



Press Clips

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FROM THE OC REGISTER**Angels' David Fletcher has caught the attention of manager Mike Scioscia**

By Robert Morales

ANAHEIM >> Angels third baseman David Fletcher had only had 51 major-league at-bats before Saturday, but the Cypress High School alum has caught the attention of Manager Mike Scioscia.

Fletcher on Friday night had a huge hit, a tying RBI single in the bottom of the ninth inning off Dodgers closer Kenley Jansen that helped the Angels defeat the Dodgers 3-2 in Game 1 of the Freeway Series at Angel Stadium.

Of those 51 at-bats, it was Fletcher's 31st against a right-handed pitcher. The right-handed batter is hitting better against right-handers – .323 (10 of 31) – than against southpaws (.250, 5 of 20). But he's being platooned with the left-handed-hitting Luis Valbuena.

Fletcher was hitting .294 with six RBIs and an on-base percentage of .345. He doesn't have a home run, but he hit six in 254 at-bats in Salt Lake City before being recalled in mid-June.

Valbuena had nine home runs and 30 RBIs in 235 at-bats before Saturday, but he was hitting just .213 with an OBP of .258. He was hitting .222 (14 of 63) with runners in scoring position, compared to .500 (5 of 10) for Fletcher.

Scioscia was asked prior to Game 2 Saturday, won by the Dodgers 3-1, if he's been tempted to put Fletcher out there every day. With right-hander Ross Stripling going for the Dodgers, he was not in the starting lineup but entered in the seventh inning and hit one to the track in the ninth inning off Jansen to go 0 for 2.

"I think David's played a lot," Scioscia said. "I think he's played some second, he's played third. I think that any time a player plays well, obviously, they're going to win more at bats, win more playing time and he's definitely doing that."

Fletcher had started 12 of the 19 games in which he'd played, 10 at third base, two at second. He's also been used in the outfield as well as at shortstop a couple of times. Six of his starts have come against righties, six against lefties.

"So, yeah, David's going to get an opportunity to play whenever we feel that there are at bats for him," Scioscia said. "He's done well. He led off the other day in Seattle, we'll use him in a multitude of roles and I'm sure that his playing time will increase as we move on and he continues to string together good at-bats."

A man of few words, Fletcher said he would love to play all the time. But he is far from consumed by that possibility.

"Yeah, obviously, everybody wants to be an everyday player," said Fletcher, who turned 24 on May 31. "Right now, though, just trying to do my role and help the team get wins."

As for batting against right-handers versus southpaws, Fletcher intimated it doesn't matter to him. Again, his big hit Friday came against Jansen, who throws right.

"I mean, I don't really think about right-handed, left-handed pitcher," Fletcher said. "It was a big hit that helped the team win, so it was big."

Former Angels sports psychologist Ravizza in medically induced coma

Dr. Ken Ravizza, a former professor of kinesiology at Cal State Fullerton who worked for the Angels as a sports psychologist, is in a medically induced coma after suffering a heart attack while driving.

Ravizza of late has been working for the Chicago Cubs, who were in L.A. on June 25-28 to play the Dodgers. Word of Ravizza's situation was found on Twitter. Cubs manager Joe Maddon confirmed what happened via email.

Ravizza reportedly was stricken while driving in Orange County. A ote posted by Claire Tehan Ravizza on CaringBridge – a page that helps families facing medical issues communicate – indicated that Ravizza had an EEG on Saturday that indicated his brain is responding to the "deep sedation," but that it's too soon "to make a clear determination of brain activity."

The post also said that Ravizza's heart and blood pressure are stable.

Ravizza, who previously worked for the Angels for some 15 years beginning in 1985 – he came back a few years later for a brief second stint – began working at Cal State Fullerton in 1977 teaching physical education classes.

Not long after, he began helping student-athletes with mental toughness.

"He was one of Fullerton's secret weapons," former CSF women's gymnastics coach Lynn Rogers said. Thanks in part to Ravizza, the Titans won the 1979 national championship.

In a 2014 story published in the Orange County Register, Ravizza had this to say about his work: "In sport you have to deal with the reality of the situation that you're in. You can't hide. As the Greeks used to say, ancient Greek tradition, you go and you stand naked before the gods."

Simmons cool with not going

Shortstop Andrelton Simmons is having a career year, hitting a team-high .315 with six home runs and 39 RBIs before Saturday. But his chances of making the American League All-Star team are slim because the league has many fine players at that position, such as Manny Machado (Orioles) and Carlos Correa (Astros).

He won't win the main fan ballot, meaning his only chances will be via the player ballot or the fan ballot that will decide the final spot on the team.

Simmons isn't concerned.

“It’s going to be tough,” he said. “Not too worried about it, honestly. Four days off sounds equally amazing so ... whoever makes it is a great honor because you’re making it out of an elite group really because there are a lot of good shortstops in the American League, especially.”

Simmons knows what he’ll be doing if he doesn’t make the grade for the July 17 game in Washington D.C.

“It would be a great honor if I do,” he said. “If I don’t, just sleeping a lot and catching up, getting ready for the second half.”

Shoemaker to start throwing

Matt Shoemaker missed the second half of 2017 with a forearm injury, and had surgery to repair the radial nerve in his right forearm.

He pitched in one game this season, then was shut down and had surgery to repair a split tendon in the same forearm on May 29.

Shoemaker remains in good spirits, though, because he is going to begin throwing next week with the idea of returning sometime this season.

“I start a throwing program and, hopefully, can build back up, everything feels great, Lord willing we’re good to go,” said Shoemaker, whose best season was 2014 when he went 16-4 with a 3.04 ERA.

Shoemaker, 31, can’t wait to get back.

“It’s frustrating, to say the least,” he said. “You just want to be out there and play. You want to play, you want to help your team and when you think everything’s good and then some little thing like this comes back, it’s insanely frustrating.

“When it first happened again, it was really rough, I guess you could say, mentally, emotionally. But you’ve just gotta fight through that and now I’m looking at the positives of, ‘Hey, I get to start throwing next week and build back up and get ready to go.’ “

Dodgers make lead stand up this time, beat Angels in second game of Freeway Series

By Bill Plunkett

ANAHEIM – After tossing and turning most of the night, Kenley Jansen said he gave up on the idea of sleeping, got up and turned the TV on around 5 Saturday morning.

He probably found a lot of reruns on at that hour. That is just what he wanted when he got to the ballpark later – only with a chance to rewrite the ending.

A night after the Angels rallied for two runs in the ninth, handing Jansen his first blown save since April, the Dodgers called on their closer again. This time, Jansen retired the side in the ninth, closing out a 3-1 Dodgers victory in the second game of the Freeway Series at Angel Stadium.

"I can sleep. I can definitely sleep," Jansen said. "I was hard on myself. You're going to blow saves. But last night – four straight balls (after getting Shohei Ohtani down 0-and-2), didn't hold the runner, didn't back up home. Those things ... I had a rough night last night."

These have been two rough days for both sides. Friday's record-breaking 108-degree temperature at game time was followed by 100 degrees Saturday – and a 4:15 p.m. start that brought shadows into play as the Angels tried to read Ross Stripling's knuckle curve Saturday.

The two offenses have produced a total of nine runs on 17 hits in the two games.

"He's got good stuff, obviously," said Angels outfielder Mike Trout who had three of the Angels' four hits in Saturday's game. "You know, 4:15 game, the shadows are tough. It's a battle. It's kind of uncomfortable. You've gotta get a pitch. You can't miss it. It's just a battle throughout the whole game."

No one else in the Angels' lineup won the battle with Stripling. Trout had the only hits off Stripling who turned in another strong six innings with seven strikeouts. That dropped his ERA to 2.22 (second in the National League), his WHIP to 1.07 (sixth) and raised his strikeout rate to 10.38 per nine innings (10th). They are All-Star worthy numbers and Stripling acknowledged a little nervousness with the announcement of this year's selections coming Sunday.

"Yeah – in a good way," Stripling said. "I'm trying not to let it affect me on the field at all. But obviously, I see things on Twitter. Family and friends keep asking. You guys keep asking. So obviously it's in the back of my mind. It would be awesome if I make it. But I try not to worry about it too much."

The Angels used a six-man tag team of pitchers to keep the Dodgers in check, allowing only four hits Saturday. But one of them was a two-run single by Justin Turner in the fifth inning and another was a solo home run by Yasiel Puig in the top of the ninth.

Turner had a chance in the third inning with two runners on and two out but took a called third strike.

He got another chance in the fifth after Puig led off with a single and Kiké Hernandez worked Angels reliever Taylor Cole for a 10-pitch walk. Joc Pederson bunted them into scoring position – an unexpected play given the frequency of Dodgers home runs (including by Pederson) over the past five weeks.

"He went on his own," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "That was on him and I like the unselfish play there."

Max Muncy struck out, bringing Turner up with two outs again. He got a fastball over the outside part of the plate and dropped it into right field. Puig scored easily and Hernandez beat the throw by sliding wide of the plate and avoiding Martin Maldonado's tag as he slapped the plate.

“Both sides it’s been really good,” Roberts said of the pitching-dominant games in Anaheim. “Those guys are executing some pitches against us, working east and west, striking the breaking ball and we’re doing the same thing. Two offensive ballclubs and the pitching is really shining.”

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

Dodgers pitcher Ross Stripling continues to shine in 3-1 victory over Angels

By Mike Digiovanna

The Dodgers fully expect Kenley Jansen to be selected Sunday to his third consecutive All-Star team. The closer rebounded from Friday night’s meltdown to strike out two of three batters in the ninth inning of the Dodgers’ 3-1 victory over the Angels on Saturday and notch his 24th save, second-most in the National League.

Among Jansen’s travel companions to Washington for the July 17 game could be pitcher Ross Stripling, a 28-year-old right-hander who opened the season in the bullpen, made one April start and in May, after injuries sidelined starters Clayton Kershaw, Rich Hill and Hyun-Jin Ryu, emerged as the team’s de facto ace.

Stripling fashioned another gem, this one in 100-degree temperatures in Angel Stadium, giving up one run and three hits in six innings, striking out seven batters and walking none to improve to 7-2 and lower his earned-run average to 2.22, second-best in the NL behind New York Mets ace Jacob deGrom.

Using a four-pitch mix that features one of baseball’s best overhand curves, Stripling has racked up 103 strikeouts and walked only 13 batters in 891/3 innings.

“It would be awesome for him to go,” Jansen said. “He started the year in the bullpen, and then Kersh, Rich and some other pieces went down. For him to hold this team up and help us stay in the race ... he’s turned his career around.”

Left fielder Matt Kemp, whom many thought would be traded before the season, is expected to be voted by fans as an NL starter. Infielder Max Muncy, who opened the season at triple A, could be on the team on the strength of his 20 home runs and 1.027 on-base-plus-slugging percentage.

“At the beginning of the year, if you thought guys like myself, Kemp and Muncy were gonna be our potential All-Stars, guys would have told you you’re lying,” Stripling said. “But that’s what we’re looking at. If I’m one of the guys who is chosen to represent the Dodgers in the All-Star game, it would be awesome.”

Stripling, partly aided by the shadows created by the late-afternoon start, did not give up a hit to a batter not named Mike Trout.

The Angels star had all three hits against Stripling, singles in the first and third innings, and a home run — Trout’s 25th — to center field in the sixth inning that cut the Dodgers’ lead to 2-1.

“He’s got good stuff,” Trout said. “It’s very hard to see in a 4:15 p.m. game. Shadows are tough. It’s a battle. It’s kind of uncomfortable.”

The Angels mounted two two-on, two-out threats in the first and third innings, but center fielder Joc Pederson made a diving catch of Albert Pujols’ fly ball in shallow left-center field to end the first inning, and Justin Upton, who is batting .161 with runners in scoring position, flied to right field to end the third.

Outside of Trout, the Angels didn’t create much hard contact against Stripling.

“I think his ball moves late in the strike zone,” Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. “His ability to change speeds and to speed hitters up, slow them down, work in and out gives him the ability to keep the ball off the barrel.”

Roberts will manage the NL squad in the All-Star game but won’t have a say in the selections. If he did, Stripling would be on the team.

“The case is solid,” Roberts said. “You look at the numbers, what he’s done against the competition ... he’s an All-Star.”

Right-hander Deck McGuire, pressed into the rotation because of injuries to Nick Tropeano and Tyler Skaggs, threw three scoreless innings for the Angels, giving up one hit, striking out six batters and walking two.

The Dodgers scored twice against Taylor Cole (0-1) in the fifth. Yasiel Puig led off with a single, Enrique Hernandez walked and Pederson advanced the runners with a bunt to first base, the second sacrifice hit by a non-Dodgers pitcher this season.

“He bunted on his own,” Roberts said. “I like the unselfish play out there.”

Muncy struck out, but Cole couldn’t get a 95-mph fastball by Justin Turner, who lined a single to right to drive in Puig and Hernandez.

Puig tacked on an insurance run in the ninth when he pulverized a Noe Ramirez 92-mph fastball, sending a 419-foot home run to center field.

Edward Paredes, Erik Goedel, Daniel Hudson and Scott Alexander combined for two relief innings to get the ball to Jansen, who said he got only a few hours of sleep after Friday night’s 3-2 walk-off loss to the Angels.

Jansen walked Shohei Ohtani after starting him with two strikes Friday. He failed to hold Ohtani on, allowing him to easily steal second. He failed to back up home plate, allowing the winning run to score on an error.

“Shoot, I was hard on myself last night,” Jansen said. “I mean, once in a while, you’re gonna blow a save, but four straight balls, not holding the runner at first, not backing up home plate? That was on me, I lost that game.”

“Man, it was tough. I had a rough night. But I woke up this morning, told myself to just forget about it, be ready and try to get locked in. I got in, and it felt good. I get to sleep tonight.”

Five things we learned from Saturday's Angels-Dodgers game

By Ethan Bauer

Here's five things we learned from the Dodgers' 3-1 win over the Angels on Saturday evening.

Ohtani is unlikely to play Sunday

Shohei Ohtani didn't do interviews in the press conference area after Saturday's game like he normally does. Instead he sat by his locker, his right leg propped up and his knee wrapped with a thick, padded bandage.

He said he doesn't feel too banged up from the foul he tapped off his knee in the ninth inning, and that he's going to try to be ready for Sunday's Freeway Series finale.

But even if he is ready, it's unlikely Angels manager Mike Scioscia starts him against Dodgers lefty Alex Wood. Ohtani entered Saturday hitting .333 against righties and .121 against lefties.

Because of Ohtani's uneven splits, it's possible Scioscia would've rested him anyway. After he limped away following a strikeout against Dodgers closer Kenley Jansen, it's almost certain.

Stripling rebounded from rough start against Rockies

Ross Stripling has been one of the most consistent pitchers in the National League this season, but in his only start of July, he tied his season-worst of four earned runs allowed against the Rockies. He returned to form Saturday.

He struck out seven and didn't walk anyone over six innings of three-hit, one-run baseball, lowering his ERA to 2.22.

He now trails only the Mets' Jacob deGrom (1.79) for the best ERA in the National League.

The only player who found success against him was perennial All-Star Mike Trout, who was 3-for-3 with a home run.

Puig's hitting is trending upward

If the season ended today, Yasiel Puig's .259 batting average would be the second worst of his career. But in July, the Dodgers' starting right fielder has started to heat up.

He's 7-for-21 this month, good for a .333 batting average.

He's also driven in five runs, including his home run to center field in Saturday's ninth inning that gave the Dodgers the insurance run they lacked when the Angels walked off on them Friday.

Jansen still has it. Especially without runners on base

A day after blowing his first save since April 17, two-time All-Star Kenley Jansen was back to his usual door-shutting self.

The Dodgers' closer shut down the Angels, downing the first three he faced with two strikeouts.

Angels second baseman Ian Kinsler said Friday that the scouting report on Jansen said he loses track of base runners, so that's what the Angels tried to exploit to earn their walk-off win. Jansen didn't give them any such opportunity Saturday.

"Today we didn't get anybody on to try to pressure him," Scioscia said. "He did a good job this afternoon."

The Angels' bullpen could be tired Sunday

The same could've been said for Saturday, but the Angels bullpen did just fine. After starter Deck McGuire was pulled after three innings, Scioscia turned to five relievers to try and preserve a chance at winning.

It was the fourth game in a row where the team used at least four relievers, so while the frequent use of the bullpen didn't seem to have much of an effect (Angels relievers allowed three runs in six innings Saturday), it could be worth keeping an eye on moving forward.

Shohei Ohtani showed off his speed and Angels manager Mike Scioscia wants to see it some more

By Ethan Bauer

Despite getting a jump from first base that gave the Dodgers no chance to throw him out, despite forcing an errant toss from **Yasmani Grandal** that trickled into center field that let him advance to third base, and despite scoring the tying run in the Angels' walk-off win over the Dodgers on Friday, **Shohei Ohtani** doesn't view himself as a base-stealing threat.

Angels manager **Mike Scioscia** disagrees.

"I think any time we've given him opportunities to run he's gotten good jumps, so the speed's there," Scioscia said Saturday. "I haven't noticed any of those flaws that he might perceive."

Scioscia said the template devised to address Ohtani's pitching and hitting abilities also includes baserunning, from reading pitchers to getting better jumps to running first to third and sliding. Even

though Ohtani said he'll only run when he's close to 100% sure he'd be safe, Scioscia sounded confident that the star Japanese rookie is being modest.

Ohtani is two for two in stolen bases. Asked whether Ohtani could steal 15 or 20 bases in a season, Scioscia said the potential is there. It's just a matter of getting him enough at-bats.

Scioscia estimated Ohtani would get a little more than half the at-bats of players who don't also pitch, so the chances of Ohtani evolving into a 20-base stealer aren't ideal. But Scioscia also emphasized that although Ohtani may not be the perfect candidate to become a prolific base stealer, he's the ideal player to become a clutch base stealer.

"He definitely has the technique and speed to steal a base when it's important," Scioscia said. "And it's not always how many you're stealing. If you're stealing them at the right time, you can influence the game like he did last night."

Getting noticed

Since arriving in the major leagues June 12, Angels rookie **David Fletcher** has ingratiated himself with timely hitting, most obviously his score-tying single just past the glove of Dodgers shortstop **Chris Taylor** on Friday night.

Scioscia said he has taken notice of Fletcher, who's hitting .283 in 53 at-bats.

"I think that any time a player plays well, obviously they're gonna win more at-bats and win more playing time," Scioscia said. "He's definitely doing that."

Fletcher has hits in seven of his last eight games, including a two against the Baltimore Orioles on June 30.

The Angels selected Fletcher, who played at Loyola Marymount, in the sixth round of the 2015 draft. He broke in with three hits in his debut but, as for an uptick in playing time after his heroics Friday, he's slamming the brakes.

"I really don't think about it that way," he said. "I just try to show up every day and try to do what I can to help the team win, honestly."

On the verge

Luis Valbuena was 0 for 2 on Saturday and has only four hits in his last 32 at-bats. But Scioscia thinks the third baseman may be coming around.

"There's been little signs in the last couple weeks of [Valbuena] maybe finding it," he said, "and when he finds it, he keeps it for a long time, as you saw in the second half of last season."

Valbuena raised his batting average from .185 to .213 in the second half of 2017. He also increased his RBIs from 23 to 46 and his home runs from six to 16.

He's hitting .211 this year with nine home runs and 30 RBIs. With the Angels trying to get back into contention for a playoff spot, Scioscia said Valbuena's potential emergence could be crucial.

"We need him," Scioscia said. "We need that power. We need that presence, that left-handed bat in our lineup, and hopefully, he's gonna start to show that consistency that he has to to be productive."

Tropeano pitches

Nick Tropeano, who started 10 games before suffering shoulder inflammation and going on the disabled list June 15, gave up two hits in five scoreless innings for Class-A Inland Empire in a rehab assignment.

FROM ANGELS.COM

Trout homers, records 3 hits in loss vs. Dodgers

McGuire notches six strikeouts in three scoreless innings, but bullpen can't hold on

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- The image that best encapsulated the Angels' frustrating day at the plate came in the third inning of their 3-1 loss to the Dodgers on Saturday at Angel Stadium.

The Angels had managed to generate one of their few scoring opportunities against right-hander **Ross Stripling** after **Andrelton Simmons** reached on a hit-by-pitch and **Mike Trout** singled to put runners on the corners with two outs, but they couldn't capitalize.

After popping out to right field to end the inning, **Justin Upton** slammed his bat into the ground as he ran down the first-base line, shattering it in half. Upton is now batting .161 with runners in scoring position this season, the fourth-lowest mark among qualified hitters in the Majors.

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

Trout went 3-for-4 with a solo home run to account for all of the Angels' damage against Stripling, but the rest of the lineup struggled to produce, scraping together only four hits and leaving seven men on base. Stripling allowed only one run on three hits over six innings for the Dodgers, lowering his ERA to 2.22 and bolstering his case for a spot on the National League All-Star team.

"He gives you different looks," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He's got a little late life to his fastball. He cuts it. He's got a couple different looks on his breaking ball, good changeup. He just moves it around and pitches. We didn't get too many good looks at him, obviously."

The Angels have now lost eight of their last 12 games to fall to 45-45 on the season, 11 games behind the Mariners for the second American League Wild Card spot.

The Angels scored two runs off Dodgers closer **Kenley Jansen** to come away with a 3-2 walk-off win in Friday's series opener, but they went quietly in the ninth on Saturday, allowing Jansen to atone for his blown save. The only drama came after **Shohei Ohtani** fouled a ball off his right knee, which caused him to walk back to the dugout with a noticeable limp. Scioscia said Ohtani is day to day, but he is likely to sit on Sunday against Dodgers left-hander **Alex Wood**.

"I think I'll be fine," said Ohtani, whose knee was wrapped in ice after the game. "I'm going to try to be ready tomorrow."

Right-hander **Deck McGuire**, who has been pitching out of the rotation following the injuries to **Nick Tropeano**, **John Lamb** and **Tyler Skaggs**, worked three scoreless innings in his second start for the Angels. McGuire gave up only a single to **Enrique Hernandez**, walked two and struck out six in the 61-pitch outing.

"I felt really good," McGuire said. "I felt like we had a good game plan going into the game, and I felt like we executed it well. We played good defense. [Martin Maldonado] did a great job behind the plate. I just wanted to give as many innings as they needed me to."

Jose Alvarez, **Taylor Cole**, **Cam Bedrosian**, **Blake Parker** and **Noe Ramirez** combined to pitch the final six innings for the Angels. Cole was charged with the loss after yielding a two-run single to **Justin Turner** in the fifth.

Yasiel Puig led off the inning with a single, Hernandez walked, and **Joc Pederson** laid down a sacrifice bunt to advance the runners to second and third with one out. After **Max Muncy** struck out, Turner flared a 1-1 fastball to right field to drive in Puig and Hernandez and give the Dodgers a 2-0 lead.

Stripling shut out the Angels through the first five innings before Trout hammered a misplaced fastball to center field for a solo home run that cut the Dodgers' lead to 2-1 in the sixth. It was Trout's 25th home run of the season, which is tied with the Yankees' **Aaron Judge** for the second-most in the Majors. Prior to Saturday, Trout had been hitting just .167 with one home run over his previous 14 games, but he's now 5-for-5 with two homers against Stripling in his career.

"Luckily no one was on base with the Trout home run, or it's a tie game and who knows what's going on?" Stripling said. "Just try to limit the base runners when those guys come up and limit their slug. Obviously it's a good lineup, one through five is tough, a couple of Hall of Famers in there. Any time you get through them without damage and getting weak contact is huge."

Puig gave the Dodgers an insurance run by blasting a solo shot off Ramirez in the ninth.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

The Angels had runners on first and second with two outs in the first inning after Trout singled and Upton reached on an error by **Chris Taylor**, but Stripling emerged unscathed after Pederson made a diving catch in center field to snag **Albert Pujols'** liner and end the inning.

"If that ball drops, obviously, it changes some of the game," Scioscia said.

UP NEXT

Left-handers **Andrew Heaney** (4-6, 3.94 ERA) and Wood (5-5, 3.84 ERA) will face off on Sunday as the Angels and Dodgers close out the Anaheim leg of the Freeway Series at 5:05 p.m. PT at Angel Stadium. In his last six home starts, Heaney is 4-1 with a 0.88 ERA and 36 strikeouts over 41 innings. He is set to face the Dodgers for the first time since Sept. 8, 2015.

Scioscia sees Ohtani's basepath threat potential

Angels manager praises two-way phenom's speed; Fletcher making good impression early

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- **Shohei Ohtani** is best known for his power arm and his power bat, but those skills often overshadow another one of his elite tools: his speed.

Manager Mike Scioscia said Ohtani is the Angels' second-fastest player behind **Mike Trout**, and he made an impact on the basepaths in Friday's 3-2 walk-off win over the Dodgers. After drawing a two-out walk off **Kenley Jansen**, Ohtani stole second, advanced to third on **Yasmani Grandal's** throwing error and scored the tying run on **David Fletcher's** RBI single. The Angels completed their rally after **Ian Kinsler** blooped a single to right field and **Yasiel Puig** made an errant throw to the plate, allowing Fletcher to score the decisive run.

Ohtani stole only 13 bases over his five seasons with the Nippon-Ham Fighters in Japan, and Friday's steal was just his second for the Angels. Despite his above-average speed, Ohtani said he doesn't necessarily view himself as a consistent base-stealing threat.

"I think I still lack the skill part of stealing a base, so I only try to go when it's as close to 100 percent as possible and I think I'm going to be safe," Ohtani said through interpreter Ippei Mizuhara.

Scioscia, however, disagreed with Ohtani's self-assessment.

"I think anytime that we've given him opportunities to run, he's gotten good jumps," Scioscia said Saturday. "His speed is there. I haven't noticed any of those flaws that he might perceive. He got a great jump last night."

Asked if he believes Ohtani has the potential to steal 15-20 bases in a season, Scioscia said, "I think he does. I think it's going to be totally contingent on how many at-bats he gets in a season. When he's pitching and he's hitting, you're talking in the 275-300 at-bat range, somewhere around there, so that's basically a little more than half of the opportunities other guys might get.

"So it's going to be contingent on that. But I do think that he definitely has the technique and the speed to steal a base when it's important. It's not always how many you're stealing, but if you're stealing them at the right time, it can influence the game like it did last night."

Ohtani is currently limited to hitting as he recovers from a Grade 2 sprain of the ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow, but Scioscia said the Angels aren't concerned about him potentially injuring himself while running the bases because he slides feet-first. Ohtani is scheduled to be re-evaluated in the third week of July to see if he'll be able to return as a pitcher this season.

Fletcher impressing

Fletcher was not in the Angels' lineup on Saturday after scoring the game-winning run on Friday, but Scioscia said the rookie infielder has been earning more opportunities after batting .294 over his first 19 games in the Majors.

"I think that anytime a player plays well, obviously they're going to win more at-bats, win more playing time," Scioscia said. "He's definitely doing that. David's going to get an opportunity to play when we feel that there's at-bats for him and he's done well. We're using him in a multitude of roles, and I'm sure that his playing time will increase as we move on and he continues to string together good at-bats."

Luis Valbuena started over Fletcher at third base on Saturday, but the right-handed-hitting Fletcher is likely to return to the lineup on Sunday to face Dodgers left-hander **Alex Wood**.

Injury updates

- Right-hander **Matt Shoemaker** (forearm strain) is slated to begin a throwing progression next week. Shoemaker made only one start for the Angels this season before landing on the disabled list on April 3. He underwent surgery to decompress a nerve and repair the pronator teres tendon in his right forearm on May 29, but he could return to pitch in August if the rest of his rehab goes smoothly.
- Left-hander **Tyler Skaggs** (adductor strain) played catch for the second consecutive day and is scheduled to throw a bullpen on Sunday. Skaggs said earlier this week that he's hoping to return from the disabled list during the Angels' upcoming series against the Mariners.
- Right-hander **Jim Johnson** (lumbar strain) is scheduled to begin a rehab assignment with Class A Advanced Inland Empire on Sunday.
- Right-hander **Alex Meyer** (shoulder surgery) has shifted his rehab to the Angels' complex in Arizona. The Angels do not expect Meyer to pitch in the Majors this season.

Mike Trout's Major League debut gave us a quick glimpse of the legend to come

By Chris Landers

We've been out of unique ways to sum up Mike Trout's historic awesomeness for a while now. He's been the best player in baseball more or less since he entered the Majors. He was an All-Star by age 20. He was an American League MVP Award winner by 22. He passed Vladimir Guerrero in career WAR by 26 (seriously). When Trout done, he'll be the next Aaron or Ruth or Mays, the one whose career you'll tell your kids and grandkids about -- and eight years ago today, that career officially began.

The Angels took Trout 25th overall in the 2009 Draft, and he spent the next two years tearing up the Minor Leagues and becoming one of the most highly-touted prospects in baseball. On July 8, just a game back of the Rangers in the AL West, the team decided to call in the cavalry, starting the 19-year-old in center field and batting him ninth.

It wasn't the most auspicious debut: Trout finished 0-for-3 on the night -- he hit just .220/.281/.390 over 40 games that year, but hey, he *was* only 19 -- and flew out to right in his first career at-bat.

As the night went on, though, we got a small peek at the player he'd become. His final at-bat ended in a scorching liner to center that hung up just long enough to be caught. And with the game tied with two outs in the top of the ninth, Franklin Gutierrez lifted a fly ball deep into the gap in right-center -- giving Trout the opportunity to get on his horse:

Trout took away what would have been at least a double, and Mark Trumbo led off the bottom half with a walk-off dinger. Trout's been helping them win games ever since.

FROM THE ATHLETIC

Before you write off Albert Pujols completely, take a look at his numbers in the clutch

By Brent Maguire

Albert Pujols' fall from established superstar with the St. Louis Cardinals to a below-average player and payroll hindrance for the Los Angeles Angels has been well-documented. Even with Pujols recently reaching historic milestones, such as his 600th home run last year and his 3,000th hit earlier this season, the narrative around Pujols as a member of the Angels has been negative.

The Athletic's Eno Sarris looked into Pujols' production and found that players with similar numbers at a similar age did not age all that well. Since becoming a full-time member of the Angels in 2012, Pujols, 38, has hit .261/.316/.454 and has been worth 6.7 Wins Above Replacement. Pujols has been paid \$153 million over the duration, a rather large overpay for someone who has performed as a near-replacement level player.

Things have gotten noticeably worse since 2017 for Pujols, who has hit .244/.287/.392 and has been worth negative-2.1 WAR in that time. Pujols is a first baseman/designated hitter who has run a 82 wRC+ in everyday duties in this time. He's baseball's slowest player according to Statcast's Sprint Speed Leaderboard. Despite all his career achievements, Pujols has been a negative in almost every area for the Angels.

One area Pujols has consistently succeeded, however, is situational hitting. Pujols has consistently hit in the middle of the Angels lineup despite the negative value he's provided as a whole. The baseball community has and will always argue over the idea of clutch hitting and whether or not it has predictive

value. Whether clutch hitting has predictive value or not, Pujols has been a drastically different player during high-leverage situations and with runners in scoring position since 2012.

	Line	wRC+
Bases Empty (2,060 PA)	.247/.288/.449	104
RISP (2,061 PA)	.278/.366/.455	117
Low Leverage (1,198 PA)	.252/.302/.462	109
High Leverage (440 PA)	.288/.375/.472	126

Over a fairly large sample, Pujols has proven to be very useful whenever runners reach second base or the game is in a high-leverage spot. This season alone, Pujols has a 97 wRC+ in low-leverage situations compared to a 132 wRC+ in high-leverage situations. With the bases empty, Pujols has a 73 wRC+ compared to a 123 wRC+ with runners in scoring position.

Even if we don't accept clutch hitting as a predictive statistic, Pujols has established a norm of hitting much better in high-leverage spots. Pujols has historically hit better with runners in scoring position (153 wRC+) compared to the bases empty (143 wRC+). He could be the rare player who actually has some skill to change his game based on the situation presented to him.

We've established that Pujols has historically hit better in important situations, even in his recent decline years. The question is what is the reasoning for the drastic change in production in high-leverage situations? For starters, his plate discipline is much better in bigger situations dating to 2012.

	Walk %	Strikeout %
Bases Empty (2,060 PA)	5.0	12.6
RISP (2,061 PA)	12.4	10.1
Low Leverage (1,198 PA)	6.1	12.3
High Leverage (440 PA)	11.8	9.1

Again, this is just a drastically different player we're seeing when Pujols is placed in an RBI or high-leverage situation. More walks than strikeouts is a throwback to the Pujols of old who consistently posted gaudy plate discipline numbers. Pujols has combined power and plate discipline whenever the situation is high-leverage or a run-producing spot.

Digging in deeper, it's worth seeing if anything changes within his batted ball profile. Is Pujols hitting more grounders or fly balls based on situation? Does he pull the ball more or less with runners on? The results show nothing drastically changes based on game situation.

	Fly-Ball %	Groundball %	Pull %	Oppo %
Bases Empty (2,060 PA)	38.7	43.1	48.3	17.7

RISP (2,061 PA)	37.1	44.0	49.1	17.7
Low Leverage (1,198 PA)	40	42.4	47.8	18.7
High Leverage (440 PA)	34.7	43.4	47.5	17.5

Pujols isn't changing anything in terms of his batted-ball profile depending on a given situation. He's not going the other way when runners are on base and the shift is off. He's not lifting more baseballs in certain situations. There doesn't appear to be a change in where Pujols wants to hit the ball based on the situation.

What does change for Pujols in these situations, however, is the utilization of the shift. Pujols is being shifted against in a whopping 40 percent of his plate appearances this year. When runners reach second base, the shift is generally not used, which becomes huge for a player with the batted-ball profile and speed of someone like Pujols. Like many other players, Pujols has been crushed by the shift.

Pujols has been roughly a .300 wOBA hitter without the shift over the past two years, hardly a valuable hitter but better than the .270-ish guy when the shift is on. You can harp on Pujols for not making the proper adjustment against the shift, but it's not particularly easy to change your game after more than a decade of success prior to the shift.

This evidence gives us a few things to consider. The most obvious conclusion is Pujols' numbers would look much better if the shift didn't exist and the situational hitting splits likely wouldn't look so different. The other piece of evidence is Pujols' raw numbers have been better in important spots and while his batted ball profile hasn't changed, his plate discipline gets better with runners on base.

Pujols is and still will be a well-below average player for the Angels and will earn \$87 million from his age 39 to 41 seasons (2019-21). There's no denying the dead weight he has carried for a lot of his Angels career. The silver lining for the Angels, however, is Pujols is still showing a knack for providing value in important situations at the plate. The Angels will take that and hope he can maintain this situational hitting until he retires.

Pitch, hit and run: Even with part of his game sidelined, Shohei Ohtani looks to make an impact

By Fabian Ardaya

ANAHEIM, Calif. — For the first time in Shohei Ohtani's big-league career, his biggest asset to help guide an Angels victory wasn't firing bullets from his right arm or getting his bat to the ball and driving it.

Instead, he manufactured the tying run Friday in a 3-2 win over the Dodgers with his legs.

Down to his team's final out in the ninth, Ohtani came to the plate against Dodgers closer Kenley Jansen, one of the game's best and someone who hadn't blown a save opportunity since April 17. Jansen's

overbearing cutter got Ohtani down 0-2, with the Japanese two-way sensation only able to foul off a quick-pitch fastball Jansen ran up at 96.4 mph.

Knowing he'd already gone 0-for-3 with a pair of strikeouts in the game, Ohtani's sights weren't set on knocking the tying run over the wall.

"I felt like I couldn't get a hit today, so I had to get on base and the best way to do that was a walk," Ohtani said through translator Ippei Mizuhara.

Jansen went for a high cutter to get Ohtani swinging, but he missed his spot. Jansen then lost the feel for his fastball, he later said, missing the next three as well to give Ohtani his walk.

"That's a great at-bat," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said after the game. "I think it speaks to the threat Shohei is at the plate. ...(Jansen) knows, if he doesn't get (the cutter) where he wants it, Shohei can get the barrel to it and drive it out."

That's where the fun began for Ohtani. The pitching prowess has been known about for years, dating to when the Dodgers tried signing him outright out of Japan as exclusively a pitcher. His power is prodigious, part of the reason just about every major-league team was in hot pursuit of his two-way services.

But he'd swiped only 13 bases in his five years playing for the Nippon Ham Fighters of NPB. He was a prolific outfielder, but the video could only say so much. So when Ohtani arrived at the Angels' spring training complex in Tempe, generating steals wasn't on the forefront of Scioscia's mind. That was, until the manager saw him run.

"He's the second-fastest player on our team," Scioscia said.

He's right, Ohtani is the second-fastest player on the team — sort of. Baseball Savant, the home of MLB's public Stat Cast data, measures "Sprint Speed," the player's average fastest time measured in terms of feet per second, with 27 feet/second being average. Among Angels players with at least 20 competitive runs, Ohtani's sprint speed of 28.2 ranks below only Michael Hermosillo (29.5) and Mike Trout (29.2). With Hermosillo currently in Triple-A, Scioscia is technically right.

But as Ohtani led off first base against Jansen, he was on his own. Scioscia left open the option of Ohtani taking second base to represent the tying run, something Ohtani saw as necessary. Jansen's scouting report has always been that the time he takes in his delivery to home plate makes him a target for would-be base stealers.

On Jansen's first pitch, Ohtani took off. He got in with a max sprint speed of 28.7 feet per second, sliding into second base as Dodgers catcher Yasmani Grandal's double-clutched throw sailed into center field. Ohtani wound up at third, scoring on the next pitch as David Fletcher singled into left field.

It was Ohtani's second stolen base in the big leagues. With more at-bats and opportunities, Scioscia said, there could be more. The problem would be generating those opportunities, and factoring in Ohtani's overall health. The 24-year-old has not been able to throw for a month as he looks to see if a platelet-rich plasma and stem-cell injection can generate regrowth in the Grade 2 sprain of the ulnar collateral

ligament in his right elbow. The first evaluation showed healing, allowing him to begin hitting. (The act of swinging doesn't stress the ligament.) Save for a freak accident on the field, Ohtani's elbow is not expected to be compromised if he's not pitching.

His only restriction is the same for all pitchers, which means no headfirst slides.

"I think the template that we're working off, that [general manager Billy Eppler] created, certainly has recovery days in it," Scioscia said of Ohtani's regimen. "It also has him doing everything you would need for him to do on the offensive end, whether it's sliding, going first to third, whatever it could be and then being ready to take that batting helmet off and put that cap on and go pitch."

Ohtani still feels he has to develop as a baserunner to become the burner on the base paths his wheels suggest he could be. It's fair that his time dedicated to being a two-way player, as he was in Japan, perhaps stunted him of having a Dee Gordon-like stretch in terms of stolen bases.

"I think I still lack the steal part when I go to steal a base," Ohtani said. "So I only go when I think I'm close to 100 percent that I could steal."

Scioscia sees the potential for more.

"I think any time that we've given him the opportunity to run, he's gotten good jumps," Scioscia said. "The speed's there. I haven't noticed any flaws."

"He definitely has the technique and speed to steal a base when it's important."

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stripling throws another gem in Dodgers 3-1 win over Angels

By Jill Painter Lopez

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Ross Stripling has tentative plans to go to Lake Tahoe or somewhere close by in California during the All-Star break. He'll happily trade the lake for the sweltering July heat of Washington D.C.

Stripling (7-2) is making a strong case to make the NL All-Star team with another terrific outing, leading the Los Angeles Dodgers to a 3-1 win over the Angels on Saturday night.

He allowed just one run and three hits - all by Mike Trout - in six innings. The right-hander struck out seven and walked none, and lowered his ERA to 2.14.

"In a good way," Stripling said when asked if he was nervous about making the All-Star squad. "I'm trying not to let it affect me on the field at all. Obviously, I see the stuff on Twitter. Family, friends are asking me. You guys are asking. It's in the back of my mind. Hopefully, I can make it. That would be awesome. I'll try not to worry about it too much."

After blowing a save opportunity on Friday night, Kenley Jansen pitched a perfect ninth to earn his 24th save. Stripling, however, stole the show on another hot afternoon start of 100 degrees.

The 28-year-old Stripling retired nine of the last 10 batters he faced for the Dodgers, who have won five of their last six games.

Trout went 3 for 3 against Stripling, including a solo home run to left-center field in the sixth inning for his 25th of the season and 50th RBI. Trout, who finished 3 for 4 overall in his 11th three-hit game of the season, is now 5 for 5 with two home runs in his career against Stripling.

"I just found that out," Trout said of his numbers against Stripling. "Just trying to get a pitch to hit."

Stripling started the year in the Dodgers' bullpen. A rash of injuries, to every starter in the rotation, had Stripling back in a starter's role. He has been the best and most consistent starter all season. And most important, he's the only one who has avoided the injury bug. He has a team-best seven wins.

"I'm just honored to be the guy when guys got hurt to be the guy they counted on to step up and go five, six, seven innings every fifth day," Stripling said. "Just feel like I've done my job and hopefully can keep doing my job. Obviously, to think at the beginning of the year to think guys like myself, (Matt) Kemp and (Max) Muncy were going to be potential All-Stars, guys would've told you probably you were lying. That's what we're looking at. If I'm one of the guys that gets chosen to represent the Dodgers, that's awesome. That's what we're shooting for."

The Angels' Shohei Ohtani fouled a ball off his right knee in the ninth during his at-bat against Jansen. After a trainer, Mike Scioscia and an interpreter went to check on him, he stayed in the game and struck out - but hobbled back to the dugout. He was sore and had his knee wrapped in ice after the game. He will be re-evaluated.

"I think I'll be fine," Ohtani said through an interpreter. "I'll try to be ready for (Sunday)."

Justin Turner hit a two-out single in the fifth inning off Taylor Cole (0-1) to give the Dodgers a 2-0 lead.

Yasiel Puig hit a two-out, solo home run to center field off Noe Ramirez in the ninth to put the Dodgers ahead 3-1.

Deck McGuire made his second start for the Angels. He allowed one hit and struck out six in three innings in his first career appearance against the Dodgers.

In the fourth inning, reliever Jose Alvarez got Cody Bellinger and Matt Kemp to ground out, but then walked Yasmani Grandal and was pulled in favor of Cole.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Dodgers: RHP Yimi Garcia (right forearm inflammation) was placed on the disabled list. ... LHP Rich Hill (sore neck) is expected to make his scheduled start on Tuesday against San Diego. ... RHP Walker Buehler (right rib micro fracture) is scheduled to throw a five-inning simulated game Sunday. Dave Roberts expects him to make a start next weekend against the Angels.

Angels: LHP Tyler Skaggs (right adductor strain) will throw a bullpen this weekend. ... RHP Jim Johnson (lumbar strain) is scheduled to start a rehab assignment at Class A Inland Empire on Sunday.

UP NEXT

Dodgers: LHP Alex Wood (5-5, 3.84 ERA) got the win in the Dodgers' 17-1 victory over Pittsburgh last week. He allowed one run on six hits and walked none in six innings.

Angels: LHP Andrew Heaney (4-6, 3.94 ERA) is grooving in his last six starts at home, where he is 4-1 with a 0.88 ERA. He's 0-2 with a 6.10 ERA in two career starts against the Dodgers.

FROM CBS SPORTS

Dodgers, Angels face each other in rubber match

Andrew Heaney was a member of the Los Angeles Dodgers for a few hours early in his major league career.

By STATS

Andrew Heaney was a member of the Los Angeles Dodgers for a few hours early in his major league career.

Heaney is still hoping to convince their front office they should have given him a longer look five years ago. He'll get another opportunity Sunday evening when he takes the mound for the Los Angeles Angels in the series finale against the Dodgers at Angel Stadium.

The Dodgers (48-40) gave up two runs in the ninth inning and lost the series opener 3-2 on Friday night, then held on for a 3-1 win against the Angels (45-45) on Saturday.

Heaney was traded from the Miami Marlins to the Dodgers at the winter meetings Dec. 12, 2014, but a few hours later the Dodgers dealt him to the Angels for popular second baseman Howie Kendrick.

Heaney had two chances to beat the Dodgers during the 2015 season, but lost both games. He gave up two runs and four hits in 5 1/3 innings of a 3-1 loss at Dodger Stadium on Aug. 1 of that season. Five weeks later at Angel Stadium, he gave up five runs and six hits in five innings of a 6-4 loss.

Heaney had Tommy John surgery in June 2016 and made only six starts over the next two seasons.

Heaney (4-6, 3.94) had a solid month of May this season, posting a 2-3 record and 2.41 ERA in six starts. He had a winning mark of 2-1 in June, but his ERA dipped to 4.45 for the month. In his only start in July, he gave up three runs and five hits in seven innings at the Seattle Mariners on Tuesday, taking the loss in the 4-1 defeat.

"It's sort of been the same old story for a little while, just sort of the big innings where I let it kind of build," Heaney told reporters after his latest outing. "It's something where I need to come out and establish earlier, kind of get ahead, and all the other same stuff we always talk about."

Heaney will be opposed by Dodgers left-hander Alex Wood, who will be aiming to win his fifth straight start. Wood also won all five appearances in May of last season on his way to an 11-0 start.

Wood (5-5, 3.84) probably didn't expect to have a chance to go over .500 by early July after dropping to 0-4 on May 15.

"Winning is just nice," Wood told Sportsnet after his latest start, a 17-1 win against the visiting Pittsburgh Pirates on Monday. "Four in a row is nice, especially where I was after that three-start stretch. So I feel good, just trying to keep moving forward and looking towards the future. Hopefully, we'll keep swinging the bats well and play well going into the All-Star break."

The Angels are the only American League West team Wood has not faced in his major league career.

He struggled in his only interleague start this season, giving up seven runs and seven hits over 3 2/3 innings in a 16-6 loss to the visiting Oakland A's on April 11.

FROM ESPN.COM

Mike Trout stays patient as pitchers take a pass

By Alden Gonzalez

ANAHEIM, Calif. -- When Mike Trout got drafted by the Los Angeles Angels and began his journey through the minor leagues, he vowed to never swing until the opposing pitcher threw the first strike. Trout wanted to build a foundation of plate discipline at the professional level, and it didn't matter if it meant consistently falling behind in counts as a developing hitter. He was that confident in his approach.

Coaches tried to shake the habit off him, worried that he might be getting too passive, but Trout didn't budge. Through 286 games in the Angels' farm system, his patience hardly wavered.

"I just wanted to have that mindset," Trout said. "It made me a better hitter when I got deep in the count."

That composure, that persistence, is worth noting now, with Trout consistently staying within himself while continually seeing fewer chances. On Friday night -- in the sixth inning, with runners on second and third, two outs and the Los Angeles Dodgers leading by two -- Trout was intentionally walked for a major league-leading 15th time this season. It tied his previous career high set last year, but with 73 games left on the Angels' schedule.

Trout has already worked 78 walks and is on pace to draw 140 of them in 2018, which would be the second most in baseball since Barry Bonds obliterated conventionality in the early 2000s. Trout is seeing

42.1 percent of pitches inside the strike zone, the lowest rate of his career, according to FanGraphs. More than 90 players have seen strikes less frequently, but that is mostly a function of pitchers understanding that Trout will hardly ever chase.

They're being as careful as possible.

"He's the best player in the game, and we have to be very careful," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said before this weekend's Freeway Series. "It doesn't matter how he's going recently. If the game dictates, obviously he's a guy you don't want to beat you."

Trout is in the midst of a mini-slump, with 11 hits and 17 strikeouts in 54 at-bats since June 21. But he has also drawn 14 walks, six of them intentionally. And he has swung at only 15.2 percent of pitches outside the strike zone during that time, a mark that is the 11th best in the majors and is actually lower than his career chase rate of 21.5 percent.

He's struggling, he's getting pitched around, and yet Trout still refuses to expand.

"You can't," said Trout, whose chase rate for the year, of 16.9 percent, ranks fourth among 164 qualified hitters. "For me, I think that's when I get in trouble. Once I start expanding my strike zone, I'm going to get myself out. So I can't worry about whether they're walking me."

This wasn't supposed to happen with Trout. Not this year. The Angels spent \$106 million to lock in Justin Upton for five seasons. Upton, a four-time All-Star, was going to protect Trout and make sure he received enough pitches to hit. But Upton is only 3-for-21 this month. Behind him is Albert Pujols, who sports a .675 OPS for the season. And behind him, usually, is Shohei Ohtani, who has managed only two hits in 16 at-bats since returning from the disabled list.

In other words, opposing managers have little reason *not* to intentionally walk Trout these days.

"But keep doing it," Pujols urged. "We're going to make them pay."

Pujols was intentionally walked 116 times from 2008 to 2010, at least 41 times more often than anybody else, and is now one of few who can relate to Trout. He understands how frustrating it can get to be denied opportunities so frequently, how challenging it might be to stay within oneself when the free passes keep coming. But Pujols hardly wavered in his approach, very rarely venturing outside the strike zone. And he sees the same discipline with Trout.

"He has a pretty good idea what he wants to do," Pujols said. "Besides that, I think he's really patient. That's the best thing that he's doing -- that he's not expanding his strike zone."

The concern heading into this season was that pitching might do in the Angels. But their precipitous slide -- they have lost 17 of their past 25, falling 11 games further in the American League West -- has been mainly the product of a sagging offense. Trout remains a legitimate MVP candidate, with a .312/.455/.630 slash line and a major league-leading 6.5 wins above replacement. But he won't force the issue while teams continually stay away from him.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia was asked if he would like to see Trout change that approach and expand his strike zone a little bit more frequently.

"No," Scioscia said, sternly. "Play baseball. He's locked in. And we have to be more than Mike."

FROM FORBES.COM

Forget His Arm Or Bat, Ohtani Helping Angels Win With His Feet

By Barry Bloom

Shohei Ohtani hasn't done much lately with his arm or bat, but Friday night at Angel Stadium he helped win a key game for his Los Angeles Angels against the rival Dodgers with his feet.

It ain't over till it's over, the old Yogism and baseball cliché goes. But the climax of the come-from-behind on the last pitch, 3-2, Angels' win is proof positive that sometimes the greatest of clichés are rooted in reality.

With no one on, two outs and Ohtani holding a two-strike count against Kenley Jansen -- one of the top closers in Major League Baseball -- the left-handed swinger nursed a walk. Those were four pitches, during which a swing or miss against any of them would've ended the game.

Once ensconced safely on first, Ohtani wasted little time stealing second base. Jansen didn't pay him much attention. Ohtani didn't hesitate.

"We put him on his own," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said afterward. "He had a great read on the jump and a great jump on the steal. That was an important time. It was a big play."

That's how much faith the Angels have in Ohtani, who just came off the disabled list earlier this week because of a torn ulnar collateral ligament in his right (pitching) elbow. Ohtani, the first two-way player in the Major Leagues in a century, is restricted from pitching right now.

He's not restricted from hitting or running.

Ohtani, the guy Scioscia calls the second fastest man on the team behind Mike Trout, sprinted toward second as Dodgers catcher Yasmani Grandal threw the ball into center field. In a split second, Ohtani was standing on third because of the throwing error, representing the tying run only 90-feet away. Moments earlier he had been down to the last pitch.

In an instant, he scored the tying run on a base hit to left by David Fletcher. That's baseball, another truism that's a well-worn hardball cliché.

"My previous at bats I wasn't able to do my job very well," said Ohtani, who was 0-for-3 in the game with two strikeouts and the walk. "I just wanted to get on base and help the team come back to win. I think it just showed that we're never going to give up until the last out."

The Angels won the game in most unlikely fashion when Ian Kinsler blooped a single in front of right-fielder Yasiel Puig. Puig bobbled the ball. But he has one of the best throwing arms of any outfielder in the league and when he came up firing, Fletcher scurried back to the safety of third base.

When Puig's throw took a hard skip over Grandal to the backstop for another error, Fletcher turned course and came home with the winning run.

To be sure and to make no mistake about it, it was Ohtani's persistence at the plate and sure footwork on the base paths that won the game for the Angels.

Ohtani is 2-for-11 with three runs scored, a walk and five strikeouts since he came off the disabled list after 25 days this past Tuesday in Seattle.

He hasn't pitched since June 6 when he worked four innings against the Kansas City Royals and left with what later was diagnosed as the UCL injury, which typically is the precursor to Tommy John surgery and a recovery time of from 12 to 18 months.

He's slated to undergo another MRI and evaluation of the state of his elbow at the Kerlan-Jobe Clinic in Los Angeles around the the time of the July 17 All-Star Game.

As a designated hitter, he's dipped to a slash line of .280/.361/.517 with six homers, 20 RBIs and an .878 OPS. He hasn't hit a homer since May 17. The stolen base on Friday night was just his second for the Angels. He stole only 13 bases, during five seasons playing for the Nippon-Ham Fighters in Japan's Pacific League.

Ohtani looks much like he did during spring training when he batted .125. He's trying to find his stride at the plate.

The injury, though, has not made Scioscia hesitant about using him in the prescribed method dictated by the Angels medical staff, sans pitching or throwing the ball, of course. The steal, though, is not a go-to play in his usual bag of tricks.

"Enough with recovering, we're past that," Scioscia said. "We talked a lot during spring training about it. He said he's run before. He says he feels good stealing bases when it's available. No, we're past all that with the elbow. He's not going to slide head first, which is the thing you'd worry about with any player, let alone a pitcher."

Since there's no timetable yet when Ohtani may return to pitch, it might be that he'll continue this season purely as a hitter. But that's certainly to be determined.

When he's doing both, he's pretty much restricted to hitting two or three times a week in between starts. And the Angels have yet to make the jump of allowing Ohtani to hit on the days he pitches because of their reluctance to play that game without the DH.

Thus, the injury may be a blessing in disguise, allowing Ohtani to concentrate and improve as a hitter.

“We’d like to have him doing both,” Scioscia said. “That’s where the real value of Shohei is. Although we’re happy to have him swing the bat, we desperately need what he was bringing on the mound. That’s really important to our club.”

But for now, with the arm unavailable, Scioscia certainly will be glad to utilize Ohtani’s speedy feet.