



Press Clips

(July 10, 2018)

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FROM THE OC REGISTER**Dr. Ken Ravizza, Cal State Fullerton's pioneering sports psychology consultant, dies at 70**

By J.P. Hoornstra

Dr. Ken Ravizza, a sports psychologist whose work touched generations in Southern California and beyond, died Sunday. He was 70.

Ravizza taught in the kinesiology department on the campus of Cal State Fullerton over parts of five decades. His professional clients included the Angels, with whom he began working in 1985. He had been a consultant to the Chicago Cubs since 2015.

A resident of Redondo Beach, Ravizza met with players from the Dodgers and Cubs in person during a series at Dodger Stadium in June. On July 2, Ravizza was hospitalized after suffering an apparent heart attack.

Ravizza was a pioneer in the field of applied sports psychology consulting. The Oxford Handbook of Sport and Performance Psychology cites him as having started consulting in 1973. His clients included amateur and professional athletes in a variety of sports. Since 2010, Ravizza was also the sports psychologist for the UCLA baseball team.

Dodgers third baseman Justin Turner and pitcher Dylan Floro both took Ravizza's sports psychology classes while they were student-athletes at Fullerton.

"When you think things are so terrible for you, he was able to give you a perspective to make you feel like what you're going through is not really anything bad at all," Turner said. "It could be way worse. It was an iconic voice. If he was in another room and you heard him talking, you knew exactly who it was. 'Yo – JT! Ya workin' it?' Nothing like it. An incredible guy."

Ravizza earned a Ph.D. from USC in 1973 and began teaching on the Fullerton campus in 1977. His courses included stress management, applied sports psychology and the philosophical and historic perspective of human movement. He also served as an adviser to undergraduate and graduate students of applied sports psychology.

"He was one of Fullerton's secret weapons," former CSF gymnastics coach Lynn Rogers told the Southern California News Group in 2014.

In 2004, a Fullerton baseball team featuring Turner and seven other future major leaguers won the College World Series. After a slow start to their season, Turner said the Titans began keeping a miniature toilet in their dugout to "flush away" bad at-bats.

"He had a lot to do with our championship," Turner said. "We started off 15-16 that year and had many, many Ken Ravizza sessions. ... He put the little portable toilet in our dugout, talked about flushing away

the bad at-bats, flushing away the bad results and moving on, getting to the next pitch. A lot of things I still talk about on a daily basis here are directly from him.”

A scholarship for kinesiology students at Fullerton, the Ken Ravizza Scholarship in Performance Enhancement and Sport Psychology, was established in 2015.

Ravizza and Chicago Cubs manager Joe Maddon worked together for 30 years, according to the team’s official website. Maddon was responsible for bringing Ravizza to the Cubs’ staff after both worked for the Angels and Tampa Bay Rays. The Cubs won the World Series in 2016.

“I think he’s one of the best in the business,” Maddon told SCNG in 2017.

“His impact on so many is immeasurable and his legacy will be a lasting one,” Angels VP of Communications Tim Mead wrote on Twitter. “Ken used not only his professional skills, but his genuine compassion, honesty, and caring for each individual he connected with.”

Ravizza and Dr. Tom Hanson co-authored the book Heads-Up Baseball 2.0 in 2017, which outlined many of Ravizza’s techniques for athletes of all ages and ability levels.

“What I took away from him I still do it to this day,” Floro said. “If you watch me with my glove, I use his breathing technique. I get set, take my deep breath and focus every now and then when I need to I find my focal point. Those are things I took from him.”

“Ken Man was a true pioneer in the mental skills field for baseball and someone who I continually credit for helping me get where I am today,” Giants third baseman Evan Longoria wrote in a social media post. “I’m eternally grateful for the things I learned from him. The baseball world lost a good one.”

How rookie Jaime Barria emerged to become a fixture in the Angels rotation

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — To fully understand why everyone around the Angels is so excited about Jaime Barría, you have to go back to one of his worst games.

Which was also one of his best.

On May 26, Barría was facing the Yankees in New York. Six pitches into the game, he’d allowed two homers. By the end of the second inning, the 21-year-old in his sixth big league start had allowed a third homer, for four runs.

“We talked in the dugout, and made an adjustment,” recalled catcher José Briceño, a rookie who had worked with Barría in the minors and caught him that night in New York. “He kept going. He kept fighting.”

Barría did not allow another run over his five innings, sticking around long enough for his teammates to erase the deficit and win the game. It was the Angels' only victory of the season against the Yankees.

A month later, Barría went into Fenway Park and gave up just two runs in what was the Angels' best start of the season against the Red Sox.

"He's got a good heartbeat on the mound," pitching coach Charlie Nagy said. "He doesn't get rattled too much. He stays in the situation. Some people learn it over time. Some people just have it."

By all accounts, Barría just has it. Matt Wise, the Angels' minor league pitching coordinator, said in the four years he's worked with Barría he's always shown exceptional mound presence.

"He definitely has a different level of poise and calm when he's pitching," Wise said.

What's happened in the past year and a half, though, is a few improvements with his repertoire have supplemented his makeup to lead to a breakthrough rookie season in the majors.

Barría has a 3.39 ERA through his first 12 big league starts. That's included the aforementioned starts at Yankee Stadium and Fenway Park, wins in hitter-friendly environments of Colorado and Texas and a game against the Houston Astros when he gave up one run in seven innings.

Barría has allowed two earned runs or fewer in 10 of his 12 starts.

"He's been great," teammate Andrew Heaney said. "I think everybody, to a man, will tell you the same thing. We're happy for him and the way he's fit in. Nothing but good things to say about him."

Barría doesn't have much to say about himself, which is part of what endears him so much to his teammates. He just shows up and does what he's told.

"He's pretty quiet," Heaney said. "He's very much locked in to what he's doing."

Barría, a native of Panama who conducts interviews with an interpreter, is clearly confident, though. Before his first big league start, he said: "I feel extremely ready."

A dozen starts later ...

"In a few months I feel like I have jelled with the team," he said. "I have confidence that I know I belong here. I am always working hard and being disciplined. I think back to Yankee Stadium and Boston, and that gives me a lot of confidence to go out and compete."

Barria's attitude helps him get the most out of a repertoire that isn't eye-popping.

After signing as a 16-year-old in 2013, Barría barely earned notice on prospect lists because none of his pitches graded out as exceptional. Although he always had the work ethic and attitude, it took a few upgrades of his stuff to get him moving up the ladder, Wise said.

Barría rose from Class-A to Double-A to Triple-A in a whirlwind 2017, with a stop at the Futures Game. It was just his second full season in the United States, after pitching at low-A in 2016.

Barría credited two Angels minor league pitching coaches, Wise and Jairo Cuevas, with helping him shoot through the system.

Wise taught him a new changeup grip in instructional league. Barría now says the changeup is his best pitch. The Angels also gave him a slightly different workout regimen and they tweaked his lower-body mechanics, which brought his fastball up a couple ticks to where it now, around 92 mph. He also improved the consistency of his slider.

He also learned how to combine his pitches to make them complement each other.

“It’s just a mix of all his pitches,” Nagy said. “He can throw any pitch in any count. That’s what makes him really good. He’s throwing them all for strikes. The hitter can’t sit or look for one pitch.”

Barría throws a fastball 46 percent of the time, with the rest being sliders and changeups. When he’s behind in the count, his fastball percentage rises only to 48 percent. Across the majors, pitchers throw fastballs 60 percent of the time, but 70 percent of the time when behind in the count.

The second to last pitch of his outing in Boston was a perfect example. Barría fell behind slugger J.D. Martinez, 3-and-0. Martinez would certainly have the green light, so Barría couldn’t just dump a fastball over the plate. He threw him a sharp slider that dove out of the zone, and Martinez swung through it.

Another at-bat that demonstrated Barría’s strength was the memorable 21-pitch duel with Brandon Belt on April 22. Barría threw Belt 11 fastballs, six sliders and four changeups.

Other numbers, however, raise some red flags about Barría’s ability to sustain his early success. His nine-inning averages of strikeouts (6.9), walks (2.8) and homers (1.5) all suggest that his ERA should be higher. Statcast numbers, which take into account the quality of contact along with his strikeout and walk rates, also indicate that he might have been fortunate so far to have the performance he’s had.

Those who’ve watched Barría closely believe his success is sustainable, though, because of his ability to make adjustments when something goes wrong.

Like that game in New York.

“He knows himself,” catcher Martín Maldonado said. “He knows what he needs to do to get people out. In Yankee Stadium, he gave up a couple homers but then he stopped that and threw the ball good.”

UP NEXT

Angels (Garrett Richards, 5-4, 3.42) vs. Mariners (Mike Leake, 8-5, 4.11), Tuesday, 7 p.m., Fox Sports West, KLAA (830 AM)

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES**Angels are optimistic the offense is starting to come around**

By Ethan Bauer

Fans at Angel Stadium filled the air with boos Sunday as Mike Trout trotted toward first base.

The Angels had runners on second base and third base with two outs in the third inning, so Dodgers manager Dave Roberts elected to intentionally walk Trout and take his chances with cleanup hitter Justin Upton.

Upton would be facing Alex Wood and the outfielder's batting average against left-handers this season was .215. He was also hitting .160 (four for 25) in July. And he had not hit a home run since June 24. Conversely, Trout had three hits, including a home run, against the Dodgers on Saturday.

Upton worked the count to 2 and 0, so Wood tried to frame a strike on the outside corner. Upton lined the fastball into right-center field to drive in two runs and pull the Angels to within 3-2.

"It was a big hit," manager Mike Scioscia said. "Got us right back in the game."

It was also a relief for a team that has struggled to generate any offense in July.

Since the start of the month, the Angels rank last in the majors in runs with 19, 37 fewer than the top-ranked Boston Red Sox. The Angels also rank last with 17 runs batted in and a .195 batting average.

Scioscia is well aware of it, but believes things are starting to turn around. Especially after Upton's hit, which helped counter another of the Angels' weaknesses — hitting against left-handers.

"Justin was in a little bit of a down cycle, but his process is good," Scioscia said. "When he starts squaring baseballs up, that's when he gives us a big lift."

Upton is a right-handed hitter, just like most of the Angels lineup. The only left-handed bats who play consistently are right fielder Kole Calhoun, third baseman Luis Valbuena and designated hitter Shohei Ohtani, who sometimes rests against left-handed starters.

That leaves Trout, Upton, Albert Pujols, Andrelton Simmons and Ian Kinsler. Theoretically, right-handed hitters should be better against left-handed pitchers. But not this group.

The Angels' .224 average against left-handers was the second-worst in the majors entering Monday, ahead only of the New York Mets' .217.

The Angels also struggle with runners in scoring position, ranking 21st with a .243 batting average.

"If you look at some of the internals, most of it's been positive as far as the process you'd like to see," Scioscia said before Sunday's game. "The results have obviously not been there. There's not one sugar pill you give to the whole offense."

But Upton's successful at-bat was a start. So was Pujols' home run against Wood in the sixth inning that tied the score 3-3.

"They're working very, very hard," Scioscia said. "These guys are all working toward that end where they start to get the production we're looking for. So hopefully we're gonna start to see that."

The Angels (46-45) need it to happen soon to stay in contention. Their odds already aren't great despite their winning record because of the success of this year's American League West, where the third-place Oakland Athletics are 11 games over .500 and nine games out of first place. The Angels are also 11 games out of a wild-card spot.

The team has shown in spurts what it's capable of offensively, like Sunday. Pujols homered against a left-hander. Upton drove in two runs after catcher Martin Maldonado and third baseman David Fletcher singled, all three hits coming against Wood. And Ohtani launched his seventh home run, this one as a pinch-hitter, in the seventh inning to lift the Angels.

Scioscia knows that's only a start and that the Angels need to hit consistently.

Trout, who appears immune from the hitting woes that have plagued the team, agrees.

"We're getting chances. Just coming up short lately," Trout said. "But it'll turn. We just have to stay positive."

FROM ANGELS.COM

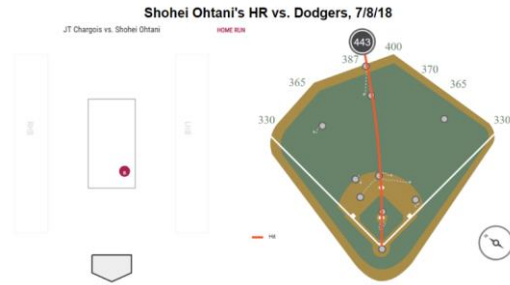
Shohei's hitting hallmark? Center field

After Sunday's HR vs. Dodgers, Angels phenom leads MLB in batting average and slugging to center

By David Adler

In terms of pure hitting, the most impressive aspect of **Shohei Ohtani's** tiebreaking, pinch-hit home run against the Dodgers on Sunday night was probably *where* he hit it -- into the rocks beyond the center-field wall at Angel Stadium. And yet, that might also have been the most predictable thing about it.

Ohtani cleared his hands through a 95.8-mph inside fastball from **JT Chargois** and launched it 108.8 mph off the bat, a Statcast-projected 443 feet, just left of dead center. It was a beautiful swing -- and it was not a normal home run for a left-handed hitter. When a lefty puts a high-velocity, inside fastball that far into the seats, it's generally because he turned on it and belted it to the pull field. Ohtani *inside-outed* the ball and still hit it over 440 feet.



Since **Statcast™** began tracking in 2015, there have been 245 home runs by left-handed hitters on high-velocity, inside fastballs -- those thrown 95 mph or harder, on the inner third of the strike zone or farther in. Of those homers, more than 85 percent have been pulled. Only 36 of the 245 have been hit to straightaway center or the opposite field. And only nine of those 36 were hit 440-plus feet. Ohtani's is one of them.

But that type of home run is a perfect emblem for Ohtani's success as an MLB hitter. Forget the batting-practice showcases where Ohtani crushes balls to the tops of right-field upper decks -- in real game action, his power has been to the heart of the field.

Statcast™ divides the field into three wedges to classify batted-ball direction: Pull, Straightaway and Opposite. This season, Ohtani leads the Majors in batting average *and* slugging percentage on "straightaway" batted balls. He's batting .538 when he hits the ball to the middle of the field, and after Sunday's homer, he's slugging 1.154. No other hitter with a similar number of batted balls is even approaching 1.000.

Highest batting average on "straightaway" batted balls in 2018

Minimum 30 batted balls hit to center of field (344 hitters)

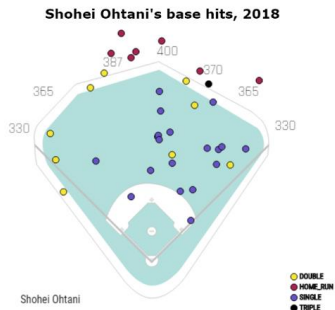
1. **Shohei Ohtani: .538**
2. **Matt Kemp: .507**
3. **Aaron Judge: .470**
4. **J.D. Martinez: .468**
5. **Max Stassi: .462**

Highest slugging percentage on "straightaway" batted balls in 2018

Minimum 30 batted balls hit to center of field (344 hitters)

1. **Shohei Ohtani: 1.154**
2. Matt Kemp: .918
3. **Franchy Cordero: .889**
4. Max Stassi: .872
5. Aaron Judge: .848

Six of Ohtani's seven home runs have been to straightaway center. So have 11 of his 17 extra-base hits, and 21 of his 36 hits overall. His hardest and farthest homer -- 112.4 mph and 449 feet on April 6 -- was to center, as was his homer off reigning AL Cy Young Award winner **Corey Kluber** two days before that.



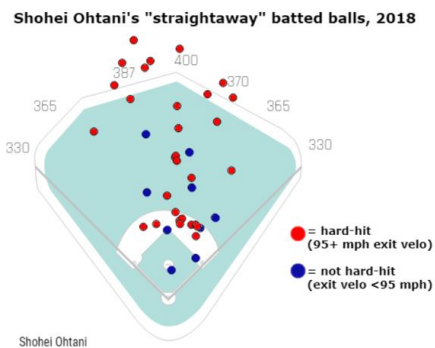
This isn't just Ohtani flashing power to center on a few scattered batted balls. He's driving the ball to center repeatedly. More than 40 percent of Ohtani's total batted balls fall within the "straightaway" region, putting him above the 90th percentile of Major League hitters in terms of frequency using the middle of the field. And the vast majority of those batted balls have been hard-hit. Thirty of Ohtani's 39 batted balls hit straightaway have had exit velocities of 95 mph or harder -- Statcast™'s threshold for hard contact. His 76.9-percent hard-hit rate to center is by far the highest in baseball.

Highest hard-hit rate on "straightaway" batted balls in 2018

Minimum 30 batted balls hit to center of field (344 hitters)

1. Shohei Ohtani: 76.9 percent
2. Miguel Cabrera: 62.8 percent
3. Kendrys Morales: 62.5 percent
4. Robinson Cano: 62.2 percent
5. J.D. Martinez: 62.0 percent

Hard-hit rate: *Percent of batted balls with exit velocity of 95 mph or higher*



Even as his elbow injury keeps him off the mound and limits him to half of his two-way potential, Ohtani continues to be a difference-maker for the Angels. He's already shown he has all the talent to thrive as a Major League hitter. This up-the-middle approach is how he's doing it.

Inbox: How will Halos approach Trade Deadline?

Inbox: How will Halos approach Trade Deadline?

By Maria Guardado

With the Trade Deadline approaching, what are the Angels looking to do? Are they more toward buyers or sellers?

-- **Josh A., Riverside, Calif.**

It'd be tough to peg the Angels as buyers right now since they're 11 games behind the Mariners for the second American League Wild Card spot. While their outlook appears quite bleak -- they have a 2.4 percent chance of making the playoffs, according to FanGraphs -- they are scheduled to face the Mariners six times in Anaheim this month, which will give them an opportunity to chip away at the deficit. But even if the Angels win both series, the first of which begins Tuesday, they'll also have to contend with the A's, who are 4 1/2 games ahead of them in the standings.

General manager Billy Eppler is unlikely to settle on a definitive direction until he sees how these next three weeks unfold. The Angels could sell if they fall too far behind in the Wild Card race, but they don't have a ton of assets to peddle to other teams. Their pending free agents are **Garrett Richards, Martin Maldonado, Luis Valbuena** (mutual option for 2019), **Ian Kinsler, Jim Johnson** and **Chris Young**.

The most intriguing trade chip would be Richards, who returned from the disabled list last week and could bolster his value if he continues to pitch well this month. The trade market for starting pitchers is relatively thin this year, so Richards could net a significant return if the Angels decide to move him. Maldonado could also attract interest from teams in search of catching help.

Is Ohtani's elbow injury affecting him at the plate?

I don't think the Angels would have activated **Shohei Ohtani** off the disabled list if they thought his elbow injury would interfere with his ability to hit. Ohtani is only 3-for-17 (.176) since coming off the DL, but I think that's more because he's still trying to find his timing at the plate after being sidelined for a month. His game-winning pinch-hit home run against the Dodgers on Sunday was an encouraging sign, though.

Will we let go of Scioscia this year?

Mike Scioscia is the final year of his contract, so there could be change coming in the managerial seat for the Angels. I don't expect that situation to resolve itself until the end of the season, however.

What's the status and timetable for pitchers on the dL? And any unsigned free agents being looked at?

The Angels have 10 pitchers on the disabled list, so bear with me. **Tyler Skaggs** (right adductor strain) threw a bullpen session on Sunday and will likely return to pitch against the Mariners on Thursday. **Nick Tropeano** (right shoulder inflammation) made a rehab start on Saturday and is scheduled to throw a bullpen on Tuesday, so he could also rejoin the rotation this week. Johnson (lumbar strain) started a rehab assignment Sunday and is also inching closer to a return.

Matt Shoemaker (right forearm strain) is slated to begin a throwing progression on Tuesday and will require several weeks to build up his arm, but he could return to pitch in August if all goes well. The other six pitchers -- **JC Ramirez, Keynan Middleton, Blake Wood, Jake Jewell, John Lamb** and **Alex Meyer** -- are out with season-ending injuries.

What top prospects do you see being called up by the end of the season? Ward, Thaiss, Rengifo, Adell, Suarez and Canning all seem like call-up candidates.

Taylor Ward, Matt Thaiss and Jose Suarez seem like solid bets for a September callup since they're playing at Triple-A Salt Lake right now. Griffin Canning, who is also on the Triple-A roster, is another candidate, though the Angels might prefer to shut him down at the end of the year since it's his first professional season. **Luis Rengifo** and Jo Adell are having impressive years, but they're at Double-A Mobile and Class A Advanced Inland Empire, respectively, so they'll need more seasoning before they're considered for a Major League callup.

FROM THE ATHLETIC

Rosenthal: Mets want a lot for deGrom or Syndergaard; Trout batting third; Greinke the hitting guru; more notes

By Ken Rosenthal

I'm not buying that the New York Mets are going to make the same mistake twice. They tried to build around their starting pitching this season, and their 35-51 record shows how well that plan worked out.

By claiming they do not want to trade right-handers Jacob deGrom and Noah Syndergaard and indicating they intend to compete next season, the Mets might simply be masking their intentions, as most teams do during trading season.

Nothing has changed in the Mets' thinking, according to major-league sources. They will listen on deGrom, who is under control for two more seasons, and Syndergaard, who is under control for three. Their asking prices for both pitchers will be exorbitant, perhaps too exorbitant for prospective suitors. But if the Mets receive an offer they deem satisfactory, they will jump.

The odds probably are against the Mets getting such an offer, and Syndergaard must prove he is recovered from a strained ligament in his right index finger for any serious conversations on him to take place.

But remember, it is not in the Mets' interests to proclaim, *yes, we will trade one of our aces*. Such an announcement would only increase the level of distraction for the two pitchers and place additional pressure on the team's three-man interim executive team.

The Mets know the landscape for them to secure a spectacular haul for deGrom or Syndergaard might never be better. Two leading trade candidates, Texas Rangers left-hander Cole Hamels and Toronto Blue Jays lefty J.A. Happ, both got rocked Saturday. A third, Tampa Bay Rays righty Chris Archer, just returned after missing more than a month with an abdominal strain. A fourth, Detroit Tigers right-hander Michael Fulmer, pitched well Sunday, but his three additional years of control and improved performance of late assure the Tigers' asking price will be high for a pitcher who had shoulder and elbow trouble last season.

The Mets prefer major-league ready prospects — the type teams rarely move — in any deal for deGrom or Syndergaard, sources say. They are willing to include cash to get better returns for players such as closer Jeurys Familia. And they are drawing serious interest in righty Zack Wheeler, who is eligible for free agency after next season.

A trade of deGrom or Syndergaard, though, would trigger a legitimate retooling at a time when a postseason berth in 2019 likely is out of reach, particularly with the Atlanta Braves and Philadelphia Phillies contending a year earlier than expected.

Maybe a deal happens before the non-waiver deadline. Maybe it gets put off until the off-season. But as maddening as the Mets can be, I refuse to believe they are going to stick with the same plan that doomed them this season.

Why Not Ricco?

The Mets often raise eyebrows with their maneuverings, and they did it again late last month by appointing their three-man interim executive team to replace general manager Sandy Alderson, who for health reasons is taking a leave of absence.

Rather than go with the trio of executives — gloriously nicknamed “The Three Tenors” by Kevin Kernan of the New York Post — the more logical move would have been to make assistant GM John Ricco the sole interim, with J.P. Ricciardi and Omar Minaya remaining special assistants.

If only it were that simple.

While Fred Wilpon, the Mets’ chief executive officer, likes Ricco, he harbors reservations about whether the longtime assistant is the right choice for the head job, according to sources with knowledge of the organization’s thinking.

Ricco joined the Mets from the commissioner’s office in 2004 and served 25 days as interim GM between Minaya’s dismissal and Alderson’s hiring in ’10. He will be a candidate for the full-time GM role, but the Mets plan to conduct a broad search later this year.

It is understandable the Mets want to look outside, just as they did when they hired Alderson — the organization almost certainly would benefit from fresh insight. Ricco, though, already is experienced in a key element of the job: Managing “up” and dealing with the Wilpons’ distinct personalities.

Ricco, for his part, said he is not worried about whether he will be the next GM.

“I’ve got enough in front of me here to try to do right by Sandy, do right by (manager) Mickey (Callaway), do right by the organization, try to get through these next few months and make good decisions for the long-term,” Ricco said.

“I’ve been here 15 years. I feel like under the right circumstances, I’d love to be a GM. But really, that’s not something I’m focused on. This organization has been great to me. I’ve been through a couple of different regimes. We’ll see what happens at the end of the year.”

Why Trout is now batting third

The impact of a batting order on a team's run production is debatable, but teams always try to determine which sequence of hitters works best. The Los Angeles Angels' recent dropping of Mike Trout from the No. 2 to No. 3 spot was one such example, a clear attempt by the club to maximize the production from perhaps the best hitter in the game.

The Angels made the change last Wednesday, after considerable internal debate. According to STATS LLC, Trout has the most plate appearances by a No. 2 hitter this season with the bases empty, in large part because the Angels' .277 on-base percentage out of the leadoff spot is the worst in the majors. With Trout batting third, the idea is to increase the Angels' scoring opportunities early in games.

Manager Mike Scioscia told the FOX broadcasters on Saturday that he would have made the change earlier if the team had better on-base options in the 1-2 spots. But Kole Calhoun and Ian Kinsler were struggling, Andrelton Simmons was hitting mostly fifth or sixth and Zack Cozart required season-ending surgery to repair a torn labrum in his left shoulder.

The resurgence of Calhoun and performance of rookie David Fletcher since his promotion on June 12 gave Scioscia an opening. In the reconfigured batting order, Calhoun and Simmons are batting in front of Trout against right-handers, Fletcher and Simmons against left-handers.

Through the admittedly tiny sample of five games, the new plan has yet to produce the desired results. Simmons, Calhoun and Fletcher have combined for a meager .233 OBP over that stretch. Trout is 6-for-17, but his only RBI came on a solo home run.

Greinke the hitting guru

Los Angeles Dodgers third baseman Justin Turner tells a great story on why he moved up on the plate several years ago, attributing his adjustment to his former teammate — and perhaps the best scout among active players — Zack Greinke.

Turner asked Greinke, "How would you get me out?" Greinke, after studying Turner's tendencies, resumed the conversation the following day with a typically blunt response: "I'd throw you 100 straight fastballs down and away."

Turner was surprised by that answer, saying he often was successful going to the opposite field. But Greinke, sensing pitchers would adjust because most of those hits came on pitches middle or middle in, told Turner, "I'd scoot up on the plate if I were you."

Turner followed Greinke's advice, and that is one reason he has been hit by 46 pitches since the start of 2015, seventh in the majors during that period.

Wanted (maybe): another David Ross

The Chicago Cubs have held internal discussions about acquiring a veteran leader such as the Orioles' Adam Jones or Toronto Blue Jays' Curtis Granderson and also reached out to other clubs about the possibility, sources tell me and *The Athletic's* Jayson Stark.

For several reasons, the idea is unlikely to come to fruition before July 31, if at all.

Cubs officials are unsure whether bringing in such a veteran at mid-season would create enough of an impact. The team also has carried 13 pitchers for much of the season, leaving little room for another position player. Tommy La Stella, the Cubs' only true bench player, leads the majors with 52 plate appearances as a pinch-hitter, and is batting .304 with a .742 OPS in that role.

Thus, the only way for the Cubs to squeeze in a Jones or Granderson would be to trade one of their young outfielders — Albert Almora Jr, Kyle Schwarber or Ian Happ. Such a move would make sense only if it brought the Cubs a top starting pitcher with multiple years of club control. And even then, the Cubs might resist.

A trade for a Jones-Granderson type might be more suitable on Aug. 31, the deadline for teams to set their postseason rosters. The fit would be easier then, with regular-season rosters expanding from 25 to 40 the next day.

A what-if worth asking

Baseball will have decisions to make if Baltimore Orioles shortstop Manny Machado and/or Tampa Bay Rays catcher Wilson Ramos get traded to a National League club after their respective elections to the AL All-star team.

The situation is not the same as it was in 2014, when Jeff Samardzija wore an NL jersey and generic cap in introductions after the Cubs sent him to the A's earlier in July. The game is again a pure exhibition, no longer determining home-field advantage for the World Series.

Baseball has no hard rule on what it would do with a player who is traded to the other league, but MLB probably would want Machado, in particular, to play in the game, perhaps as an injury replacement on the NL side. How the Orioles would be represented under such circumstances is another question.

Which two players deserve your Final Vote for the 2018 MLB All Star Game?

By Cliff Corcoran

Just when you thought your All-Star voting duties were done for the year, Major League Baseball has released the five-man Final Vote ballots for the last roster spot on each league's All-Star team. Sixty-three* players were named All-Stars Sunday night as a result of the fan vote (for the two starting lineups), player vote (for a backup at every position and eight pitchers on each roster) and league selections. The commissioner's office is now in charge of fleshing out each roster to 31 players while making sure that every team has a representative, that the rosters are properly balanced (the league mandates 20 hitters and 12 pitchers in each league), and that unavailable players are replaced. The commissioner's office also assembles the Final Vote ballots for the 32nd man on each roster.

The Final Vote gives fans a chance to correct what they consider the most egregious omission from the initial 31-man rosters. However, the selection process for the first 31 All-Stars can lead to more snubs than fit on the five-man Final Vote ballot, particularly in the American League, where the fans vote for a designated hitter and the players vote for, of all absurdities, a reserve DH, leaving the league with just two open spots for position players. That almost guarantees that most of the “token” team representatives in the AL are going to be pitchers.

Indeed, this year, the fan and player votes resulted in an AL roster with five open spots and five unrepresented teams (the A’s, Blue Jays, Tigers, Twins, and Rangers). Needing pitchers, the league selected Blake Treinen, J.A. Happ, Joe Jiménez, and José Berríos from the first four and added deserving Ranger Shin-Soo Choo to an outfield previously populated by undeserving player-ballot picks Michael Brantley and George Springer, both of whom come from teams with multiple other representatives. The league then put the Twins’ Eddie Rosario on the final ballot and snubbed arguably deserving A’s infielders Jed Lowrie and Matt Chapman entirely.

A far better solution would have been to replace Brantley and Springer with Choo and Rosario in the initial reserve outfield, leaving the league with just three teams requiring representation with the final five spots. That flexibility could have netted a spot on the roster for a snubbed pitcher such as Blake Snell or James Paxton, while also clearing room for Lowrie and Chapman on the final ballot. Unfortunately, the inflexibility of the current selection process does not allow for such an obvious fix.

Similarly, with the league now mandating 20 hitters and 12 pitchers on each roster, the Final Vote ballots are necessarily comprised exclusively of one or the other. Thus, you can’t cast a vote to say that a pitcher like Snell was a bigger snub than a hitter like Chapman. As for the AL’s actual Final Vote candidates, here are your choices:

Andrew Benintendi, LF, Red Sox

.293/.379/.515 (138 OPS+), 14 HR, 48 BB, 66 K, 16 SB (94%)

Eddie Rosario, LF, Twins

.301/.342/.536 (139 OPS+), 18 HR, 21 BB, 65 K

Jean Segura, SS, Mariners

.330/.358/.470 (131 OPS+), 7 HR, 17 BB, 50 K, 14 SB (67%)

Andrelton Simmons, SS, Angels

.307/.369/.436 (125 OPS+), 6 HR, 27 BB, 15 K

Giancarlo Stanton, DH/OF, Yankees

.267/.341/.510 (127 OPS+), 21 HR, 34 BB, 120 K

In addition to Lowrie, Chapman, and pitchers in general, the most obvious omission here, in my opinion, is Shohei Ohtani. One can certainly argue that Ohtani's injuries have prevented him from playing enough in the first half this year to deserve an All-Star nod, but one can't deny that he is one of the game's brightest stars, nor that he would be a thrilling player to watch in next Tuesday's All-Star Game, even if it's only for a pinch-hitting appearance.

The last rookie to generate as much hype was Yasiel Puig in 2013. Puig debuted on June 3 of that year and took the league by storm, generating much debate about whether or not one month of elite play and obvious star power were enough to motivate an All-Star selection. That year, the fans got to vote on the matter, as Puig was included on the Final Vote ballot. He finished second to the Braves' Freddie Freeman, settling the matter, however unsatisfactorily for some. It would have been nice for fans to at least have a similar opportunity here.

Of the five players who are here, Stanton, who won the MVP in the National League last year, is the biggest star, but has been the weakest performer thus far this season. His walk and strikeout rates have reverted to where they were when he was a 20-year-old rookie, and he is on pace to tie the single-season record of 223 strikeouts. Further undermining his value, the crowded Yankees outfield has forced him to make roughly half of his starts at designated hitter.

That stands in sharp contrast to the player who the advance metrics suggest is the most deserving one of these five, Andrelton Simmons. Simmons' 4.6 percent strikeout rate thus far this season is the lowest by a qualified hitter in the major leagues since Placido Polanco's 4.5 percent in 2005. Simmons is on pace for just 27 strikeouts on the entire season, which would be the fewest by a qualified batter since Jeff Keppinger struck out 24 times in 502 plate appearances (4.8 percent) in 2008.

Those strikeout numbers are fun, but they are only a small part of what has made Simmons so impressive this year. As always, Simmons' calling card is his play at shortstop. One of the best fielders of his generation, Simmons is up to his usual tricks in the field this year, but he is also paring that performance with a career-year at the plate, including career-bests in all three slash stats and OPS+ and a career-high walk rate (8.2 percent) to match his career-low strikeout rate.

Simmons is an easy pick over fellow shortstop Segura. Meanwhile, Rosario is the more deserving of the two full-time outfielders. That allows us to quickly boil this ballot down to Simmons vs. Rosario, both of whom should have been All-Stars this year, and likely would have been had the players not erroneously selected Brantley and Springer. For me, Simmons is a relatively easy choice as a player who has been a star for years thanks to his glove but has never before been an All-Star and may never be more deserving than he is this year.

With two extra roster spots to work with, because the NL does not have two elected designated hitters, the commissioner's office did a better job of rewarding players snubbed by the fan and player votes in the National League. League selections J.T. Realmuto, Scooter Gennett, Miles Mikolas, and Patrick Corbin have all been standout performers thus far this year. With seven open roster spots and just four teams needing representation, the NL was able to tab Realmuto and Mikolas to represent the Marlins and Cardinals, Corbin and Paul Goldschmidt to represent the Diamondbacks, and only had to reach for a Pirates rep, tabbing closer Felipe Vázquez. The penultimate NL roster spot went to Dodgers closer Kenley Jansen.

I only have one real complaint about those seven selections, but before I get to that, here are the NL's final vote candidates (bold text indicates league leader):

Jesús Aguilar, 1B, Brewers

.306/.368/.633 (162 OPS+), **22 HR**, 25 BB, 74 K

Brandon Belt, 1B, Giants

.300/.393/.509 (145 OPS+), 13 HR, 39 BB, 64 K

Matt Carpenter, 3B/1B/2B, Cardinals

.258/.365/.513 (137 OPS+), 17 HR, 51 BB, 85 K

Max Muncy, UT, Dodgers

.270/.407/.610 (174 OPS+), 20 HR, 46 BB, 59 K

Trea Turner, SS, Nationals

.278/.355/.419 (106 OPS+), 11 HR, 40 BB, 75 K, 22 SB (81%)

Just looking at those batting lines, Turner looks like the easiest player to eliminate from this group, and I fear he'll fare poorly in the voting as a result. The trick is that Turner is actually the *most* deserving of these players, as the quality of his fielding and baserunning has made him one of the league's most valuable players thus far this season. Looking at the three wins-above-replacement statistics (Baseball-Reference's bWAR, FanGraphs' fWAR, and Baseball Prospectus's WARP), all three have Turner as the most valuable National League hitter not included on the initial 31-man All-Star roster. As Bill James wrote in his 1987 *Baseball Abstract*, "if a thing is real, you have to be able to measure it in different ways and see about the same thing." Turner's value thus far this season passes that test.

That doesn't mean that the other four men above don't deserve consideration, but then so do Brandon Nimmo, Kyle Schwarber, Ross Stripling, and A.J. Pollock, just to name a few. The fans already made their voices heard on Bryce Harper and Matt Kemp, by voting them in as starters, but the players missed Realmuto for Buster Posey (who would have been another good Final Vote candidate), requiring an extra roster spot for a third catcher, and then chose Charlie Blackmon (106 OPS+) over numerous more deserving outfielders. The league also overreached by putting Goldschmidt directly on a roster that already had two first basemen. The wiser move would have been to give Turner that last guaranteed spot, put Goldschmidt up for the Final Vote, and let the fans choose the last man on the roster from five full- or part-time first basemen.

Had Turner made the roster outright, this would have been a much more compelling ballot, with Goldschmidt the biggest star, Aguilar and Muncy the breakout performers, and Belt and Carpenter the leaders, in that order, in both bWAR and fWAR. Instead, the league's failure to properly reward Turner makes the choice here easy. Trea Turner, like slick-fielding fellow shortstop Andrelton Simmons in the AL, deserves your Final Vote.

FROM MLB.COM

Final Vote candidates make their cases

By Alyson Footer

The fans have selected the National League and American League All-Star starting lineups, and now, they have one more task to complete: selecting the final two players who will round out the **All-Star rosters**.

Balloting is now open for the 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Final Vote, in which fans choose from a list of five All-Star-caliber players from each league. The highest vote-getter from each will be added to his respective club for the All-Star Game on July 17 at 7:30 p.m. ET on FOX.

From the AL, the candidates are: Boston outfielder **Andrew Benintendi**; Angels shortstop **Andrelton Simmons**; Twins outfielder **Eddie Rosario**; Yankees outfielder **Giancarlo Stanton**; and Mariners shortstop **Jean Segura**.

The NL Final Vote options are: Dodgers corner infielder **Max Muncy**; Brewers first baseman **Jesus Aguilar**; Cardinals third baseman **Matt Carpenter**; Giants first baseman **Brandon Belt**; and Nationals shortstop **Trea Turner**.

Fans can cast votes for the final player on each league's roster -- on computers, tablets and smartphones -- exclusively online as part of the **2018 Camping World MLB Final Vote**, as well as via the MLB At Bat and MLB Ballpark mobile apps, until Wednesday at 4 p.m. ET.

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Andrew Benintendi, OF, Red Sox

Benintendi has been a force all year, in a Boston lineup packed with power. Entering Tuesday's competition the 24-year-old outfielder was hitting .368 with a 1.155 OPS with runners in scoring position. On Saturday, Benintendi reached base six times, becoming just the fifth hitter in the last 100 years with a double, homer and four walks in a game.

Andrelton Simmons, SS, Angels

Simmons, 28, has enjoyed many seasons as one of the top defenders in the league; this year, his offense is garnering as much attention. Simmons' .307 average through Monday's games ranked among the top 10 in the American League, and he's spent the entire season as one of the toughest hitters to strike out, fanning once every 21.9 plate appearances, the best in the Majors. Since May 1, Simmons has struck out seven times in 224 plate appearances.

Eddie Rosario, OF, Twins

Rosario has two of the Twins' four four-hit games this season, and has 33 multi-hit games on the year, which leads the Twins and ranks among the AL leaders. From June 8 through Monday's play, Rosario, 26, was hitting .276 (32-for-116) with seven doubles, one triple, four homers and 11 RBIs.

Giancarlo Stanton, OF, Yankees

After a slow start, the 28-year-old Stanton turned it on in June, slashing .298/.373/.577 with a .950 OPS and eight homers. The Yankees' big offseason acquisition continued his roll in Monday's doubleheader in Baltimore, going for 4-for-9 with a home run, a double and three runs scored. Over Stanton's past 15 games, he's reached base in 30 of 68 plate appearances, recording 23 hits and seven walks. Overall, he's been crushing lefties -- entering Tuesday's game, Stanton was slashing .363/.423/.769 with five doubles, 10 homers and 20 RBIs vs. southpaws.

Jean Segura, SS, Mariners

Through Monday, Segura, 28, had 37 multi-hit games, tied for second-most in the Majors. He has more multi-hit games than games without a hit this season (22). Entering Tuesday's game, his .330 average was the fourth-highest in the big leagues, behind only **Mookie Betts**, **Jose Altuve** and **J.D. Martinez**. Meanwhile, his 115 hits were second only to Altuve (123). His Mariners teammates have **enthusiastically embraced his candidacy**.

NATIONAL LEAGUE**Max Muncy, 1B/3B, Dodgers**

On the NL side, perhaps no newcomer is generating more buzz than LA's Muncy, whose 13 homers since June 3 are tied for the most in the Major Leagues. Overall, the 27-year-old has 20 homers, which is tied for third-most in the NL.

Jesus Aguilar, 1B, Brewers

Aguilar is one of several feel-good stories to emerge from Brewers camp. The first baseman broke a tie with **Nolan Arenado** and **Bryce Harper** for the NL lead in home runs by hitting his 23rd on Monday, and also ranks among the league leaders in RBIs. Since April 19, he's been among the best in the NL in slugging and OPS. Aguilar, 28, has nine three-hit games this season, tying his career high.

Matt Carpenter, 3B, Cardinals

The veteran Carpenter has emerged as an offensive force in the past two months. Since May 16, he leads all Major Leaguers in doubles (20), and over that time, his batting average jumped more than 100 points. Also, Carpenter, 32, leads the league with 12 home runs from the leadoff spot in the order. The Cardinals **have partnered with the Red Sox** to push for Carpenter and Benintendi.

Brandon Belt, 1B, Giants

The **Giants got creative in their campaign** for Belt, with **Hunter Pence** and **Derek Holland** cutting a wrestling promo on behalf of their teammate. One of several veteran hitters helping to keep the Giants in the mix in the NL West race, Belt is hitting .394 with five RBIs and five walks in July. His 13 homers lead the Giants, as do his 42 RBIs. Belt, 30, ranks seventh in the NL with a .905 OPS.

Trea Turner, SS, Nationals

The 25-year-old Turner could be the fourth Nationals player to make an All-Star appearance in front of his hometown crowd, joining **Max Scherzer**, **Sean Doolittle** and Bryce Harper. Since June 3, he's hitting .295 with five home runs and six steals.

The Final Vote isn't the only opportunity for fans to make their voices heard. On Tuesday, July 17, while watching the 2018 All-Star Game presented by Mastercard live on FOX, fans can submit their choices for the Ted Williams Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet with the 2018 All-Star Game MLB.com MVP Vote.

The 89th Midsummer Classic, at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C., will be televised nationally by FOX Sports; in Canada by Rogers Sportsnet and RDS; and worldwide by partners in more than 180 countries. FOX Deportes will provide Spanish-language coverage in the United States, while ESPN Radio and ESPN Radio Deportes will provide exclusive national radio coverage of the All-Star Game. MLB Network, MLB.com and SiriusXM also will provide comprehensive All-Star Week coverage.

For more information about MLB All-Star Week and to purchase tickets, visit AllStarGame.com and follow [@MLB](https://twitter.com/MLB) and [@AllStarGame](https://twitter.com/AllStarGame) on social media.

FROM MiLB.COM

Head of the Class: Triple-A

Red Sox hurler Beeks, Angels slugger Blash highlight first half

By Kelsie Heneghan

Most exciting hitter

Angels OF Jabari Blash, Salt Lake: In his first season in a new system, Blash is fitting right in. After shuttling between El Paso and San Diego for the last two seasons, the outfielder switched PCL clubhouses and settled in with Salt Lake. Blash is among the Minor League leaders in home runs (23), slugging percentage (.766), extra-base hits (42) and OPS (1.204). The 29-year-old also hasn't hit below .318 all year as he entered the All-Star break with a .332 mark. Blash slugged four homers in three games in April, then one-upped himself with **three jacks in one game** in June. And if the season ended today, his 23 dingers would be his third-highest total in nine pro seasons. Not to mention Blash's average, on-base (.439) and slugging percentages are all career highs for the 2010 Draft pick. And all of this comes with a few trips to Anaheim sprinkled in. Sure, hitter-friendly Smith's Ballpark in Salt Lake City has played a role in Blash's killer power numbers. But there are plenty of good hitting parks in the PCL, and no one took advantage quite like Blash did in the first half.

Most exciting pitcher

Red Sox LHP Jalen Beeks, Pawtucket: Beeks made a big jump in the strikeout category last season, and now he's posting the lower ERA to go along with it. While his pitches grade at average, **Boston's No. 15 prospect** has taken advantage of his four-pitch mix to fool IL hitters. The crafty southpaw has held opponents to two earned runs or fewer in 10 of his 15 starts and has tallied seven quality starts. While already reaching triple digits in strikeouts (110) for the fourth straight season, Beeks is keeping his free passes down (23). And on June 7, the University of Arkansas product got his first call to The Show to fill in for **Drew Pomeranz**. Beeks fittingly began his Major League career with a strikeout, but that was the

highlight of his start. If the 5-foot-11 hurler can continue to hone his fastball-cutter combination and put up filthy K numbers, it shouldn't be long until he's back at Fenway Park.

Best team

Memphis Redbirds: Glancing at the **Cardinals' list of top prospects**, one will see a lot of musical note-looking M's, and that's because all of the club's top nine prospects have played for the Redbirds this season, plus former top guys **Jack Flaherty** and **Carson Kelly**, who have since lost their prospect status. Led by **Austin Gomber**, **Dakota Hudson** and **Daniel Ponce de Leon**, Memphis leads the PCL with a 3.41 ERA and a 1.28 WHIP. **Tyler O'Neill** and **Patrick Wisdom** have been among the league's top sluggers, while **Andrew Knizner** made a May/June promotion to Triple-A look easy in just his second full season. With manager Stubby Clapp remaining at the helm, last year's PCL champions look poised for a return to the Triple-A National Championship, notching a level-leading .622 winning percentage at the break.

Second-half breakout

Yankees RHP Chance Adams, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre: Last year's pitcher of the year in the Yankees system has hit a few hiccups this season. Adams was saddled with a 5.11 ERA in five April starts, then followed that up with a 6.98 mark in five May outings. But the 23-year-old has since begun to chip away as he goes into the break with a 4.82 ERA. As Adams polishes his slider and continues to improve his curveball, he's beginning to stop rallies. In four of his last six outings, the 6-foot-1 hurler has held foes to one earned run or fewer, something he wasn't doing a couple months ago. Adams has pitched into the sixth just twice in his last seven starts, though. If he can get quicker outs and throw strikes to work more efficient innings, there's no reason why Adams can't keep lowering that ERA in the second half.

Coming soon

Blue Jays 3B Vladimir Guerrero Jr.: For the first two months of the season, it didn't look like anyone earned a promotion to Triple-A as much as Guerrero had. And while he's been on the disabled list for over a month, MLB.com's **top overall prospect** will still be a coming attraction in the Minors' highest level. Following a patella tendon strain in his knee in early June, Guerrero is back in the cages and has begun running drills, so he's set to pick up where he left off in no time. As a reminder, the 19-year-old hit .407/.457/.667 with 11 homers, 55 RBIs, 20 walks and 21 strikeouts in 53 games with Double-A New Hampshire before the injury. His age and defensive hitches may have held him back previously, but if Guerrero hits the ground running when he returns from the DL, it won't be long before he is anchoring the Buffalo lineup.

FROM ESPN.COM

The one player all 30 teams should trade before the deadline*

By David Schoenfield

The trade deadline is heating up ... well, the rumors are anyway. Manny Machado to the Yankees! Scooter Gennett to the Dodgers! J.T. Realmuto to the Red Sox! Maybe all these blockbusters will happen, and even if they don't, hey, it's fun to speculate. One thing seems clear about this deadline: It's going to be weak in starting pitchers, so teams needing to plug a hole in their rotation might instead look to upgrade the bullpen or the offense.

Keep in mind, as well, how the deadline has changed in recent years. As Joe Sheehan pointed out, the teams making the biggest moves haven't been those fighting to get into the playoffs, but those who have already locked down a playoff spot and are looking to improve their postseason roster -- think Yu Darvish to the Dodgers and Justin Verlander to the Astros last year (although that was an August trade) or Aroldis Chapman to the Cubs and Andrew Miller to the Indians in 2016.

Still, it should be an active deadline period this year, even if Machado ends up as the only really big name traded. Here is one guy every team should trade:

AL WEST

Houston Astros -- Cionel Perez, LHP. Concerns about the Astros' bullpen are overblown even if they don't have an obvious lockdown closer, but maybe they'll look to add another piece. They also could add an outfielder or a left-handed option at DH or first base. Perez is a small lefty with a 1.98 ERA and 83 strikeouts in 68⅓ innings at Double-A Corpus Christi, relying on a low-90s fastball with sink and a good slider.

Seattle Mariners -- Juan Querecuto, SS. The Mariners made an earlier trade for Alex Colome and they have the weakest farm system in the majors, so a major deal probably isn't in the works. Querecuto was a top-30 international prospect when the Mariners signed him last year for \$1.225 million, but he's years from the majors -- and thus definite Jerry Dipoto trade bait.

Oakland Athletics -- Franklin Barreto, 2B/SS. The A's absolutely should be buyers and not sellers, given Seattle's 6.5-game lead over them is based on the Mariners' remarkable (and unsustainable?) record in extra innings and one-run games. In 2014, Barreto was the prime prospect acquired for Donaldson, but he has struggled in his big league trials with a .203 average and 56 strikeouts against six walks. He's still young, and maybe another team will take a chance that he figures things out.

Los Angeles Angels -- Blake Parker, RHP. At this point, the Angels need a big run and the Mariners and A's to fold have a chance at the wild card. Good luck with that. They're kind of stuck in no man's land, but they may as well flip Parker for some random kid in A-ball with some tools and potential.

Texas Rangers -- Cole Hamels, LHP. This is a tough one. Hamels can block a trade to 21 teams, including the Yankees (that doesn't mean he *would* block a trade). Maybe he waives his no-trade clause if a team agrees to pick up his \$20 million team option for 2019. He also has a 4.28 ERA and has allowed 21 home

runs in 103 innings (although his strikeout rate has increased this season from 2017), so a team has to be careful it's not trading for Hamels' reputation as opposed to what he is right now.

FROM CBS SPORTS

Angels' Richards keeps running into Mariners

Garrett Richards might be seeing the Seattle Mariners in his sleep these days.

By STATS

Garrett Richards might be seeing the Seattle Mariners in his sleep these days.

The hard-throwing right-hander for the Los Angeles Angels (46-45) will face the Mariners (57-34) for a third straight time on Tuesday night in the opener of a three-game series at Angel Stadium.

Richards (5-4, 3.42) was the starting pitcher on June 13 in Seattle but left after two innings because of a hamstring strain and did not get the decision in an 8-6 loss.

He came off the disabled list on Wednesday and went 5 1/3 innings against the Mariners, allowing three runs (two earned) and four hits in 5 1/3 innings. He picked up the win in the 7-4 victory to improve to 2-0 against Seattle this season with a 2.57 ERA.

Overall, he's 7-4 in his career against Seattle with a 3.06 ERA.

Richards will be matched against Mariners right-hander Mike Leake for a third time this season.

Leake and Richards went head to head on Wednesday in Seattle, and Leake (8-5, 4.11 ERA) exited after four innings, his shortest outing since April 23. He gave up four runs (three earned) and nine hits.

They were also the starting pitchers on May 4 in Seattle. Richards shut out the Mariners on four hits in 6 2/3 innings and the bullpen maintained the shutout in the 5-0 win.

Leake is 1-2 against the Angels overall this season with a 4.11 ERA. He's 3-2 in his career against Los Angeles with a 3.07 ERA.

Several members of the Angels have hit well against Leake in their careers.

Luis Valbuena is 12-for-28, Justin Upton is 10-for-26, Mike Trout is 7-for-14, Albert Pujols is 7-for-19 and Andrelton Simmons is 9-for-24. Upton, Trout and Simmons have also homered off Leake.

Upton had a big hit on Sunday against the visiting Los Angeles Dodgers to help the Angels win the rubber game of the series.

The Dodgers had intentionally walked Trout to load the bases with two outs in the third inning. Upton followed with a two-run single to cut the deficit to 3-2, and Pujols and Shohei Ohtani produced solo homers in the later innings to lift the Angels to a 4-3 win.

"Justin was in a little bit of a down cycle, but one thing his process is good," Angels manager Mike Scioscia told reporters after Sunday's win. "He doesn't expand. He takes his walks if they're there. When he starts squaring baseballs up, it's going to give us a big lift."

Seattle had its eight-game winning streak snapped by the Angels on Wednesday and was nearly swept by the visiting Colorado Rockies last weekend before salvaging a 6-4 win on Sunday.

Seattle first baseman Ryon Healy is 3-for-23 in July with one RBI, but he produced a double, homer and five RBIs in the series finale against Colorado.

"You ride the ups and the downs, but Ryon Healy is a good player," Seattle manager Scott Servais told the Seattle Times after Sunday's win. "There are going to be some stretches where it doesn't look so pretty.

"He's maturing. Ryon is an emotional guy. That's why we all love him. He's always into the game. But riding those highs and lows over the course of a season, it takes some energy away from you. We are trying to keep him on an even keel."

Make MLB All-Star Game great again: How to spice up the Midsummer Classic with a format change

Our idea to tweak the format borrows a bit from the old football Chicago Charities College All-Star Game

By Dayn Perry

When in the course of human events we're presented with the run-up to the All-Star Game, we're honor-bound to put forth ideas on how to improve, change, or obliterate said All-Star Game. Since no one asked what he thought, this scribe is here to do just that.

The All-Star Game has become a bit of a bloated affair -- ballot-stuffing by rank homerists is encouraged, rosters are too large, substitutions are thus too frequent -- and the whole thing is undertaken with an understandable sense of apathy on the part of the players. To be sure, it's an exhibition (and it blessedly no longer determines home-field advantage in the World Series), so it's ultimately harmless no matter how unwieldy it becomes. Besides, the souped-up Home Run Derby format is there for those with nowhere left to turn. All that said, why not add some intrigue to a signature even that seems a little stale these days?

Since its inception, the All-Star Game has highlighted the rivalry between leagues. Over time, though, the borders between the National and American Leagues have become a bit nebulous. Bud Selig merged the AL and NL offices under the umbrella of the commissioner. Then came interleague play, which sapped the All-Star Game of some of its unconventional appeal. Soon enough, we'll probably see

uniform use (or, less likely, non-use) of the DH in both leagues. The distinctions that once defined the two leagues have been whittled away to the point that highlighting what remains feels like a contrivance. So let's carve out a new space, shall we?

This idea borrows a bit from the old Chicago Charities College All-Star Game in football. For more than four decades, a team of college football seniors would take on the NFL champion. As you would expect, the NFL entrants pretty well dominated the series with a record of 31-9-2 against the collegians. Even so, the novelty of it made it a popular event, and there's always going to be something natively compelling about the underdog-"overdog" dynamic.

So how do we transport such a dynamic to MLB? Let the All-Star Game now go permanently by its other name, the Midsummer Classic, and let it pit prospects and rookies against veterans. The dividing lines are simple:

- Any player in the minor leagues, signed from the June draft of that same year, or in the majors as a rookie or as a player who exhausted his rookie status in the year in question plays for Team Prospects & Rookies.
- Any player who exhausted his rookie status in a prior year plays for Team Veterans.
- To highlight the dividing line, this year Gleyber Torres of the Yankees (lost rookie status in 2018) would be eligible for Team Prospects & Rookies, but Ozzie Albies of the Braves (exceeded rookie limits in 2017) would be eligible for Team Veterans.

So what kind of lineups might such a format yield in 2018? Well ...

Team Veterans

POS.	PLAYER
C	J.T. Realmuto, Marlins
1B	Freddie Freeman, Braves
2B	Jose Altuve, Astros
3B	Jose Ramirez, Indians
SS	Francisco Lindor, Indians
OF	Mike Trout, Angels
OF	Mookie Betts, Red Sox
OF	Aaron Judge, Yankees
DH	J.D. Martinez, Red Sox

SP Max Scherzer, Nationals

Yes, these choices will be disputed no doubt, but this gives you the flavor of things. Stick Nolan Arenado, Andrelton Simmons, Javier Baez, Alex Bregman, Paul Goldschmidt, Yadier Molina, Albies and others on the bench. Flesh out the staff with hurlers like Chris Sale, Luis Severino, Justin Verlander, Jacob deGrom, Edwin Diaz, Craig Kimbrel, and so on. You get the idea. Across the way, maybe you get something like this ...

Team Prospects & Rookies

POS.	PLAYER
C	Max Stassi, Astros
1B	Jake Bauers, Rays
2B	Gleyber Torres, Yankees
3B	Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Blue Jays (if healthy)
SS	Fernando Tatis Jr., Padres
OF	Juan Soto, Nationals
OF	Ronald Acuna, Braves
OF	Eloy Jimenez, White Sox
DH	Shohei Ohtani, Angels
SP	Shane Bieber, Indians

With this one, it's got to be a mix of performance and long-term ceiling. That's how you get the players people want to see on the Prospects & Rookies roster. With that in mind, yeah, you could argue for Francisco Mejia over Stassi at catcher, and you could argue for a number of arms over Shane Bieber as the starting pitcher.

Position players who would also likely make the roster include Brendan Rogers of the Rockies, Miguel Andujar of the Yankees, Austin Meadows of the Pirates, Harrison Bader of the Cardinals, Peter Alonso of the Mets, Kyle Tucker of the Astros, Jo Adell of the Angels, Bo Bichette of the Blue Jays, and others (Nick Senzel of the Reds would be a no-brainer if he hadn't suffered a season-ending injury). Roster-worthy arms would include Jordan Hicks and Jack Flaherty of the Cardinals, Forrest Whitley of the

Astros, Michael Kopech of the White Sox, Seranthony Dominguez of the Phillies, Walker Buehler of the Dodgers, Kyle Wright of the Braves, and, yes, others. Let's for sure stick top overall pick Casey Mize of the Tigers on there.

The Futures' Game is for many the highlight of All-Star week, and this arrangement would render that even obsolete. However, giving prospects (and rookies) this wider stage would give them even more deserved attention. On the veterans side, I'm not naive enough to suggest you're going to see a renewed sense of purpose when it comes to playing an exhibition game, but the idea of losing to a team of rooks and farmhands would likely inspire more effort than would the idea of losing to peers playing with a similar lack of vigor.

Obviously, the veterans would be heavily favored each time out. However, baseball has a lot of structural parity, and prospects these days -- thanks to advances in training and development -- are reaching the majors close to peak form than they ever have before. These prospects and rookies are also necessarily very good baseball players. This format might be more competitive than you'd think. Again, though, there's also the charm of that whole underdog thing. Throw in some teammate-versus-teammate subplots and the possibility that a player who shines for the Rookies & Prospects will later do so for the Veterans, and you've got some new life breathed into the event. Also: Yes, MLB should pay the prospects who agree to participate.

The other consequence of this for MLB players is that being an All-Star once again truly means something. Right now, we're talking about two rosters of 32 players each, which -- high-level mathematics forthcoming -- comes to 64. This format would at least halve the number of major-league All-Stars and it would do so without arbitrary regard for which league they play in. This -- to the greatest extent possible -- would feature the very best players. Whether the selection process remains the same is up to MLB.

Mostly, though, the idea of seeing today's best players suit against tomorrow's best players with generational pride on the line would be the major makeover that the [All-Star Game](#) Midsummer Classic truly needs.

Or not. Just spitballin', people.

FROM THE NEW YORK POST

The white flag Yankees can root for to shake up pitching market

By Joel Sherman

The Yankees and other teams interested in expanding the starting pitching trade pool should become Mariners fans the next few days.

The Angels host the Mariners for three games beginning Tuesday. The series begins with the Angels one game over .500, fourth in the AL West, 11 games behind Seattle for the second wild card and currently given a 2.4 percent chance of reaching the postseason by FanGraphs simulations.

This screams surrender, especially since the Angels have been bedeviled by injuries and still have 13 players on the DL, including 10 pitchers.

But the Angels have Mike Trout. Trout is signed through 2020, and the organization already has wasted the first phase of a great career by making the playoffs just once with Trout. They will need to convince him they can win before his free agency, so surrender is difficult.

The Angels also have nine games this month, pre-trade deadline, against the Mariners. They already have lost two of three in Seattle July 3-5. The Angels might have to sweep the remaining six against the Mariners this month to have a chance — and even if they do, they also have the hot A's ahead of them in the standings.

When I talked to Angels GM Billy Eppler last week, he said his focus remains galvanized on getting this club to the postseason. But those who know Eppler believe he will be pragmatic, and if nothing changes — and quickly — he will recommend to ownership to be better for 2019 and beyond.

The most obvious piece to trade would be Garrett Richards, who might be Trout's best friend on the Angels. Richards is in his walk year.

Assuming the Mets retain Jacob deGrom and Noah Syndergaard, Richards could become the best starter on the market if — drum roll — he is healthy.

Richards has made one start since coming off the DL with a left hamstring injury, holding Seattle to two earned runs in 5 1/3 innings on July 4 (the only Angels win in that series). Richards last pitched a full season in 2015, making just 12 combined starts in 2016-17 due first to an elbow tear (for which he did not get Tommy John surgery) and then a biceps strain.

The Yankees lean toward pitchers with high rates of strikeouts and ground balls and, among starters with a minimum of 70 innings, Richards is averaging at least a 50 percent ground-ball rate and more than 10 strikeouts per nine innings.

Also, the added benefit of obtaining Richards is he would no longer have to face the Yankees. This season in two starts against the Yanks, the 30-year-old righty lasted a total of four innings, recording a 14.00 ERA with a 1.124 OPS against. In his other 13 starts, Richards has a 2.58 ERA and a .633 OPS against. He is walking more than four batters per nine innings, and his 15 wild pitches were four more than any other pitcher had, an issue that must be considered if Gary Sanchez were to become his primary catcher.

The Yankees, of course, are hardly the only team looking for quality rotation help this month. The Brewers, Braves, Phillies, Mariners and Cubs are among those who would like to upgrade as well.

The All-Star rosters evoke the worst in aggrieved America, especially our growing tolerance for conspiracy theory. Sixty-four players make it and, like the 68 teams that make the NCAA Tournament field, there are going to be screams of those "snubbed." Trust me, if it were 74 players/teams, it would be the same. No matter how large the pool, someone eventually has to be left out.

The case of Tampa's Blake Snell brought out the worst of the anger this year when he was not initially named to the AL squad. I get it. He leads the AL in ERA.

But for those screaming that he was jobbed because of being in a small market, then why did five Cleveland Indians make it? How the heck did three — THREE — Cincinnati Reds infielders make it? Why didn't the Mets' Brandon Nimmo, Dodgers' Max Muncy and Red Sox's Andrew Benintendi make it from big markets?

Then there are those blaming the media, a familiar punching bag. I don't mind the ones for which we are responsible, but the All-Star teams are assembled by fan vote, player vote and the Commissioners Office. I had as much to do with this as voting for Brexit.

The problem arises from having to shoehorn at least one player from all 15 teams in a league into 31 spots (remember the fans pick the 32nd spot in a final five-player runoff) when the fans and players pick the majority of All-Stars. When the fan/player voting was done, the Commissioners Office had five slots left and five teams not yet represented, so they had to pick a player from the A's, Blue Jays, Rangers, Tigers and Twins. An extra spot was created because Houston's Justin Verlander is starting Sunday and will not pitch in Tuesday's game, and the Commissioners Office tabbed Trevor Bauer from that teeming metropolis of Cleveland.

By the way, Bauer also is lined up to start Sunday, which means Snell very well might take his spot, which would unleash fury from Seattle that it was not James Paxton, or from somewhere else. There is no getting this perfect.

FROM USA TODAY

Mike Trout Monday: Mike Trout is the 6th player in MLB history to be a 7-time All-Star at his age

By Ted Berg

Mike Trout's utterly unsurprising All-Star election Sunday night capped a typically excellent week for the best player in baseball. Trout exited a mini-slump to go 6-for-20 with two doubles, a homer and five walks in six games since last Mike Trout Monday, good for a very Troutian .300/.440/.550 line.

Video of Trout's 25th homer, unforgivably, is not currently embeddable, but **it's here**. All five of his walks on the week were intentional, and Trout now leads the Majors with 16 free passes.

Trout has been an All-Star every season he's played, and by achieving his seventh such nod by age 26, he joined an elite club. By my count, only five guys before Trout were seven-time All-Stars by his age, and all five — Mickey Mantle, Al Kaline, Johnny Bench, Ken Griffey Jr. and Ivan Rodriguez — went on to be first-ballot Hall of Famers.

Qualifiers abound. First and foremost, I could not think of a better way to determine this than by spending about an hour on baseball-reference.com clicking on the pages **for every single guy on this**

list and then every guy with at least seven All-Star Games tallied on **positional JAWS leaderboards**. (There are some real randos in there, too. Did you know longtime Tigers catcher Bill Freehan was **an 11-time All-Star**? Yanks infielder Bobby Richardson was **an All-Star seven times** and finished with 8.2 WAR.) I don't think I missed anyone, but there's some non-zero chance I did, and will update this post if and when someone uncovers another.

Second, the All-Star Game has been played in earnest since 1933, meaning the games early greats — Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb and Lou Gehrig among them — never had a chance to match Trout here. Of that trio, though, probably only Ty Cobb would've done it. Ruth was good but not great as a pitcher at age 20 before breaking out the next season, and Gehrig — like practically all college players before and after him — became a full-time big-leaguer too late to get there.

Third, a slew of great players missed time in their early 20s serving the country in World War II and Korea, though — notably — neither Ted Williams nor Willie Mays were All-Stars in their age-20 rookie seasons before leaving for the military. But both probably should have been.

That's the last qualifier: Way more guys make the All-Star Team now than in the past (though there are also way more big-leaguers, naturally), and fan voting this season seems more meritorious than ever. It's downright shocking at this point to expect the voting public to get anything right, but it kinda nailed this year's voting. Every one of Trout's seasons to date has been the type that lands a guy on an All-Star roster any year, but there are probably some guys who deserved to make seven All-Star appearances by age 26 that got jobbed along the way.

In any case, it's great company. Mike Trout just notched another achievement exclusive to first-ballot Hall of Famers.

FROM BLEACHER REPORT

Buy or Sell for Every Team at 2018 MLB Trade Deadline*

By Zachary D. Rymer

It's getting closer to crunch time on the summer trade market for the 2018 Major League Baseball season. What should each team do?

Ahead are judgments for whether each of MLB's 30 teams should buy or sell ahead of the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline. Because at a time when baseball is split into haves who must go for it now and have-nots who must prepare for later, it's hard to advise anyone to stand pat.

We'll go in alphabetical order by city.

Los Angeles Angels: Sell

The Los Angeles Angels had a heck of an offseason, and it paid off for a while.

But now, not so much. They're just 9-17 since June 9, and they can't seem to go more than five minutes without adding players to the DL. In the meantime, the Astros, Mariners and A's have left them in the dust in the American League West race.

The Angels don't need to blow it up and launch a rebuild, but they must get a head start on retooling for 2019. That means shopping their pending free agents, including Garrett Richards, Ian Kinsler, Martin Maldonado, Jim Johnson and Chris Young.

None of them may be worth impact prospects in a trade, but the Angels may be able to snag some spare MLB parts or MLB-ready prospects. Either could help them get back on track next season.

Verdict: Sell

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

FROM SB NATION

A Japanese TV show has a Shohei Ohtani puppet and it is amazing

Can't look away.

By Whitney McIntosh

A Japanese TV show "announced" a new member of the show this week, as spotted by Twitter user @shoheisaveus. That new character for the show just happened to be an uncomfortably realistic Shohei Ohtani puppet, which is absolutely amazing.

Before we go any further, you should watch the video of this puppet's participation in the show yourself. It needs to be experienced firsthand, and it's such a short clip that I promise you will want to rewatch it.

Now that you've seen it, here are the top five things about this puppet that are most unsettling:

1. The moving eyebrows.
2. The moving lips.
3. The way the puppet is holding the bat.
4. How close the host holds the ball to the puppet's face before it hits it.
5. The puppet's unsure look at hitting the ball.

Here are the five best things about this puppet and clip:

1. The moving eyebrows.
2. The moving lips.
3. The way the puppet is holding the bat.
4. How close the host holds the ball to the puppet's face before it hits it.
5. The puppet's unsure look at hitting the ball.

It's hard to tell what the actual purpose of having an Ohtani puppet on this show is, or if it is going to be a running guest segment rather than a one-off puppet appearance. If anything in this world is good, it will be the latter. We could all use more Ohtani Puppet in our lives.