Armenteros** had a nice May in the Midwest League but hit the disabled list at the beginning of June. **Sean Murphy**, at least, has been an additional bright spot, but it's Luzardo's breakout that buoys this organization's first-half mark.

Houston Astros

Grade: B+

Things are looking pretty good for the Houston farm system -- not great, but good. **Kyle Tucker** followed a head-turning spring camp with a strong campaign at the Triple-A level. **Forrest Whitley** was suspended for the first 50 games of the season, but returned with three straight scoreless starts for Double-A Corpus Christi at the beginning of June. He hit a bump in his fourth outing, but 24 strikeouts over 16 1/3 innings in those games suggest he's ready for a strong second half. **Yordan Alvarez** has been an offensive standout on that Hooks team, which also graduated Minors stolen base leader **Myles Straw** to Fresno. The biggest downside has been the undisclosed injury to **J.B. Bukauskas**, the 15th overall pick of last year's Draft, who was limited to two rough starts before suffering an injury, but second-rounder **Corbin Martin** has shown signs of giving that Draft class a star with his climb to Double-A.

Los Angeles Angels

Grade: A

While it's true that Shohei Ohtani was lost to an elbow injury shortly after he outgrew his prospect status, it's also true that the addition of Ohtani didn't single-handedly overhaul the Angels system. It's been steadily improving over the last couple years, and several of its brightest youngsters -- especially those from recent Drafts -- have wowed this year. **Jo Adell** has been absolutely sensational, and **Jahmai Jones** and **Brandon Marsh** have both been buzz-worthy. **Griffin Canning** has pitched far better than anybody anticipated, already reaching Triple-A. **Kevin Maitan** got off to a quick start in Rookie ball, though he has since cooled. **David Fletcher**, **Jaime Barria** and **Michael Hermosillo** have all made big league contributions, and **Matt Thaiss**, **Taylor Ward** and **Jose Suarez** might not be too far behind. Aside from the injury to Ohtani -- which still might not hold him back from returning as a hitter soon -- the Halos' farm system could scarcely have asked for a better first half.

FROM USA TODAY**Mike Trout Monday: The 10* Hall of Famers Mike Trout surpassed in WAR in June**

By Ted Berg

By Mike Trout standards, Mike Trout had sort of a lousy week: He went 4-for-23 in seven games since last Mike Trout Monday as the Angels went 2-5 and fell to 11 games behind the Mariners in the race for the second AL Wild Card spot. Trout still got on base at better than a 40% clip, and a tiny .188 BABIP for the week suggests he was a bit unlucky. Plus, he did homer:

Trout opened the week still limited to DH work as he worked through a finger injury, but returned to center field on Friday and showed off his range in a three-game set against the Orioles. Check out the jump he gets here:

As is customary at the end of months, it's time to look at the Hall of Famers Mike Trout surpassed in WAR in June.

* The asterisk in the headline is doing double-duty here. First: In addition to the already enshrined Hall of Famers Trout surpassed in WAR this month, he also passed, among others, Ichiro Suzuki — a no-doubt first-ballot guy. By the time a player gets to around 60 WAR, he has at least some case for the Hall. Catchers and relievers pitchers at this point are automatic, and most but not all position players and starters that clear the threshold wind up in Cooperstown. By 70 WAR, with a few rare exceptions, you're more or less a lock. This post lists only 10 guys who are already on plaques, but from this point forward, every guy Trout passes has some shot at landing in the Hall, either in regular election or from a veteran's committee. This is the last time I'm going to asterisk for that.

Second: Trout technically surpassed aptly named pitcher Early Wynn in June, but **dipped back below him on the career WAR leaderboard** with a rare 0-for-4 night on July 1. I'm not including Wynn here, but Trout will probably pass him again in the next couple of nights and you'll get to hear more about it in a month.

OK, here we go. Huge hat tip, as always, to the **incredible SABR Bio project**.

1. Vladimir Guerrero: Vlad Guerrero Sr., that is. You might remember him: Preternatural hitter, capable of smacking pitches "from his nose to his toes," per a somewhat frequent refrain. An electric all-around player with stunning throwing arm from right field and good speed on the bases during his prime. A perennial MVP candidate with over 2,500 career hits and 449 total homers, Guerrero was a deserving Hall of Famer and one of this author's personal favorites. But because he had a fairly short decline and was out of the Majors at age 36, because he played right field in the midst of an unprecedented era for offensive production, and because he did not get on base quite like Trout can, he did not produce more WAR in his stellar career than Mike Trout has in less than seven full big-league seasons.

2. Yogi Berra: Yogi Berra's reputation as a yoda-like sage of weird baseball wisdom probably overshadows the fact he was an extraordinary player. A three-time MVP and an All-Star in 15 straight

seasons from 1948-1962, Berra ranks sixth all-time in WAR among guys who primarily played behind the plate. But catching shortens careers and limits counting stats. Case in point...

3. Mike Piazza: The best hitting catcher in baseball history, and it's not terribly close. Behind the plate, Piazza was never great at throwing out basestealers but probably a bit underrated in the other aspects of catcher defense. At his best, Piazza was a transcendent type of superstar, with an unmistakable right-handed swing that blasted liners and moonshots to all fields. True story: By rule, I never harass celebrities in public, but I saw Mike Piazza on the street in Midtown Manhattan and seriously considered asking him to pose for a photo with my sleeping baby so said baby could have a ferociously awesome #TBT post in like 2034. I didn't, but I regret it now. Mike Piazza rules.

4. Jim Bunning: The only guy ever elected to both the Hall of Fame and the Senate, Bunning was one of the game's most dominant strikeout guys in his time. He threw the National League's first modern-era perfect game in 1964 — pitching to future *The Wire* reference Gus Triandos — and was a pioneering member of the MLBPA who convinced his fellow players to hire Marvin Miller as executive director, a decision that led to massive improvements in working conditions and salaries for big-league athletes.

5. Jesse Burkett: A Deadball Era hitting machine who twice batted over .400, Burkett was known as "The Crab" because he was, per **the SABR Bio project**, "cranky and unsociable, prone to challenging opponents with his fists and insulting fans and umpires with strings of expletives so creative that sportswriters of the day could only reprint his repartee by omitting all the bad language, which usually made his harangues incomprehensible." This guy sounds awesome. He got kicked out of both ends of a double-header in 1897.

6. Dazzy Vance: Doomed to be forever confused with short-time teammate and fellow Hall of Famer Dizzy Dean, Vance earned his nickname for his dazzling fastball but did not become a full-time Major Leaguer until he was 31 years old in 1922. It's a pretty wild story: Vance banged his arm on a poker table in New Orleans and felt intense pain, so he went to a doctor and wound up one of baseball's earliest elbow-surgery success stories. No one's entirely sure what the surgeon did to Vance, but it revived an arm that had been flopping around baseball's fringes for nearly a decade. He was a member of the Brooklyn Dodgers' rotation a year later and the NL MVP a couple years after that, in a 1924 season that kicked off an eight-year run of leading the league in strikeout-to-walk ratio.

7. Zack Wheat: A slick-fielding, gap-hitting outfielder whose career straddled the end of the Deadball Era, Wheat remains the Dodgers' franchise leader in doubles, triples and hits. He was known for refusing to choke up in an era when everyone else did, and for hitting curveballs so well that opposing manager John McGraw prohibited his pitchers from throwing them to him. Had tiny size-5 feet. Could not amass more WAR than Mike Trout.

8. Al Spalding: Before his name became synonymous with actual baseballs in his post-playing career as a sporting goods tycoon, Spalding packed an astonishing amount of pitching into six seasons from 1871-1876, averaging 42 wins and 479 innings a year in that stretch. Baseball was different then, and Spalding is credited with first popularizing the use of a glove for infielders. He later organized an exhibition tour that featured prominent ballplayers of the time playing games in Australia, Egypt, and all across Europe. Helped found the National League, and was an early owner of the franchise that would become the Chicago Cubs. An early baseball pioneer in too many ways to list.

9. Stan Coveleski: A spitballer that I'm not sure I had ever heard of until right now, Coveleski — despite being only 5'11" and 166 pounds — was known as "The Big Pole" due to his Polish heritage. While in a rowboat with teammate Joe Sewell at manager Tris Speaker's lake house in 1921, Coveleski asked Sewell if he could swim. When Sewell said he could not, Coveleski pushed him off the boat and rowed away. A rescue party saved Sewell, and Coveleski thought it was a very funny prank.

10. Harmon Killebrew: Wait, Mike Trout surpassed Harmon Killebrew in career WAR! What? Harmon Killebrew was one of the great power hitters in Major League history. He hit 573 homers, led the league six times, and retired at fifth on the all-time list. But Killebrew was an early three-true-outcomes masher guy who rarely hit above .270 and was limited to corner positions, and as such did not manage more WAR in parts of 22 big-league seasons as Mike Trout has in parts of eight.

FROM MLB TRADE RUMORS

AL Notes: King Felix, Tigers, Angels, Richards

By Connor Byrne

Mariners right-hander **Felix Hernandez's** contract expires after next season, but he doesn't expect it to be his last deal. *"Oh yeah, I've got more years to play. I'm not going to retire,"* Hernandez told Jon Heyman of Fancred, adding that he has an affinity for Seattle and would like to continue his career in the only major league city he has ever called home. Whether the Mariners feel similarly is up in the air, as Hernandez has fallen off in recent seasons since inking a seven-year, \$175MM extension prior to the 2014 campaign. Hernandez was among the game's best starters then, but he's now sporting a career-worst 5.11 ERA over 100 1/3 innings in his age-32 season.

More on a couple other AL teams:

- **Tigers** center fielder **Leonys Martin** is headed to the 10-day disabled list, Jason Beck of MLB.com tweets. Martin departed Detroit's game on Sunday with a left hamstring cramp — a similar injury to the one that sent him to the DL in early May. Hamstring troubles aside, Martin has been a solid contributor for the Tigers this year, having hit .257/.327/.431 with nine home runs and 2.2 fWAR over 303 plate appearances. The 30-year-old looks like a logical trade candidate as a result, as MLBTR's Jeff Todd wrote this week, but that's up in the air given Martin's health issues.
- Injured right-hander **Garrett Richards** could return to the **Angels'** rotation as early as Wednesday, per Ian Quillen of MLB.com. Richards went to the DL on June 15 with a left hamstring strain, and he's among a slew of injured Angels pitchers who are currently on the shelf. Thanks in part to their host of injuries, the Halos are amid a slide in which they've fallen to 11 1/2 games behind AL West-leading Houston and 10 1/2 back of a wild-card spot. The 30-year-old Richards, a pending free agent, did his best to keep the Halos in the hunt before going on the DL, as he recorded a 3.42 ERA with 10.27 K/9, 4.21 BB/9 and a 50 percent groundball rate over 68 1/3 innings.
- Although 39-year-old **Tigers** designated hitter **Victor Martinez** is struggling, the fact that this may be his last season means manager Ron Gardenhire will continue to give him opportunities

(via Evan Woodbery of MLive.com). *"We all know what's going on with him. It's the last year of his contract,"*Gardenhire said. *"Right now he feels really good, he's feeling great, so we're letting him play. We'll get him more breaks as we go along. But like I said, if this is his swan song, or whatever you want to call it, I'm going to make sure he gets as many opportunities as he needs here as we go along. Hopefully he'll keep having quality at-bats."* While Martinez has been an offensive standout for most of his career, he's now in the throes of his third subpar season in the past four years, having batted a meager .238/.293/.321 with the majors' fifth-worst ISO (.083) in 290 trips to the plate. He's in the final season of a four-year, \$68MM deal.

FROM BUSTED COVERAGE

Someone Listed All Of The Future MLB Deferred Payments In Honor Bobby Bonilla Day

By Dan Crawford

Bobby Bonilla Day aka Darren Rovell Day is a holiday we all love to celebrate every July 1st as a way to bring the internet together for one common goal: to make fun of the Mets for being the hilarious, dysfunctional franchise they are. For those of you who somehow don't know this story, Bobby Bonilla gets a check every July 1st for \$1.19 million until 2035. Pretty decent for a guy who retired in 2001.

Details of the deal via ESPN – The Mets owed Bonilla \$5.9 million for the 2000 season and no longer wanted him. So the club negotiated with Gilbert to attach an 8 percent annual interest rate to that money. With the clock starting in 2000, that adds up to \$29.8 million. The first installment of the payout came on July 1, 2011, and the Mets will pay their sixth installment on Friday.

But as much as we love trashing the Mets, this isn't necessarily a new thing. Bobby Bonilla isn't the only player cashing checks while sitting on his couch 4th of July weekend long after he stepped on the baseball field. This is actually common across MLB contracts.

Michael Mayer, an editor at metsmerizedonline.com, researched and listed out a bunch of future deferred payments set to be doled out in the coming years.

Get ready, this is a long thread

Happy MLB Deferment Day!

This thread is dedicated to all (shocker Bobby Bonilla isn't the only one!) of the current and future deferment payments given to MLB players.

The Cincinnati Reds are paying Bronson Arroyo \$1,363,636 this season and that deferred payment continues through 2021.

The Washington Nationals have to cut a check to Rafael Soriano for \$2,000,000 as a deferred payment in 2018 through 2024.

The Washington Nationals owe Joe Blanton a deferred payment of \$1 million in 2018 and \$2 million paid in 2019.

The Milwaukee Brewers have to pay Lorenzo Cain \$1 million annually as a deferred payment from 2023 to 2027.

The Washington Nationals have to give Matt Wieters a one-time deferred payment of \$5 million in 2021.

The Washington Nationals have to give Daniel Murphy a deferred payment of \$2.5 million in 2019 and \$3 million in 2020.

The Washington Nationals have deferred payments with Stephen Strasburg of \$10 million installments each July 1 starting in 2024 through 2030.

(These payments can change according to opt-outs).

The Washington Nationals agreed to give Max Scherzer deferred payments of \$15 million each July 1 from 2022 to 2028.

The Milwaukee Brewers have to pay Ryan Braun \$1,800,000 each year starting in 2022 through 2031.

The Washington Nationals will pay Jayson Werth a one-time deferred payment of approximately \$11 million in 2018.

The Washington Nationals have an unusual contract with Ryan Zimmerman that pays him \$10 million total in a span of 5 years for personal services beginning once playing career ends.

The St. Louis Cardinals will pay Jim Edmonds a deferred payment of \$300K in 2018 and 2019. The annual payment started in 2010.

The New York Mets have paid Bret Saberhagen a deferred payment of \$250,000 annually from 2004 and that continues through 2028.

The New York Mets will give Carlos Beltran his final deferred payment of \$3,142,857 in 2018.

The Cincinnati Reds began giving Ken Griffey Jr. a deferred payment of \$3,593,750 in 2009 and continue to do that annually through the year 2024.

The Milwaukee Brewers pay the final of three deferred payments of \$2,333,333 to Kyle Lohse in 2018.

The Colorado Rockies pay \$13.1 million of the money they owed Todd Helton over a span of 10 years starting in 2014 with 3 percent interest.

The St. Louis Cardinals will pay Matt Holliday \$1.4 million on July 15th every year from 2020 to 2029.

The Baltimore Orioles will give Chris Davis 15 deferred payments, \$3.5 million annually in 2023 through 2032 and \$1.4 million annually in 2033 through 2037.

The Los Angeles Angels agreed to pay Albert Pujols \$10 million over 10 years in a personal-services contract that begins upon retirement or once his contract expires.

The Detroit Tigers agreed to pay Gary Sheffield \$12.5 million in deferred money with 3 percent interest back in 2009, the final payment comes in 2019.

Sheffield also received an undisclosed amount from the Yankees in deferred payments.

The New York Mets give Johan Santana a deferred payment of \$5.5 this year and that continues through 2020.

The Boston Red Sox will give Manny Ramirez a deferment payment of \$2,003,389 this year and will continue with that annual payment through 2026 at 2.5 percent interest.

The New York Mets will cut a check for \$1,193,248.20 to Bobby Bonilla today and will continue that annually through 2035.

Bobby Bonilla also gets a second deferred payment of \$500k every year that is split evenly between the Baltimore Orioles and New York Mets.

Before the Bobby Bonillia deferred deal, the Mets deferred 40 percent of Darryl Strawberry's 1990 salary of \$1.8 million at a 5.1 percent interest rate to be paid from 2004-2033.

That payment was later sold by the IRS to the highest bidder in 2015.

The Atlanta Braves are still paying Bruce Sutter \$1.12 million a year in a deferred payment through 2021 and he will also receive a final balloon payment of \$9.1 million.

The Seattle Mariners have a deferred payment set up with Ichiro.

\$25 million at 5.5 percent interest in annual installments each Jan. 30 starting with the year after his retirement from the major leagues up until at least 2032.

FROM BALTIMORE BASEBALL

Orioles missed Ohtani on the mound, but how have they done historically against rookie stud pitchers?

By Paul Folkemer

The Orioles finished their season series against the Los Angeles Angels on Sunday, and the Angels' two-way rookie sensation, Shohei Ohtani, didn't face them as a pitcher.

Ohtani was originally slated to pitch against the Orioles in the teams' first series in May, but an ankle sprain scuttled his scheduled start. And by the time the Angels made their lone visit of the season to Camden Yards, Ohtani was on the DL with an elbow sprain he suffered in the first week of June.

He'd been off to a sensational start since signing with the Angels out of Japan, going 4-1 with a 3.10 ERA and an 11.1 strikeout rate as a pitcher (along with a .907 OPS and six homers as a hitter). In the Orioles three-game series in Anaheim, Ohtani was 3-for-11 (.273) with one RBI, three runs scored, a double, a strikeout and a walk.

We'll never know how the Orioles' offense would've fared against Ohtani in his debut season.

But that got me thinking — how have the Orioles performed in past years when they've faced highly touted, heavily hyped rookie pitchers? Have the Orioles' bats usually been stymied by the promising youngsters, or have they been able to cut through the hype and deliver a strong performance?

Here's a look at 10 of the most memorable rookie hurlers who pitched against the Orioles in the last 50 years.

David Clyde, 1973

Although he's now a poster child for the dangers of being rushed to the majors, Clyde was a sensation in his rookie season. The fledgling Texas Rangers, in their second year after the franchise moved from Washington, drafted Clyde No. 1 overall out of high school in Houston, where he had gone 18-0 with five no-hitters as a senior. Desperate to boost attendance, the Rangers summoned the 18-year-old lefty immediately to the majors. His debut brought the first ever sellout crowd in Texas, and fans poured to the ballpark whenever he pitched throughout the year.

The Orioles faced Clyde on Aug. 27 at Memorial Stadium, his 13th major league start. The Orioles chased him in the fourth inning, tagging him for three runs and six hits, including a Bobby Grich two-run homer. Clyde finished that season with a 5.01 ERA. His career lasted only 84 games, and he didn't pitch in the majors past age 24.

Mark Fidrych, 1976

"The Bird" took Detroit by storm in his debut season in '76, when he went 19-9 with a league-leading 2.34 ERA to win the AL Rookie of the Year award and place second in the Cy Young race (well behind Jim Palmer). Beyond his impressive pitching performance, Fidrych attracted notice for his wacky antics, including talking to the baseball and circling around the mound. Sadly for Fidrych, it was all downhill after his rookie year. Knee and shoulder injuries ended his career after 58 games.

Fidrych faced the Orioles three times his rookie season, and he threw a complete game each time. The Orioles, though, managed to win two of those games. On July 29, Fidrych lost a 1-0 game to the Orioles' Rudy May at Tiger Stadium — and the game's only run scored on an error. Fidrych's fielders abandoned him again on Sept. 7, when the Tigers committed four errors that led to three unearned runs in a 5-3 loss. Fidrych, though, did collect one of his 19 wins at the Orioles' expense, throwing a shutout July 3.

Roger Clemens, 1984

Clemens, the Boston Red Sox first-round pick in the 1983 draft, built a reputation coming up through the minors, not just for his blazing fastball but also for his fiery and often abrasive demeanor on the mound. Although Clemens had major league success at a young age, winning both the AL Cy Young and MVP awards in 1986 at age 23, his rookie season of 1984 was unspectacular, as he went 9-4 with a 4.32 ERA in 21 games.

The Orioles ended up being Clemens' most frequent opponent in the majors; he made 51 starts against them during his 24-year career, going 22-14 with a 3.53 ERA. His first one came on June 27, 1984, in his ninth major league start. Clemens gave up three runs (two earned) and 10 hits in 7 1/3 innings. Gary Roenicke tagged him for a home run, and Orioles starter Scott McGregor outdueled Clemens in a Baltimore victory.

Jim Abbott, 1989

Perhaps no pitcher attracted as much media attention as Abbott, and it wasn't because he put up phenomenal numbers; his 4.25 career ERA in 10 seasons was about league average for his era. What was most remarkable about Abbott's performance is that he did it despite being born without a right hand. The southpaw developed a pitching delivery in which he would balance his glove on the end of his right arm while throwing, then quickly slip the glove onto his left hand to be ready to field his position before the batter put the ball in play.

Abbott, a pitching star in college and the Olympics, drew a throng of press in all his early big league games. More than 150 media credentials were issued for his big league debut for the California Angels in 1989. He earned his first major league win at the Orioles' expense in his third start, holding them to two runs in six innings at Anaheim Stadium on April 24. The Orioles got their revenge later in the season, tallying five runs in four innings against him June 22.

Orlando Hernandez, 1998

The legend of the hurler nicknamed "El Duque" grew before he even set foot on U.S. soil. Hernandez was the ace of the Cuban national team, and his half-brother Livan, the 1997 World Series MVP for the Florida Marlins, said, "He was better than me. The best pitcher in Cuba." Orlando Hernandez was banned from the Cuban team because of suspicions that he intended to defect. In December 1997, he made a dangerous escape from Cuba and arrived in the United States, free to sign with a major league team.

The New York Yankees won the bidding for Hernandez's services, and the 32-year-old had a sparkling rookie season in 1998, going 12-4 with a 3.13 ERA in 21 starts. Two of those outings were against the Orioles, and Hernandez won them both, allowing a total of three earned runs in 14 innings. In the second of those starts on Sept. 20, though, nobody watching the game was paying attention to Hernandez — because that's the night that the Orioles' Cal Ripken Jr., voluntarily took a seat, ending his MLB-record consecutive games streak at 2,632.

CC Sabathia, 2001

Sabathia, the six-time All-Star and 2007 AL Cy Young winner, is still going strong in the majors, carrying a 4-3 record and 3.18 ERA for the Yankees this season at age 37. But he was a 20-year-old pup when he

made his major league debut against the Orioles on April 8, 2001. The Cleveland Indians' former first-round pick, who made the club out of spring, was given a rude welcome to the bigs by coughing up three runs in the first inning, including a double, a walk, a wild pitch and a Jeff Conine three-run homer.

But Sabathia settled down after that and kept the Orioles off the board for the remainder of his 5 2/3 innings, and the Indians came back to win after he left the game. One weird aside to that game. The Orioles starter opposing 20-year-old Sabathia was 33-year-old journeyman lefty Chuck McElroy, who was making his third career start despite logging more than 600 appearances in the big leagues in 13 seasons. McElroy also received a no-decision. Sabathia faced the Orioles again two starts later, earning the win with a quality start in Baltimore. That was the first of his 19 career wins (and counting) against the Orioles.

Daisuke Matsuzaka, 2007

A national sensation in Japan, Matsuzaka starred both in high school and in the Japan Pacific League, amassing a 108-60 record, 2.95 ERA and six All-Star appearances in eight seasons with the Seibu Lions. When he was made available for posting to the majors before the 2007 season, the Boston Red Sox swooped in with a \$51.1 million posting fee and then inked him to a six-year, \$52 million contract.

He faced the Orioles twice in his rookie season, both late in the year, and didn't beat them either time. On Aug. 10, he dominated the Orioles for seven innings and left with a 5-1 lead, but the Red Sox bullpen blew it by giving up four runs in the eighth and a walkoff run in the ninth. On Sept. 8, the Orioles torched Matsuzaka for eight runs in 2 2/3 innings, including homers by notable Orioles' sluggers Tike Redman and Scott Moore. Matsuzaka lasted eight years in the majors and is currently back in Japan, pitching for the Chunichi Dragons.

David Price, 2008

A longtime Orioles' nemesis, Price has pitched for three of their AL East rivals — the Tampa Bay Rays, Toronto Blue Jays and now Red Sox. Price was the No. 1 overall pick in 2007 by Tampa Bay, and with the team closing in on its first playoff berth in franchise history the following season, he was called to the majors that September.

Price mainly pitched in relief down the stretch and in the postseason, but he started one game that year. Guess who he faced? Yes, it was the Orioles, on Sept. 22. Price pitched well, giving up two runs (one earned) in 5 1/3 innings in a no-decision. Lifetime, Price is 13-5 with a 2.77 ERA in 26 starts against the Orioles.

Yu Darvish, 2012

Darvish was one of the most coveted international players in MLB history when the Nippon Ham Fighters posted him before the 2012 season. Darvish had been scouted by big league teams dating back to high school, then cemented his reputation by pitching in the 2008 Olympics, the 2009 World Baseball Classic and seven years for the Fighters in the Japan Pacific League, where he was 93-38 with a 1.99 ERA. The Rangers submitted a record \$51.7 million posting fee and signed Darvish to a six-year, \$60 million contract.

The Orioles faced him only once in 2012, and it was one of their most memorable games in recent history: the first-ever AL Wild Card game, played in Arlington on Oct. 5. Though Darvish, on paper, had the matchup advantage over Orioles lefty Joe Saunders, the Orioles pulled out the unlikely victory by scratching across two runs against Darvish and holding on for a 5-1 win to move on to the Division Series. Darvish has made only one regular season start against the Orioles in his career, which didn't come until 2016.

Masahiro Tanaka, 2014

Two years after Darvish, Tanaka was the next big thing to come out of Japan. Tanaka put up video game numbers in his final season for the Rakuten Golden Eagles, going a perfect 24-0 with a 1.27 ERA in 27 starts in 2013 — and even picking up a save in the final game to seal Rakuten's league title. That capped Tanaka's seven-year career with the Golden Eagles in which he was 99-35 with a 2.30 ERA. The Yankees swooped in to add him, paying a \$20 million posting fee and signing him for seven years and \$155 million.

In 2014, before the Orioles faced Tanaka for the first time, Adam Jones sent New York media into a frenzy when he called Tanaka "nothing special" and mocked the hype: "Am I (supposed) to go home and say I faced Tanaka tonight? Just go throw a party that I faced Tanaka?" Tanaka, perhaps trying to prove Jones wrong, threw well in each of his two starts against the Orioles that year, holding them to three runs in seven innings each time. Surely it didn't bother Jones, though, because the Orioles won both games.

All told, these rookie studs pitched 17 games against the Orioles, and although 12 of them were quality starts, the pitchers had a losing record overall: 5-7 with a 3.30 ERA.

The Orioles, it seems, have more than held their own against highly touted rookie pitchers in their franchise history. Considering the 2018 Orioles' offense, though, it's doubtful they would've had the same success against Ohtani this year.