



Press Clips

(June 10, 2018)

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FROM THE OC REGISTER**Angels' sixth straight win is worth the wait for Tyler Skaggs**

By J.P. Hoornstra

MINNEAPOLIS – Jose Briceño napped for 15 minutes on one of the tan leather couches clustered in the center of the Angels' clubhouse inside Target Field. The rookie catcher got a haircut – shaved to the skin on either side of his head and shaggy up the middle, like a ohawk. He still had more than three hours to kill.

Angels second baseman Ian Kinsler did, as he said, “a whole lot of nothing,” while pitcher Tyler Skaggs said he downed four Red Bulls.

Meanwhile, Manager Mike Scioscia monitored the weather.

For a time Saturday, Scioscia said, a big green blob on a radar screen threatened to postpone the Angels' game against the Minnesota Twins by a day. He received conflicting reports. One claimed that downtown Minneapolis would be drenched in rain until 8:30 p.m. local time. Another predicted the skies would clear in the late afternoon, which would allow the Angels to dodge the dreadful bullet of a getaway-day doubleheader.

By 4 p.m., the rain stopped. The close-cropped catcher and the caffeinated pitcher could begin planning for a baseball game. Whatever they did, however they passed the time, it worked.

After a four-hour delay, the Angels needed just under three hours to beat the Minnesota Twins 2-1, extending their winning streak to six games.

Skaggs (5-4) allowed five hits, one run, walked one batter and struck out eight in seven innings. He lowered his ERA to 3.08 and has won both of his June starts after a winless May.

The left-hander “was out at the park here at 9:30 this morning, getting ready to get into your routine and pitch,” Scioscia said. “Just the mental part of a four-hour delay, we waited every hour for updates. Then we got a definitive time. You could see him go into overdrive and get ready to pitch. He pitched a good game.”

Home runs by Ian Kinsler and Albert Pujols provided the Angels' runs. At 37-28, the Angels are now 3-1/2 games out of first place in the American League West after gaining one game on the Seattle Mariners.

Skaggs went to high school in Santa Monica and literally wears his Southern California upbringing on his sleeve. The interlocking letters “LA” and the number 310 – the area code of the greater west side – are written in ink on his upper right arm. Rain delays are not in his blood.

Yet Skaggs also spent part of the 2011 season with the Arizona Diamondbacks' Double-A affiliate in Mobile, Ala. Where, he said, “it rains almost every single day.”

"I've had a lot of practice waiting out rain delays," he said.

Once the skies cleared, neither Skaggs nor Twins starter Kyle Gibson (1-4) got much help from their offenses. The Twins collected seven hits, the Angels six. Run support has not been kind to either pitcher this season, but the Angels did their damage with a pair of daggers.

Kinsler's home run, a laser to left field, handed Skaggs a 1-0 lead in the third inning. It was his third home run in his last three games.

Pujols' 623rd career home run took flight in the sixth inning. It landed in the first row of the first deck of seats overhanging the left-field bleachers, where it soon became property of an elated fan. The souvenir ball was the 1,951st RBI of Pujols' career, which tied another former St. Louis Cardinals great, Stan Musial, for sixth place on the all-time list.

Meanwhile, the Twins (27-34) only put one runner past third base against Skaggs. That was in the sixth inning, when singles by Eddie Rosario and Robbie Grossman put runners at first and third with one out.

The next batter, Max Kepler, bats left-handed. Skaggs was intent on inducing a ground ball against a fellow lefty, got ahead 1-and-2, and succeeded when Kepler tapped a looping curve to Angels first baseman Jose Fernandez.

Fernandez stepped on the bag to retire Kepler, then threw to shortstop Zack Cozart, who needed to tag Grossman to end the inning. Grossman cleverly remained in a rundown long enough for Rosario to score from third base before he was tagged out. The Twins got their only run on the unconventional inning-ending double play, cutting their deficit to 2-1.

Scioscia said that Fernandez, who had scarcely played first base before he was called up from Triple-A Salt Lake on Friday, made the correct play.

"First blush you might say, 'why didn't (Fernandez) go home with it?' ... He tagged first knowing it was probably going to cost us a run, but we got out of the inning and we still have our 2-1 lead," Scioscia said. "That's a heads-up play."

A one-run lead with nine outs to go is often far from safe. But these are the Twins; only six teams have scored fewer runs this season. Skaggs struck out the side in the seventh. Justin Anderson pitched around a single in the eighth. Blake Parker did the same in the ninth, locking down his seventh save in eight tries.

The Angels nearly padded their lead in the eighth inning. Justin Upton was hit in the left triceps by a Trevor Hildenberger pitch, then stole second base – his fourth successful steal in four attempts this season.

The next batter, Pujols, roped a single into left-center. Rosario's throw was up the third-base line and reached catcher Bobby Wilson on one hop, but Wilson was able to reach back and tag Upton before Upton could touch home plate.

Insurance runs have been an unnecessary luxury for the Angels lately. While winning seven of their past eight games, they've allowed more than three runs only once. The pitching, Scioscia said, is the one aspect of the streak that makes him most proud.

"On the offensive side we've got some really clutch hits, which have helped," Scioscia said. "If you look at what our rotation has done through this thing, the only game that was rough was the game that we beat (Kansas City) 9 to 6. ... We're getting our rotation doing what it needs to do. Go around our rotation a couple times, give us a chance to win, that way we can get on some of these streaks. They've been doing a really good job of it."

Should injured Shohei Ohtani go to the All-Star Game?

By J.P. Hoornstra

MINNEAPOLIS – He is a fan favorite and a logical choice to participate in the All-Star Game, if only his health cooperates. Landing on the disabled list at the beginning of June certainly complicates this timing. Can he recover in time to play alongside the game's best players?

This was the question facing Mike Trout last summer. Now it's true for Shohei Ohtani.

After being diagnosed with a Grade 2 sprain of his ulnar collateral ligament, Ohtani received an injection of platelet-rich plasma and stem cells Thursday. He will be re-evaluated in three weeks, knocking him out until at least the end of June.

The All-Star Game is July 17 in Washington, D.C. Ohtani is listed on the ballot as a designated hitter. He can also pitch, of course, and the idea of the two-way rookie sensation displaying even some his talents on the All-Star stage is scintillating.

Now, there are more important questions facing Ohtani. If he ultimately needs Tommy John surgery to replace his elbow ligament, his 2018 season is over – and 2019 would be in serious jeopardy too. Given his importance to the Angels as a pitcher and a hitter, could he finish the season as a designated hitter alone? Even if he could, would the team let him?

Angels general manager Billy Eppler heard these questions Friday but did not want to look too far ahead. Ohtani's immediate future is as hazy as ever – or at least since last winter, when it was unclear which team on which continent would employ him next.

Regardless of his health, it's not inconceivable Ohtani would be voted into the All-Star Game. He is hitting .289 with a .372 on-base percentage and a .535 slugging percentage. He's appeared in 34 games with a bat in hand, starting all but four, and collected six home runs and 20 RBIs. Projected over a 162-game season, that would give Ohtani 29 homers and 95 RBIs.

Should Ohtani accept an invitation to D.C. regardless of whether his elbow allows him to play?

“One hundred percent,” Trout said. “The experience is unbelievable, from the Derby to the all-around All-Star Game. The atmosphere, the fans – it’s a great experience. If he gets voted in, I’m sure he’ll definitely want to go.”

Trout is a six-time All-Star. He was the second-leading vote getter last year, despite a thumb injury that ultimately left him unable to participate in the game.

“I was almost ready but I didn’t want to push it,” Trout said. “It was just one of those things that if it happened a few weeks earlier, I would have been playing.”

If Ohtani can say the same, it will come as a relief.

FONTANA RISING

Nolan Fontana, who was recalled from Triple-A Salt Lake on Friday, is one of just a handful of hitters in the Angels’ system who has more walks than strikeouts this year.

Fontana, 27, has always been a patient hitter, but cutting down on strikeouts has been more difficult. In his first Triple-A game after being demoted in April, he struck out four times in five at-bats.

Since then, Fontana has drawn 20 walks to just 14 strikeouts. The secret?

“I think it comes from my set-up,” he said. “I’m setting up a little taller and my recognition of pitches, I’ve noticed, has been better. I don’t know if there’s a secret ingredient to that but I’m seeing the ball better being more upright now. I’m standing significantly taller at the start. It’s a lot more comfortable. Got down to the basics of it and it’s more comfortable for me.”

Fontana said several coaches have helped him transition out of the crouch. Why it’s been so effective is unclear, though at 5-foot-10, Fontana’s eyes were relatively low to the ground to begin with.

The upright stance hasn’t cost him any power or contact. He had hits in 11 of his previous 14 games prior to being called up. Ten of his 18 hits went for extra bases.

“We’re all trying to find that perfect spot, which there really is none,” Fontana said. “It’s comfort. As soon as something feels right you stick with it.”

ALSO

Angels radio play-by-play broadcaster Terry Smith is expected back in the booth Monday in Seattle after receiving medical attention for an irregular heartbeat Friday. He was released from a local hospital in good spirits Saturday. Jose Mota and Mark Langston handled the Angels’ radio broadcast in his absence.

UP NEXT

Angels (Nick Tropeano, 3-3, 4.35 ERA) at Twins (Fernando Romero, 2-2, 3.96), Fox Sports West, 11 a.m.

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES**Albert Pujols ties Stan Musial on RBI list in 2-1 Angels victory over Twins**

By Jeff Miller

A rain delay forced the Angels to idle for four hours Saturday.

Turns out it also was pouring inside.

“I had like four Red Bulls,” pitcher Tyler Skaggs said. “I was ready to go.”

Heavily caffeinated and sufficiently armed, the left-hander produced seven solid-and-then-some innings as the Angels won their sixth game in a row, beating Minnesota 2-1.

Skaggs arrived at Target Field early Saturday, taking the first of two buses from the team’s hotel like he usually does.

He then waited more than seven hours to pitch, passing the time by with sugar and vitamin B, 12 ounces at a time.

“I knew it was going to rain,” said Skaggs, who routinely checks the weather forecast. “But I didn’t know it was going to be that long.”

When the game finally began, he didn’t appear to be the least bit inconvenienced. Skaggs had a 1-2-3 first inning, overcame a 26-pitch second that included a double and a walk, then had another 1-2-3 inning in the third.

In the third, he retired Bobby Wilson, Brian Dozier and Eddie Rosario with a fastball, a changeup and a curve.

Then, in the fourth, he struck out Robbie Grossman during an at-bat that featured a 71-mph strike one (curve) and a 93-mph strike three (fastball).

“It’s not easy to sit around for four hours and wonder are you going to pitch or not pitch,” manager Mike Scioscia said. “When we got a definitive (start) time, you could see him go into overdrive and just get ready.”

After giving up a leadoff double to start the fifth, Skaggs retired the next three hitters on eight pitches, including a foul tip that catcher Jose Briceno secured for strikeout of Dozier.

The only run the Twins scored came on a double play that helped end a sixth-inning threat.

Then came the seventh, when Skaggs supplied what he called the “exclamation point.” On his 100th pitch of the day, he struck out Miguel Sano. On his 108th pitch, he struck out Ehire Adrianza. On his 112th and final pitch, he struck out Ryan LaMarre.

“He went to the auxiliary tank,” Scioscia said, “and just finished strong.”

Skaggs (5-4, 3.08 ERA) matched rookie Jaime Barria for the team lead in victories, doing so by holding the Twins hitless in five at-bats with runners in scoring position.

The Angels’ runs came on home runs by Ian Kinsler — who has homered in three straight and hit six in his past 11 games — and Albert Pujols.

After Kinsler’s home run in the third, Mike Trout and Justin Upton walked. Pujols thought he drew a walk, too, but umpire Jim Reynolds disagreed. He called him out on a full-count strike three that, upon review, appeared to be outside.

Pujols demonstratively reacted but avoided saying anything that would get him ejected.

Good thing because Pujols hit his homer in his next at-bat.

The RBI was the 1,951st of his career, tying Pujols for sixth all-time with Stan Musial, a Hall of Famer he got to know during his time in St. Louis.

For a player whose name appears routinely on lists with baseball’s greatest ever, matching Musial brought something extra for Pujols.

After the game, he said he would be giving his jersey and his bat and the ball to the Musial family.

A day that began with the Angels doing a lot of nothing ended up with them doing plenty.

Shohei Ohtani’s injury is bad news for All-Star game

By Jeff Miller

It appears the Angels weren’t the only ones who lost Shohei Ohtani to injury Friday.

The sport’s first regular two-way standout since Babe Ruth looked to be a shoo-in for the American League roster in the All-Star game, which will be held July 17 in Washington D.C.

It seems a bit farfetched to think Ohtani could still be able to play.

Ohtani suffered a grade 2 sprain of his right ulnar collateral ligament and was placed on the 10-day disabled list after receiving a platelet-rich plasma and stem cell injection.

He will avoid throwing until he is reevaluated in three weeks, the Angels hoping he heals enough to avoid ligament replacement surgery.

Mike Trout, who missed last year’s All-Star game because of a thumb injury that sidelined him six weeks, said he thinks Ohtani should attend the festivities even if he isn’t able to play.

"100%," Mike Trout said when asked if he'd advise Ohtani to go. "The experience is unbelievable. From the (home run) derby to the game, the atmosphere, the fans. It's just a great experience."

Having perhaps his finest season yet, Trout is expected to make the 2018 American League team and, with Ohtani hurt, may be the Angels' lone participant.

Ohtani's injury was diagnosed after his start Wednesday, when he noticeably struggled with his command.

The problem was initially thought to be a blister that affected Ohtani in April. Watching from his position in center field, however, Trout said he suspected something worse.

"I just had a weird feeling that something wasn't right," Trout said Saturday. "He said he was fine, still throwing 94, 95 (mph). But he didn't know where it was going."

Ohtani didn't travel with the Angels on this trip, instead remaining in Southern California for treatment.

Trout said he hasn't spoken to the rookie since his diagnosis but will do so when the Angels return home June 17.

"Just to bring him up a little bit," Trout explained. "I'm sure he's pretty down. He was having a great season so far. You just gotta stay positive, tell yourself it's a little setback."

"Everybody is going to be pumping him positive thoughts. You can't do anything about it now. You just gotta get it better."

Smith improves

Angels radio play-by-play broadcaster Terry Smith continues to improve and is expected to return to the booth Monday in Seattle.

He left the game Friday night to receive medical attention for an irregular heartbeat. He was released from a local hospital early Saturday morning.

Etc.

The Angels still are offering no timetables for the returns of either Andrelton Simmons (sprained ankle) or Kole Calhoun (strained oblique). Neither traveled with the team for the start of this trip.

Simmons was hurt Tuesday and spent the final day of the team's homestand on crutches.

Calhoun is in Arizona receiving treatment. He has resumed baseball activities, including swinging a bat.

Time for Angels to secure the playoff berth that could secure Mike Trout

By Bill Shaikin

When Vin Scully retired, we retired the phrase “soundtrack of summer in Southern California.” He was it, and it was him, and on we went.

As it turns out, we need to return the phrase to active duty, this time not with a comforting baritone emanating from Chavez Ravine but an ominous ticking tone from Anaheim. Mike Trout might turn out to be the greatest player in baseball history, and we might be little more than two years away from losing him.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

Conventional wisdom says that Trout has little interest in considering a contract extension with the Angels until he knows he can get to the playoffs with them. Trout has a good and open relationship with Billy Eppler, the Angels’ general manager, so we asked Eppler whether Trout has said he might not stay if the Angels do not advance to the postseason.

“He has never said that,” Eppler said.

Trout can be a free agent after the 2020 season. Would he consider signing before then if the Angels do not make the playoffs, this year or next?

“I don’t know the answer,” Trout said. “I want to get to the playoffs. That’s my mindset. I can’t predict the future. So I just take it one game at a time now and see what happens.”

Trout made his debut in 2011. Since then, he has won more most valuable player awards (two) than postseason games (zero). In his six full seasons, he has played in three postseason games, fewer than Kyle Farmer, the Dodgers’ third-string catcher, played in one week last October.

He is 26, an age at which most players are entering their prime. Based on the wins over replacement (WAR) statistic, he is on pace for the greatest season in baseball history.

We have earnestly pumped up Shohei Ohtani’s bid to become the first player to win 10 games and hit 10 home runs in the same season since Babe Ruth exactly 100 years ago. We should not exhaust our Ruth comparisons on Ohtani, not without noting that Trout could better what is considered the best season the best player ever put up: Ruth’s 1923.

Happily for the Angels, their path to the playoffs this year appears to have remarkably few obstacles, even with the possibility that the injured Ohtani has thrown his last pitch of the season. The American League is not about competitive balance this year.

In the East, three of five teams are done, all at least 14 games back entering the weekend. In the Central, two are done and two others are at least five games under .500. In the West, the Texas Rangers are done, and the Oakland Athletics aren’t convincing.

That could all but leave the Boston Red Sox, New York Yankees and Cleveland Indians in the AL playoffs, with the Angels, Houston Astros and Seattle Mariners fighting for the final two spots.

October is there for the Angels, if they are good enough.

“We are a playoff team, no doubt,” said Angels second baseman Ian Kinsler, who has played in 37 postseason games. “It just comes down to execution — winning the games that we should, and some we shouldn’t. We obviously have the talent in this room.”

Eppler, the guy charged with assembling the talent, does not hesitate to agree. He said he feels no more urgency this season than he did last season.

“My urgency has not wavered one bit in any of the years I’ve been here,” he said. “I want to be in the postseason.”

No more urgency with the Trout timer tick-tick-ticking in the background?

“All I think about is what’s best for the organization, what’s best for our fan base and what’s best for the guys in that locker room,” he said. “Every one of those guys deserves to be in the postseason.”

It is not clear that these Angels are good enough. Their starting pitchers are barely averaging five innings, even with the extra rest that has come with a six-man rotation. In the AL rankings for appearances, three Angels relievers rank among the top eight, five among the top 15.

The Angels on Monday fielded a lineup in which five players started the game with an on-base percentage below .300, including Kinsler at leadoff and Albert Pujols at cleanup.

“We’ve had some positive moves within our farm system,” Eppler said. “There might be an answer internally.”

Jaime Barria has come out of the farm system to bolster the rotation — his 2.48 ERA leads the team — and Justin Anderson has emerged in the bullpen. The Angels could get in-house help from infielder Jose Miguel Fernandez and outfielder Michael Hermosillo, both recent call-ups, first baseman Matt Thaiss and third baseman Taylor Ward, both at triple-A Salt Lake, and pitcher Griffin Canning, who is at double-A Mobile.

That would be a lot to ask, from a lot of kids. The Angels need to trade.

“It’s tough to get that starting pitcher,” Eppler said. “It’s tough to get that everyday bat, or impact bat. Those are harder to acquire.

“It’s interesting because oftentimes the best starting pitcher that is out there is just automatically painted as an ace. Sometimes that is not the case. But it’s just because he is the best starting pitcher out there.”

Translation: Why pay ace prices for a J.A. Happ, Michael Fulmer or even Cole Hamels, 34, who has given up more home runs than all but one pitcher in the AL?

Go on, Mr. Eppler.

“Typically, we’ve seen the trade markets be flush with relievers whose contracts are expiring at the end of the year,” Eppler said. “History has shown us that that’s what’s out there in quantity.”

In that category, the Baltimore Orioles could offer Zach Britton, who is expected to return next week from the disabled list, and Brad Brach. The Chicago White Sox could offer Joakim Soria. The Kansas City Royals could offer Kelvin Herrera.

The Angels have spent the money — they are paying more to the players on their roster this season than the Dodgers are — but now comes time to spend a prospect.

Eppler has led the revitalization of a dormant farm system. Baseball America ranked the Angels’ minor league system 14th among the 30 clubs this year, after ranking it dead last in three of the previous four years.

To win this year, Eppler is going to have to weaken the farm system.

“I like when players that are drafted internally and developed internally play here,” he said. “I want that group of guys to make it to the big leagues, to hold each other accountable, to push each other.

“If we’re presented with an opportunity that is going to impact our club, I always have to evaluate those things, but my preference is, let’s let this group grow and fulfill their potential here because that’s good for every part of the organization. It’s good for scouting, development, major leagues, environment, ownership, everybody.

“That is how you build a championship organization, not a championship team.”

However, unlike Dodgers counterpart Andrew Friedman, Eppler has traded his team’s top prospect. In his first trade as the Angels’ general manager, he sent minor league left-hander Sean Newcomb to the Atlanta Braves for shortstop Andrelton Simmons.

Three years later — in his first full major league season — Newcomb is scheduled to start Sunday at Dodger Stadium. He is 7-1 for the Braves, with a 2.48 ERA. The Angels have no complaints; Simmons has retained his defensive brilliance and added a reliable offensive dimension to his game. Simmons had five years left on his contract; the Angels might add players with two or three months left on their contracts.

The Angels also are developing a surplus of high-ceiling, high-risk outfielders: Jo Adell, their first-round draft pick last year; Jordyn Adams, their first-round pick this year; Brandon Marsh; and — although they moved him to second base this year — Jahmai Jones. None has risen above the Class A level.

The Angels’ third basemen rank last in the league in OPS. Take one of those blue-chip outfield prospects and send him to the rebuilding Royals as the lure in a package that would get Herrera and third baseman Mike Moustakas — a left-handed bat, a need amplified by the injury to Ohtani — to Anaheim.

Zack Cozart can split his time among second base, shortstop and third base for the rest of the season. The Ohtani injury opens at-bats at first base and designated hitter, with Pujols most likely to return to

full-time DH. If the Angels were to decide to pick up Moustakas' option next season, Cozart could replace Kinsler at second base.

No prospect has Trout's ceiling. If the Angels keep Trout, with Justin Upton signed through 2022, they do not need all those outfield prospects. If one of them surfaces in Kansas City three years from now — with Trout still roaming the Angels' outfield, with playoff experience and a new contract, and still not even 30 years old — that is a win-win.

And tick, tick: It is time for the Angels to win.

FROM ANGELS.COM

Pujols, Kinsler homer to back Skaggs in win

Left-hander unbothered by rain delay, fires seven frames of one-run ball

By Maria Guardado

MINNEAPOLIS -- The overcast sky loomed ominously on Saturday morning when Mike Scioscia met with reporters in the dugout for his daily pregame media session. The tarp remained on Target Field as rain steadily drizzled, but Scioscia predicted a favorable forecast -- for the weather and for his team.

"We're going to be OK," Scioscia said. "We're going to be a little wet. The forecast is for us to do a good job controlling the strike zone from the pitcher's side, get the game on our terms and come out with a win."

After a four-hour rain delay, the Angels fulfilled those expectations, as **Ian Kinsler** and **Albert Pujols** homered and left-hander **Tyler Skaggs** tossed seven strong innings in a 2-1 victory over the Twins that extended the club's winning streak to six games.

Kinsler's third home run in as many games put the Angels on the board in the third, and Pujols added an insurance run with another solo shot in the sixth. Pujols' 623rd career home run also yielded his 1,951st career RBI, tying him with Stan Musial for sixth on the all-time list. The 38-year-old slugger plans to donate the home run ball to the Musial family, along with his jersey and bat from Saturday's game.

"Albert has the utmost respect for what Stan Musial was about," Scioscia said. "Not only on the field, but he was a man of great character off the field. I know those two had a chance to spend a lot of time together when he was in St. Louis. He respects his legacy tremendously, so for him to be in the same sentence as Stan Musial, I know it's a nice feeling for Albert."

Unbothered by the lengthy rain delay, Skaggs limited the Twins to one run on five hits while walking one and striking out eight. He has now allowed two or fewer runs in 10 of his 13 starts this season, lowering his ERA to 3.08.

Skaggs said he consumed four Red Bull energy drinks as he waited for the rain to dissipate to help keep himself sharp.

"It wasn't too difficult," Skaggs said. "Coming up in the Minor Leagues, I played in a place called Mobile, Alabama, where it rains almost every single day. I've had a lot of practice waiting out rain delays. I just tried to stay focused. I knew it was going to let up sometime today, I knew we were going to play today, so just kind of stayed in the moment."

The Twins threatened in the second after Skaggs surrendered a two-out double to **Miguel Sano** and a walk to **Ehire Adrianza**, but he avoided damage by coaxing a forceout from **Ryan LaMarre** to end the inning. Adrianza also led off the fifth with a double to left field, but Skaggs retired the next three batters on eight pitches to leave him stranded.

"Those are big outs there," Scioscia said. "No doubt, he had all three pitches working. He had his fastball in different zones, elevated it, got it to the outside corner. He pitched with his back against the wall the whole day."

Skaggs fell into a bit of a jam in the sixth after **Eddie Rosario** and **Robbie Grossman** singled to put runners on the corners with one out, though he minimized damage by inducing a double play on a bouncer to first base from **Max Kepler**. **Jose Miguel Fernandez** fielded the ball, stepped on first for the out and then threw to **Zack Cozart** at second, but Grossman forced a rundown to give Rosario enough time to score from third, cutting the Angels' lead to 2-1.

Skaggs returned to the mound in the seventh and capped his outing by striking out the side. He departed after throwing 112 pitches, two shy of his career high.

"I felt like I put an explanation point on the outing," Skaggs said. "I was happy with it."

Justin Anderson worked a scoreless eighth before giving way to **Blake Parker**, who worked around a two-out base hit to earn his seventh save of the season and shut the door for the Angels.

Scioscia said he's been most impressed by the strength of the Angels' rotation over the club's six-game winning streak. Angels starters have now recorded a 2.58 ERA since May 1, the best mark in the American League.

"I think on the offensive side, we've gotten some really clutch hits, which have helped," Scioscia said. "But we're getting our rotation doing what it needs to do. Going around that rotation a couple times gives us a chance to win, and that way we can get on some of these streaks. They're doing a very good job of it."

UP NEXT

The Angels will send right-hander **Nick Tropeano** (3-3, 4.35 ERA) to the mound on Sunday afternoon as they close out their three-game series with the Twins at 11:10 a.m. PT at Target Field. Minnesota will counter with rookie right-hander **Fernando Romero** (2-2, 3.96 ERA). Tropeano faced the Twins on May

12 in Anaheim but did not factor into the decision after allowing three runs over six innings. In three career appearances (two starts) against Minnesota, Tropeano is 0-0 with a 2.84 ERA.

Trout on Ohtani injury: 'We're all bummed'

Broadcaster Smith OK after health scare; Calhoun resumes baseball activities

By Maria Guardado

MINNEAPOLIS -- Mike Trout missed more than six weeks last season after tearing a thumb ligament on a headfirst slide into second base, so he understands the frustration that Shohei Ohtani is likely experiencing after being diagnosed with a Grade 2 sprain of the ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow. Ohtani, who received platelet-rich plasma and stem-cell injections on Thursday, was placed on the disabled list on Friday and will be shut down for at least three weeks.

"We're all bummed," Trout said Saturday. "It's a tough loss for this team. Obviously, he hits and pitches, so it's a double loss. The biggest thing in this game is to stay healthy. That's the toughest part."

Trout and Ohtani are among the Angels' top All-Star candidates this season, though Ohtani's status has been muddled by his injury. Trout earned his sixth All-Star selection in 2017, though he opted not to attend as he recovered from his thumb injury. The star center fielder said he would still advise Ohtani to go to the All-Star Game at Nationals Park on July 17 if he is voted in by the fans.

"100 percent," Trout said. "The experience is unbelievable. From the [Home Run] Derby to the game, the atmosphere, the fans. It's just a great experience. If he gets voted in, I'm sure he'll want to go."

Broadcaster OK after health scare

Angels radio play-by-play man Terry Smith left Friday night's broadcast to receive medical attention for an irregular heartbeat. Smith was released from the hospital early Saturday morning and will return to the air on Monday in Seattle.

Fox Sports West analyst Jose Mota will fill in for Smith over the weekend and join color analyst Mark Langston in the radio booth.

Smith is in his 17th season on AM830 KLAA, the Angels' flagship radio station. He is the longest-tenured radio broadcaster in club history.

Calhoun progressing

Right fielder Kole Calhoun, who has been on the disabled list since June 2 with a right oblique strain, has resumed baseball activities and is currently rehabbing in Arizona.

"He's starting to feel a little bit better, but there's a process you always want to be careful with," manager Mike Scioscia said Saturday. "He's starting to get into some baseball activities, so we'll just kind of measure it and see when he's ready to go."

Maldonado receives a day off

Catcher Martin Maldonado was not in the Angels' starting lineup on Saturday afternoon, as rookie Jose Briceno got the starting nod against the Twins following Friday's night game. Maldonado fouled a ball off his left foot in the seventh inning on Friday and was sporting a noticeable limp on Saturday morning, but Scioscia said that didn't factor into the decision to start Briceno.

Scioscia said he's been impressed with the growth that Briceno has shown since being acquired from the Braves as part of the Andrelton Simmons trade in November 2015. The 25-year-old backstop received his first MLB callup last month after backup catcher Rene Rivera landed on the DL and has made the most of his opportunity with the Angels, going 4-for-12 with two home runs and three RBIs in five games.

"He's really starting to understand the things that we feel are important to a catcher helping a pitcher perform at a high level," Scioscia said. "He's really wrapped his arms around game plans, he's understanding pitchers better as he's come through the organization and he's figured some things out in the batter's box. There's a lot of positives with Briceno."

Angels sign second-round pick

The Angels announced Saturday that they've officially signed second-round Draft pick Jeremiah Jackson, a shortstop out of St. Luke's Episcopal High School in Mobile, Ala. The slot value for the 57th overall selection is \$1,196,500.

FROM MiLB.COM

Adell has first three-hit night in Cal League

Top Angels prospect belts roundtripper, adds two base knocks

By Rob Terranova

Jo Adell believes success in baseball comes down to finding a good rhythm. If that is the case, he was grooving and shaking Friday night.

The top Angels prospect went yard and added a pair of base hits to set the tempo in Class A Advanced Inland Empire's 7-1 win over Rancho Cucamonga at LoanMart Field.

It was Adell's first three-hit outing since being promoted to the California League on May 22. In 16 games with the 66ers, baseball's 53rd-ranked prospect is 15-for-69 with nine extra-base hits -- including four dingers -- 10 RBIs, 10 runs and four stolen bases.

"The big thing for me is to stay in rhythm," the 19-year-old said. "I understand now that I'm at the next level, there's going to be fewer pitches to drive. So it's really important that no matter who the pitcher

is, whether it's BP or practice or a game, to stay in rhythm with him. It's big for me. It helps my timing, it allows me to be ready ... everything comes into play when I'm in rhythm.

"I know where I want the ball, and once it gets through that tunnel, I'm ready to attack."

Batting second in the order Friday, Adell turned around the first pitch he saw from righty Isaac Anderson (1-5) in the opening frame and hit a ground ball into left field. Three batters later, he came around to score on a fielder's choice to the shortstop by Roberto Baldoquin.

In the next inning, last year's No. 10 overall pick squared up a 1-2 pitch and drilled it into center to set Inland Empire up with runners on the corners and one out. After stealing second and advancing to third on a throwing error by catcher Connor Wong, the **No. 14 Dodgers prospect**, Adell scampered home on a wild pitch by Anderson.

After striking out in the fourth, the Louisville native fouled off a pair of pitches from right-hander Marshall Kasowski and then didn't miss a 2-2 fastball that he deposited over the wall in right-center for a solo shot in the sixth

"Every situation is different. You never know when your pitch is going to happen," Adell said. "In the first inning, it was the first pitch, and on the home run, I worked the count to get the pitch that I wanted in that zone. That's what it's all about, being in rhythm. You sit there and read the pitcher and read the pitch, and if I get the ball in my zone, not to miss it. You can't hit everything, so you have to simplify it to what you want."

Southpaw Logan Salow struck out Adell looking to the end the eighth, but the three-hit performance by the right fielder raised his average 29 points to .217 in the Cal League.

"Guys are a little older here and the speed of the game is a tick up now," Adell said. "Things are happening faster and I need to speed my game up. I still have to stay in my zone but bring the speed up a little.

"Pitchers are competing in the zone more. They can locate the fastball better, no one is leaving anything really over the plate here. So it's all about do what you can with what you get and that's been my goal from the moment I got here."

Right-handed reliever Blake Smith (1-0) entered the game in the fifth and allowed a run on three hits and a walk over 2 2/3 innings. Third-ranked Jahmai Jones and Baldoquin chipped in a pair of RBIs apiece for the 66ers.

FROM THE MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE**News of Shohei Ohtani's DL trip a jarring blow to Japanese media**

The regular Japanese contingent covering Shohei Ohtani is 50 to 60 working home games. About half that number travels to road games and was at Target Field for this week's injury news.

By Chip Scoggins

The tweet arrived at 2:03 p.m., just as a contingent of Japanese reporters trickled into the press box at Target Field for another day of exhaustive coverage of rookie sensation Shohei Ohtani, the hottest story in Major League Baseball this season.

Except Ohtani isn't in Minnesota. And the tweet delivered news of a potentially serious injury in Ohtani's pitching elbow. The mood changed in a snap.

"Shocked," said Hideki Okuda, a sportswriter for Sports Nippon newspaper who has covered Japanese players in MLB since 1997.

Shocked, dejected, gut punch.

They all apply.

The magic carpet ride of Ohtani's debut season took an ominous turn Friday with diagnosis of a Grade 2 sprain of an elbow ligament. Sprain and UCL used in the same sentence usually causes baseball folks to break into nervous sweat.

Ohtani left his start Wednesday because of a blister on his hand. Now there is concern he might need Tommy John surgery if rehab doesn't yield positive results.

"Naturally you're concerned any time a pitcher has any type of discomfort," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said.

Scioscia was flanked by Japanese reporters who chronicle Ohtani with tunnel vision. Much like previous Japanese stars who migrated to MLB, Ohtani has his own beat corps assigned to cover his exploits and little else.

"The majority of those who are covering him, their focus is basically 95 percent Shohei Ohtani," said Tim Mead, the team's longtime VP of communications.

The fascination is rooted in historical significance. Not since Babe Ruth has MLB witnessed a regular two-way player. Ohtani hits and pitches, and has displayed tremendous aptitude at both. He smashes home runs and throws 100 miles per hour, a rare talent who arrived with the subtlety of a lightning strike.

"This guy is obviously special," said Okuda, the veteran sportswriter. "The size of impact might be as big as Hideo Nomo and Ichiro Suzuki."

Okuda has covered Japanese players throughout the majors since 1997, starting with Nomo. He normally covers Chicago Cubs pitcher Yu Darvish, but he was assigned the Angels-Twins series this weekend.

He got thrown a knee- buckling curveball.

Mead was conducting an interview about Ohtani-mania as news of his injury began to circulate. He stopped at one point to arrange a media conference call with Angels General Manager Billy Eppler, who was back in California. Forty-five minutes later, the Japanese media joined a few of the team's American beat writers around a phone in a conference room inside the Target Field press box.

The regular Japanese contingent covering Ohtani has settled in, with 50 to 60 working home games. About half that number travels to road games, too.

The Angels established rules to help ease his transition. Ohtani doesn't play the day before or after he pitches, so he doesn't do interviews on those days. He only talks to reporters on days that he plays.

He prefers to hold his news conferences outside of the clubhouse to avoid being a distraction. And no 1-on-1 interviews because his requests are a mile long and the team doesn't want to show favoritism.

Ohtani has his own interpreter and the Angels also hired a woman who worked in public relations for the Dodgers during the Nomo era to assist them in accommodating the international media.

"All of the decisions have been collective decisions," Mead said. "It's not Shohei in any way, shape or form saying 'I won't' or 'I don't want to.' There's been a certain amount of protecting because of the adjustment to the culture and all the work getting to know his teammates."

Mead noted that interest in Ohtani is so intense that Japanese TV stations host half-hour shows to dissect his pitching outings.

"At some point we all take a step back and recognize this is history," Mead said. "It's a national appeal. Certainly baseball wants to see him do well."

And see him healthy. This will be an anxious wait while Ohtani rehabs on the disabled list. With any luck, he will avoid the dreaded Tommy John surgery.

His press corps is in limbo, too. Many weren't sure if they would finish covering this series, return to California immediately or stay with the team for the next series in Seattle.

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**Pujols ties Musial on RBI list; Angels beat Twins 2-1**

By Brian Hall

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Albert Pujols met Hall of Famer Stan Musial during his time with the St. Louis Cardinals and grew to appreciate Musial and his legacy.

For now, the pair is sharing a place in baseball's record books.

Pujols hit his 623rd career homer and tied Musial for seventh on the career RBI list with 1,951, helping the Los Angeles Angels beat the Minnesota Twins 2-1 after a four-hour rain delay Saturday.

Pujols' solo home run in the sixth proved to be the difference as Tyler Skaggs (5-4) allowed one run in seven innings and matched a season best with eight strikeouts.

The team announced Pujols is sending the ball he hit, his jersey and bat from Saturday's game to the family of Musial, who died in 2013.

"I know those two had a chance to spend a lot of time together when he was in St. Louis and he respects him, respects his legacy tremendously," Los Angeles manager Mike Scioscia said. "For him to be in the same sentence with Stan Musial I know is a nice feeling for Albert."

Ian Kinsler had a solo home run, his sixth in the past 11 games, for the Angels. Blake Parker recorded his seventh save as Los Angeles won for the seventh time in its past eight games.

Kyle Gibson (1-4) allowed both home runs before completing seven innings. He gave up five hits, walked two and struck out five batters as Minnesota fell to 3-13 in one-run games.

Gibson threw a career-high 118 pitches. He's posted six consecutive quality starts without a win.

"Offensively when you're struggling, it's just tough," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "Especially not taking advantage of some of these really good starts that we've been getting."

The four-hour rain delay is the second longest in Target Field history behind a 4:50 delay last June against the Chicago White Sox.

Pujols struck in the sixth with a towering homer to the second deck in left field.

"They were really spitting out some sliders and some good fastballs away and, unfortunately I just made the wrong pitch at the wrong time, and Albert did what Albert does," Gibson said. "He did a really good job on that pitch."

Pujols added a single in the eighth for his 3,027th career hit, which ranks 27th on the career list. He's seventh on the home run list, seven behind Ken Griffey Jr., and his RBI total is 44 behind Lou Gehrig for sixth.

“The names that are thrown up next to his are names that all baseball fans know and some are names that just people know,” Kinsler said. “He’s passing, I guess you could call them, legends. It’s a lot of fun to watch.”

Minnesota’s lone run crossed the plate in the sixth after Max Kepler grounded into a double play, but Robbie Grossman got caught in a rundown before being tagged out, allowing Eddie Rosario to score.

ENERGY TO SPARE

Skaggs had his second straight strong start. He was coming off six scoreless innings in a win against Texas on June 3. The left-hander retired 11 of the first 13 batters he faced and ended up giving up five hits and one walk in tying his longest outing of the season.

“I had like four Red Bulls and a lot of energy drinks,” Skaggs said of how he spent the rain delay. “So, I was ready to go. I woke up early, got here on the first bus because I wanted to wake up for the game. I think it worked out really well.”

ANGELS ANNOUNCER CLEARED

Los Angeles radio play-by-play announcer Terry Smith was released from a local hospital after an irregular heartbeat forced him to leave Friday’s broadcast. Smith was taken to Hennepin County Medical Center where he underwent tests.

The team said Smith was cleared after the testing and he’ll return to the broadcast on Monday in Seattle.

MINNESOTA MOVES

The Twins recalled OF Jake Cave from Triple-A Rochester before the game and optioned RHP Tyler Duffey. Cave hit .111 in three games earlier this season, including his first major league hit on a home run.

TRAINER’S ROOM

Angels: C Martin Maldonado was out of the lineup a day after fouling a ball off his foot. But Scioscia said he planned to start rookie catcher Jose Briceno anyway because of the day game following a night game.

Twins: OF Byron Buxton (10-day disabled list) ran on an antigravity treadmill Friday as he tests his broken left great toe. Buxton was likely to advance to hitting off a tee Saturday.

UP NEXT

Angels: RHP Nick Tropeano (3-3, 4.35 ERA) starts the series finale. Tropeano allowed five runs in 4 2/3 innings in his last start against Kansas City.