



# ***Press Clips***

**(May 13, 2018)**

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**FROM THE OC REGISTER****Angels squander chance in the 11<sup>th</sup>, and Twins pull out victory**

By Elliott Teaford

ANAHEIM — Jefry Marte walked to home plate with the cheers of 40,117 fans ringing in his ears. The Angels had loaded the bases with two outs in the 11th inning Saturday, and the crowd was standing and ready to head for the exits with a game-winning hit.

Instead, Marte tapped a harmless comebacker to Minnesota Twins reliever Trevor Hildenberger, who threw him out at first base for the final out of the inning. The Angels and Twins were deadlocked heading to the 12th. The tie wouldn't last, though.

Minnesota's Mitch Garver broke it with a run-scoring double off reliever Noe Ramirez and Gregorio Petit added an RBI single, and Fernando Rodney pitched a scoreless 12th as the Twins held on for a 5-3 victory. The Angels left 16 men on base by game's end, including three in the pivotal 11th.

Additionally, the Angels were 1 for 10 with runners in scoring position.

"You know you're going to have 10 of those exhilarating wins during the season and 10 losses that just rip your heart out," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "This one is obviously in the tough loss basket, but you turn the page and come back tomorrow."

Ramirez (1-2) pitched three innings and was perfect in the 10th and 11th. Scioscia refused to fault him for the second bullpen meltdown in as many nights, following the Angels' 5-4 loss Friday to the Twins. Scioscia praised Ramirez instead.

"Noe did a great job for us," Scioscia said after Ramirez gave up two runs and three hits with four strikeouts. "He gave us a bunch of looks to win the game and we just weren't able to get that one hit to fall in. I thought everybody on the mound did a good job for us tonight."

Hours earlier, Angels right-hander Nick Tropeano seemed flawless in his return from the disabled list. He retired the Minnesota Twins in order in the first inning and then threw a 1-2-3 second in his first game since a no-decision May 1 against the Baltimore Orioles at Angel Stadium.

Then the third rolled around and it looked as if Tropeano might not last the inning. The Twins battered him during a three-run third that threatened to knock him from the game and raise questions about the shoulder inflammation that sent him to the DL.

But a funny thing happened. Tropeano regained his rhythm and confidence and overcame what proved to be a hiccup en route to a quality start. The Twins managed little of consequence against him outside of the third, and he tossed six strong innings before Blake Parker relieved him in the seventh.

Tropeano gave up three runs and five hits with two strikeouts and three walks in six innings, departing with the Angels trailing 3-2. He threw 87 pitches, a modest number in his return to the Angels' starting rotation. Fifty-two were strikes.

Six batters came to the plate to start the game and Tropeano retired all six before things went haywire temporarily in the third inning. Logan Morrison walked and went to second on Ehire Adrianza's single. Morrison then scored on Byron Buxton's double.

Joe Mauer delivered a run-scoring single and Brian Dozier knocked in the third Minnesota run with a sacrifice fly that drove Mike Trout to the warning track in center field. Tropeano avoided further trouble by getting Max Kepler to hit into an inning-ending double play.

"I know I didn't have my best stuff out there," Tropeano said. "Everything's good. Everything was coming out good. It was just about getting that first-pitch strike. In that third inning, I kind of fell away from it and put myself in some bad counts. Other than that, I felt good."

Minnesota starter Kyle Gibson had troubles of his own in the third, but limited the Angels to one run on Justin Upton's run-scoring fielder's choice. In the sixth, Andrelton Simmons tripled and scored on Luis Valbuena's sacrifice fly to cut the Angels' deficit to 3-2.

Gibson gave up two runs and three hits with six strikeouts in six innings.

Ryan Pressly relieved Gibson to start the bottom of the seventh and coughed up the lead. Upton scorched a single to left field to drive home Kole Calhoun for the tying run. Pressly struck out Zack Cozart, walked Trout and then struck out Albert Pujols to end the Angels' threat.

Upton's two RBIs gave him 17 in May, tops in the majors this month.

## **Manager Mike Scioscia monitoring Angels' bullpen, but not more than usual**

By Elliott Teaford

ANAHEIM — No question, the Angels' bullpen was overworked to start the 2018 season. Their relief corps needed to be monitored and protected as much as possible as the days and weeks passed and their starters failed to pitch deep enough in games.

Matters seemed to be changing for the better, with Angels starters posting a 2.14 ERA in May, the fourth-best mark in the majors. Handoffs from their starters to their relievers continue to be problematic, however, with Friday's bullpen collapse the latest case in point.

Manager Mike Scioscia tried to avoid using Jose Alvarez, Kenyan Middleton and Jim Johnson on Friday, giving them a rest after they pitched Thursday. Instead, Scioscia stayed with Justin Anderson, who gave up three runs in 1-1/3 innings in the Angels' 5-4 loss to the Minnesota Twins.

Middleton is the only Angels reliever to have pitched three consecutive days, and he ended up on the disabled list because of a right elbow inflammation after throwing April 21-22-23. Three consecutive days of throwing now seems to be the no-go zone.

Scioscia insisted Saturday that he's not more concerned about overtaxing his bullpen than in the past. The Angels' new six-man starting rotation this season also is not a reason for keeping a closer watch on their relievers than usual, according to Scioscia.

The Angels have seven relievers to go with a six-man rotation used to accommodate Shohei Ohtani, a rookie from Japan who is pitching and serving as a designated hitter this season. Even if the Angels had eight relievers, Scioscia said he would keep a close watch on his bullpen.

The starters simply haven't chewed up the needed innings to give the bullpen a break, he said.

"You always pay a lot of attention to your bullpen," Scioscia said. "But when you're in the situation that we've been in for the first quarter of the season, you certainly have to pay more attention to it. We've been fortunate to have mostly an eight-man bullpen, which helps for the first 40 games."

Seven relievers should be plenty, as far as Scioscia is concerned.

"Our issue has been for a lot of the first quarter of the season is we were averaging 14 outs from a lot of the rotation," he said. "That's a lot for you bullpen to pick up every night. We're protective of every pitcher in our bullpen. They need a day (off), they get a day."

#### **OHTANI WORKLOAD UPDATE**

The Angels hope Ohtani will shift from pitching every seven days to every six days, which was their game plan going into the season. When it happens is anyone's guess, although the Angels finally have six healthy starters with the return of Nick Tropeano from the disabled list Saturday.

"Hopefully, Shohei will be able to come back on a six-day rest instead of a seven-day," Scioscia said. "As he gets comfortable and starts to get innings under his belt, hopefully, he'll be able to recover and be able to do that at some point. It will help us a lot.

"(But) we don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves."

#### **COVERING THE BASES**

The Angels sent reliever Akeel Morris to Triple-A Salt Lake in order to make room for Tropeano on the roster. Tropeano, who started Saturday against the Twins, had been on the disabled list because of shoulder inflammation since May 2.

Reliever Blake Wood is scheduled to make a rehab appearance with Class-A Inland Empire on Monday, Scioscia said. Wood, a right-hander, has been on the DL since April 23 because of an impingement in his right shoulder.

**FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES****Angels drop another tough one to Twins, this time in extra innings**

By Mike DiGiovanna

Mike Trout nearly cost the Angels a key run, unwittingly, with his speed and aggressive baserunning in the seventh inning Saturday night, but his Matrix-like elusiveness on a slide into third helped his team pull even with Minnesota.

The teams remained deadlocked for four more innings before the Twins broke out for two runs in the 12th inning of a 5-3 victory in front of 40,117 in Angel Stadium.

Eddie Rosario led off the 12th with an infield single against right-hander Noe Ramirez, who was pitching his third inning of relief, and Mitch Garver shot a run-scoring double past diving third baseman Zack Cozart and into the left-field corner.

Gregorio Petit hit a run-scoring single to center for a two-run cushion, and closer Fernando Rodney picked up his seventh save.

"You know you're going to have 10 of those exhilarating wins during a season and 10 losses that rip your heart out," manager Mike Scioscia said. "This one is obviously in the tough-loss basket, but we're going to turn the page, come out [Sunday] and hopefully come away with a win."

The Angels trailed 3-2 when Kole Calhoun drew a leadoff walk from reliever Ryan Pressly in the seventh. Rene Rivera struck out, but Calhoun took second on a passed ball. Cozart struck out and Trout drew a four-pitch walk.

Up stepped Justin Upton, who entered on a nine-game tear in which he hit .351 with a 1.297 on-base-plus-slugging percentage, six homers, 14 RBIs and 12 runs. Upton worked the count to 3 and 1 before ripping an 88-mph slider for a single to left-center field.

Calhoun was waved home and Trout went from first to third. Left fielder Rosario made a strong throw to third but Trout avoided Eduardo Escobar's lunging tag with a twisting, head-first slide past the infield side of the bag.

Trout scrambled back to the base as Calhoun scored for a 3-3 tie. Had Escobar tagged Trout on his first pass, the run would not have counted because Calhoun had not yet reached the plate.

"I thought he was going to throw home but once he fired to third I told myself I can't get tagged out here," Trout said. "The throw was to the right a little bit. I slid to the left, past the bag. Dino [Ebel, third-base coach] helped me a lot with the throw. It was a crazy play."

Blake Parker (seventh), Cam Bedrosian (eighth) and Keynan Middleton (ninth) worked in relief of right-hander Nick Tropeano, and Ramirez retired the side in order in the 10th and 11th before stumbling in the 12th.

The Angels threatened in the ninth inning when Trout drew his fourth walk with two outs and took third on Upton's single to center field, but Albert Pujols hit a 105-mph line drive to center field for an out. The Angels put two runners on with one out in the 10th inning but Calhoun and Rivera flied out.

Sidearm-throwing Trevor Hildenberger opened the bottom of the 11th by hitting Cozart with a pitch. Trout grounded into a fielder's choice and stole second base. He tagged on Upton's fly to medium right field and took third base.

Pujols and Andrelton Simmons were walked intentionally to load the bases for Jefry Marte, who tapped a grounder to the mound and was thrown out.

Tropeano, activated Saturday after a 10-day stint on the disabled list because of shoulder inflammation, gave up three runs and five hits in six innings, striking out two batters and walking three, his only trouble coming in the third inning.

After retiring six consecutive batters to open the game, the right-hander suffered a sudden loss of command, falling behind each of the first five batters in the third with 2-and-0 counts.

Logan Morrison drew a leadoff walk and Ehire Adrianza poked a single to right field. No. 9 hitter Byron Buxton looped a run-scoring double to shallow left-center field. Joe Mauer ripped a run-scoring single to right field. Brian Dozier hit a sacrifice fly to center field for a 3-0 lead before Max Kepler grounded into an inning-ending double play.

The Angels got one run back in the third inning, a rally Cozart sparked when he one-hopped the short wall in left field for a ground-rule double against starter Kyle Gibson, who was picked 22nd overall in the 2009 draft, three spots ahead of Trout.

Cozart took third on a wild pitch and, after Trout walked, scored on Upton's fielder's choice. Pujols singled to put two on with two out, but Simmons flied out.

## **Mike Trout's line drive was the hardest-hit ball by an Angel since 2015**

By Mike DiGiovanna

The velocity matched the volume, which is why Minnesota catcher **Bobby Wilson** was not surprised that **Mike Trout's** game-ending line drive to shortstop **Gregorio Petit** on Friday night left the bat at 118.0 mph, the hardest-hit ball by an Angel since Statcast began tracking exit velocity in 2015.

Only 18 balls have been recorded with exit velocities of 118 mph or more since 2015; Trout's was the first to be recorded for an out.

"There are only a couple of guys when I've been behind the plate who can make that kind of sound with a ball coming off the bat, and that's **David Ortiz**, **Alex Rodriguez** and Trout," said Wilson, a 35-year-old in his 10th big league season.

"Those are special players, and I put [**Shohei**]Ohtani in that class, too. It's just a different sound, that whip of the bat, the batting gloves ripping. It's a distinctive sound that I only hear with certain guys, and those guys happen to be really, really good."

Trout represented the potential winning run when he squared up a 93-mph fastball from **Fernando Rodney** and hit a hooking liner that Petit — fortunately for him — caught in the web of his mitt.

"I was very happy about that," said Petit, a former Angels utility player.

If Trout had gotten slightly under the ball instead of hitting it flush, it could have been a game-winning two-run home run. Instead, the Angels lost 5-4.

"I barreled it up and hit that ball pretty good, but it was right at him," Trout said Saturday. "You have to hit it where they're not."

Trout's liner was the third-hardest batted ball in the major leagues this season behind Colorado's **Carlos Gonzalez** (118.3 mph) and the New York Yankees' **Aaron Judge** (118.2 mph).

"He just missed it," Wilson, the former Angel who was a teammate of Trout in 2011 and 2012, said jokingly. "In that situation, he can hit that ball 150 mph. As long as he hit it to somebody in the field of play, I was happy."

### **Sixth man**

The Angels, who Tuesday began a stretch in which they'll play 29 games in 30 days, are finally employing the six-man rotation they expected to use when they signed Ohtani, the two-way star who is scheduled to start Sunday's series finale against the Twins.

**Mike Scioscia** said Ohtani will continue to pitch once a week, as he has for the first six weeks. The manager reiterated Saturday that Ohtani could eventually pitch on shorter rest, but that no move was imminent.

"Shohei has been able to pitch on a sixth day, and as he starts to get comfortable, as he gets innings under his belt, hopefully he'll recover and be able to do that at some point," Scioscia said.

"With our schedule, that would help us a lot, but we don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves. Even with Shohei pitching once a week, we've been able to juggle guys ahead of him and behind him and keep guys on regular rest."

Have the Angels spoken to Ohtani about pitching on five days of rest?

"No," Scioscia said, "but he wants to pitch every fourth day, so it won't be a problem."

### **Short hops**

Reliever **Blake Wood**, sidelined since April 23 because of an elbow impingement, will make a rehabilitation appearance for Class-A Inland Empire on Monday. The right-hander could be activated as



soon as Wednesday. ... Reliever **Akeel Morris** was optioned to triple A on Saturday to clear a spot for pitcher **Nick Tropeano**, who had spent 10 days on the disabled list with shoulder inflammation. He started Saturday and allowed three runs in six innings.

**FROM ANGELS.COM**

## Angels claw back but fall to Twins in 12<sup>th</sup>

*Lineup finishes 1-fo-10 with RISP, strands 16 baserunners*

By Avery Yang

ANAHEIM -- The Angels' bats, after a recent renaissance, faltered in their production on Saturday night, unable to notch hits in key situations -- going 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position -- in a 5-3, 12-inning loss to the Twins at Angel Stadium. The Halos are now a game behind the Astros for first place in the American League West.

With a real opportunity in the 11th, the Angels could not deliver. Zack Cozart led off the inning with a hit-by-pitch, providing the Halos a much-needed leadoff baserunner in a game that produced few. Mike Trout followed with a fielder's choice, beating out the throw to first. Trout then stole second -- his eighth for the season (8-for-8) -- before Justin Upton moved him over to third with a flyout to right field.

Then, Twins manager Paul Molitor decided to intentionally walk both Albert Pujols and Andrelton Simmons to load the bases for Jefry Marte, who promptly grounded out to the pitcher, after a six-pitch battle, to end the inning. In all, the Angels stranded 16 baserunners.

"We had a lot of opportunities," manager Mike Scioscia said. "Unfortunately we didn't get that hit here or there where we needed it."

The Angels' bullpen, the most overworked in the American League, had, until the 12th, put up five scoreless innings, before Noe Ramirez gave up a leadoff single to Eddie Rosario and then an RBI double to Mitch Garver. Two batters later, Gregorio Petit singled to center to give the Twins their second run of the inning. The bullpen came into Saturday with the fourth-lowest ERA in the AL.

"Good swings by them," Ramirez said. "Unfortunately, I left that changeup up to Garver there. You would like to bury that a little more, just kinda crept over the plate. He put a pretty good swing on it and just out of the reach of [Cozart]. But that's baseball. One pitch can determine a lot."

Upton, who had previously homered in four straight games, drove in two runs, the first on a forceout in the third inning for the Angels' first run and the second on a key single in the seventh off reliever Ryan Pressly to tie the game at 3. Pressly had come into this series against the Angels with a 0.92 ERA, but gave up the leads in both Thursday's 7-4 loss and on Saturday to bring his ERA to 1.69.

Upton then threatened in the ninth with a long single off the wall in center field off reliever Addison Reed, but Byron Buxton was able to relay the ball in to his cutoff man right as the speedy Trout rounded

third, preventing him from attempting a play at the plate. Upton finished the night 2-for-5, and has hit .357 (15-for-42) with six homers and 16 RBIs over his last 10 games.

Simmons, with a triple to right field in the sixth inning, has hit safely in 15 of his last 16 games and has reached base in 19 straight. Two pitches later, Luis Valbuena, who snapped his 1-for-13 slump with a single in the eighth, knocked in the second Angel run on a sacrifice fly.

Though known as a consummate gloveman, it is Simmons' bat that has illuminated this season. In his last 15 games, he has hit .396 (25-for-63) with 10 extra-base hits and 15 RBIs. His .345 batting average is second in the American League.

Ian Kinsler, Kole Calhoun and Trout each reached base with walks -- Trout with four to extend his Major League-leading on-base percentage to .453. He now leads the American League in walks with 34.

Nick Tropeano, in his first start since returning off the disabled list with shoulder inflammation, was solid, except for a shaky third inning in which his fastball command eluded him, allowing the Twins to notch three runs.

Shohei Ohtani, who is due to start on Sunday, was on the bench for a potential pinch-hit opportunity in extra innings, but Scioscia said after the game that he was not available.

"You know you're going to have 10 of those exhilarating wins during the season, you're going to have 10 of those losses that just rip your heart out," Scioscia said. "This was obviously in the tough loss basket, but just like last night, we're going to turn the page, come out tomorrow and hopefully come away with the win."

#### **MOMENTS THAT MATTERED**

**Big double play:** In a key situation in the ninth inning, with a runner on first and one out, Keynan Middleton struck out Logan Morrison as Rosario attempted a steal of second. He overslid as Simmons secured the ball, forcing Rosario to book it to third while Simmons chased him down to end the threat, and the inning, sending the game into extras.

#### **YOU GOTTA SEE THIS**

With runners on first and second with two outs in the seventh inning, Upton singled to left to bring Calhoun around third and headed toward home. However, Calhoun did not reach home before Trout, advancing from first to third, made an acrobatic slide to evade the tag of Eduardo Escobar.

Had Trout not slid in safely, Calhoun's run would not have counted, and the score would have remained at 3-2.

"It was kind of a crazy play," Trout said. "That's the one thing that was in my mind: I couldn't get tagged out there. I think if [left fielder Eddie Rosario] comes up throwing, obviously the throw beats me by a lot, and I try and stop and get in a rundown. But it worked out."

#### **UP NEXT**

Ohtani (3-1, 4.10 ERA) will toe the rubber in the series finale against the Twins on Sunday, with first pitch set for 1:07 p.m. PT. Ohtani will be making his sixth start of the season coming off of an outing

against the Mariners in which he threw six innings and allowed two earned runs on six hits with six strikeouts. Ohtani will face off against fellow rookie Fernando Romero, who is 2-0 with a 0.00 ERA.

## **Trout does acrobatic slide on 'crazy play' at 3B**

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- Mike Trout used an acrobatic slide to avoid being tagged out while advancing from first to third in the seventh inning of the Angels' 5-3 loss to the Twins on Saturday night at Angel Stadium.

With the Angels trailing, 3-2, Trout drew a two-out walk off right-hander Ryan Pressly to put runners on first and second for Justin Upton. Upton then tied the game by lining a single to left field to score Kole Calhoun from second. Trout was nearly thrown out at third on the play -- which would have negated the run -- but he pulled off a nice head-first hook slide to evade Eduardo Escobar's tag.

"It was kind of a crazy play," Trout said. "That's the one thing that was in my mind: I couldn't get tagged out there. I think if [left fielder Eddie Rosario] comes up throwing, obviously the throw beats me by a lot, and I try and stop and get in a rundown. But it worked out."

Trout's sprint speed going from first to third was 29.4 feet per second, well above the MLB average of 27 feet per second.

The 26-year-old center fielder went 0-for-2 with four walks on Saturday, marking his second four-walk game of the year. Trout is the third player in Angels history to record multiple four-walk games in a season, joining Fred Lynn in 1984 and Chris Iannetta in 2013.

## **Halos hope road ahead is less taxing for 'pen**

By Maria Guardado

ANAHEIM -- No relief unit in the American League has been taxed as heavily as the Angels' bullpen this season. Entering Saturday, the contingent had pitched 155 1/3 innings, second in the Majors behind only the Padres (159 1/3).

The Angels were forced to lean on their relievers more than they would have liked in April, when their rotation struggled to pitch deep into games on a consistent basis. Two back-end arms -- Keynan Middleton and Blake Wood -- subsequently landed on the disabled list, stretching the bullpen even further.

All those factors seemed to snowball for the Angels in their 5-4 loss to the Twins on Friday night. With left-hander Jose Alvarez unavailable after pitching in two consecutive games and the Angels likely wanting to be cautious with Middleton, who threw 22 pitches after being activated off the DL on Thursday, manager Mike Scioscia decided to send rookie Justin Anderson back out for the ninth inning.

Anderson had pitched a 1-2-3 eighth, but he couldn't hold the Angels' 4-2 lead in his second inning of work, yielding a leadoff homer to Eddie Rosario and a double to Logan Morrison. Scioscia then turned to veteran Jim Johnson, but he couldn't bail Anderson out, allowing the Twins to score two more runs to go ahead, 5-4.

Johnson said afterward that he thought Scioscia's bullpen management was likely influenced by his desire to protect his relievers from overuse early in the year.

"I think he's trying to keep everybody healthy," Johnson said. "I think with the relievers in general, we're getting a heavy workload early on, and it was kind of hidden because we were winning ballgames. With Blake getting banged up and Key, I think they're just trying to spread the load a little bit more, ask a little bit more from a couple other guys. I think sometimes you're playing a little bit cautious, just trying to give guys ample rest. If you save a guy a day here in May, then you can abuse us in August and September. I was told that by another manager. He's playing for the long haul."

The Angels had largely carried eight relievers to start the season, which helped ameliorate some workload concerns, but they're down to seven after optioning Akeel Morris to Triple-A Salt Lake to clear a roster spot for Nick Tropeano, who was activated off the disabled list and started against the Twins on Saturday.

The Angels are expecting to use a six-man rotation for the near future, so they won't be able to carry an additional reliever, but an impressive run by the club's starters has given Scioscia confidence that the club won't have to rely so heavily on the bullpen moving forward. Angels starters have posted a 2.14 ERA over 10 games this month, the fourth-lowest mark in the Majors.

"Hopefully it will continue," Scioscia said Saturday. "I think once that happens, it's going to help a lot of those other things to work themselves out. There's no doubt that you always pay a lot of attention to your bullpen, but when you're in a situation that we've been in for the first quarter of the season, you certainly have to pay more attention."

## **FROM THE ATHLETIC**

### **It's Mother's Day every day Angels pitcher Tyler Skaggs takes the mound**

By Steve Dilbeck

Tyler Skaggs could try to hide it, but what's the point? He knows it better than anyone.

"I'm a momma's boy," Skaggs said.

Maybe not the typical thing for a 26-year-old professional athlete to confess, but then the relationship between the Angels left-hander and his mother, Debbie Skaggs, has always been unique.

Debbie wasn't just his mother, but his coach. Not just there for hugs, but to push him to run another lap. Debbie has been a high school softball coach her entire career.

“Other than in softball the pitcher throws underhanded and in baseball overhanded, it’s basically the same game,” he said.

His parents divorced when he was 2 and he has spent more time with his mother than any one. Their bond grew at home and on the field. Tips on studies and training.

Debbie was coaching softball at Santa Monica High School while Skaggs was playing on its baseball team, drawing the kind of rave reviews that would make him a supplemental first-round pick by the Angels in 2009.

Nine years later that special bond is unbroken. Debbie attends every game he pitches at home and as many road games as manageable. If she misses a trip, he calls her after every start.

“He’s an amazing son,” Debbie said. “He’s so good to me. He’s very passionate. He texted me today (Friday). Today would have been my dad’s birthday.

“He passed away last year when (Skaggs) was in Seattle, watching him pitch in that Angels game. So after the game I told him, ‘Poppa passed away watching you pitch tonight.’ It was a touching moment. He was sad but like, ‘I’m glad I could do something for him.’ ”

The ability to text has been yet another boon to their relationship, an easy way to check in, but also critique and offer reminders of his mechanics, whether on the road or at home.

“She’ll text me something after the second inning about my shoulder, even if I won’t see (the text) until after the game,” he said.

It’s not like Debbie is being overbearing. He seeks out her advice, trusts her for honest insight. So even as he is underway in his sixth season in the majors, she offers tips and observations.

“I do, but he is getting a little old,” she said. “I still text him every game. And then we talk after the game. He’ll go, ‘What did you think, mom?’ And I’ll say, ‘OK, is this the coach or the mom?’ And he’s like, ‘I want to know what you think.’ ”

Softball and baseball seasons run simultaneously in high school, so mother and son had their challenges watching each other’s games. Sometimes Debbie would let an assistant manage if their games overlapped so she could take in his starts.

Meanwhile, Skaggs became close to the players on his mother’s teams. He promised his senior season that if her team won the CIF sectional championship, he would buy the team rings. In 2010, they did.

“So he had already graduated in 2009, but we held him to it,” Debbie said. “He goes, ‘I know,’ because all the girls were texting him. He was good friends with a lot of the girls on the team just because of the relationship we all had. They still come to his games and cheer him on.”

Athletics come to his family honestly. Debbie’s identical twin, Donna Lee, has coached softball at Valencia High School for 31 years. Three years ago, Debbie switched her softball coaching to Windward High School, though she remains at Santa Monica as a physical education teacher.

Skaggs' father, Darrell, was a shortstop at Canoga Park High School and currently operates a batting cage in Santa Maria. His stepfather, Dan Ramos, was also a softball coach. Ramos built a pitching mound in their backyard to help Skaggs master his craft. It's still there, and — true story — still gets used by Skaggs.

"Sometimes he'll come home on an off-day and work on his mechanics on the mound," Debbie said. "He does that with my husband in the backyard. I'll be videotaping. It's kind of cute. I feel like that's just where his grounding is. He's always, 'What am I doing wrong? What can I do better?' He's always looking to get better."

This season, Skaggs is off to a promising start. He missed all of 2015 following Tommy John surgery and, battling an oblique injury, appeared in only 10 games last season. Eight starts into 2018, he is 3-2 with a 3.07 ERA and 46 strikeouts in 44 innings.

"I try not to look back," Skaggs said. "I'm just trying to stay in the now."

Skaggs has never won more than five games in a season and believes he has yet to tap into his full potential. This season hints at more still to come.

"It's super exciting," Debbie said. "We're lucky. He's fortunate. He's worked hard to this point. He's kind of flying under the radar this year, which is good."

The entire Skaggs clan feels fortunate that he not only bucked the odds to become a major leaguer, but that he's pulling it off 42 miles down the freeway in Anaheim, where all his games can be taken in.

Skaggs is uncertain where he would be if not for his mother.

"I probably wouldn't be pitching in the major leagues," he said.

**FROM THE MINNESOTA STAR-TRIBUNE**

## **Twins-Angels rookie showdown between Fernando Romero, Shohei Ohtani draws attention**

*The series finale in Anaheim matches up two hotshot rookies.*

By La Velle E. Neal III

ANAHEIM, CALIF. — There will be nasty pitches thrown, eliciting awkward swings. Hitters will look overmatched. Oohs and aahs will be heard throughout the crowd.

And the Twins expect Shohei Ohtani to throw a few nice pitches himself.

That's generally been their reaction when asked about Sunday's matchup of young guns. Ohtani, 23, has been the talk of baseball because of his two-way talents. But the Twins would rather talk up their guy, Fernando Romero, who has begun his major league career with 11 $\frac{2}{3}$  scoreless innings while featuring a 98-mile-per-hour fastball and a vicious slider.

"It's going to be good just to see two young guys go at it," Twins outfielder Robbie Grossman said. "The little we saw of Romero in spring training was exciting, and it is exciting to have him up here and for him to contribute like he has.

"Ohtani, it's his first year in the league, and it is exciting to see new guys."

Romero, also 23, shut out the Blue Jays for 5 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings in his major league debut May 2, then followed that with six shutout innings against the Cardinals on Monday. Sunday's meeting will be his biggest test yet — even without Ohtani involved.

But Romero ended up drawing the fire-throwing Japanese righthander in the Mother's Day matchup, giving Sunday's game even more flavor.

Ohtani became a star in Japan by both hitting and pitching at a standout level, and now he has made the leap to North America, entering Saturday night's game batting .348 with five home runs and 16 RBI at the plate while going 3-1 with a 4.10 ERA on the mound. He was named AL rookie of the month for April. The Twins will face him, his 100-mph fastball and dominating split-fingered pitch Sunday, but they already saw him hit a homer against them Thursday.

"Just watching Ohtani hit is pretty impressive," Twins second baseman Brian Dozier said. "I watched his batting practice on Friday and it was pretty special. I didn't know the guy can run, too. I say let him hit while he pitches."

Ohtani's starts have become must-see events, as he has been a phenomenon in every sense.

"He's definitely opened the conversation," Grossman said. "It will be interesting to see how long that lasts. Not only this year, but as the years go on."

Romero has held opponents to a .184 batting average while striking out 14 in his 11 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings. He might have the biggest arm the Twins have ever produced in a starting pitcher.

"You never know what you are going to get from guys making their debut," Dozier said. "How you react to walks and giving up a couple hits. He bounces right back and fills up the zone. His ball runs all over the place and gives hitters fits.

"Aside from his stuff, he's very, very comfortable. That says a lot, doing it on this level."

The hype doesn't appear to faze Romero, who needs six more shutout innings to set a Twins record for most scoreless innings to begin a career. He is prepared for whatever the atmosphere is Sunday.

"I'll be ready to face batters," Romero said. "I've got no excuse to not go forward. I can't wait for the day to get here."

## A long injury update

The Twins provided updates on a number of injured players on Saturday.

The most concerning is the plight of catcher Jason Castro, on the disabled list because of a torn right meniscus. Castro is headed Monday to Vail, Colo., where he will be examined by Dr. Robert LaPrade of the Steadman Clinic. Castro initially injured his knee April 20 at Tampa Bay. He took off a game before returning to action but had more problems with it, leading to him landing on the disabled list.

But his rehabilitation has hit a snag of some sort.

“Not progressing as much as we had hoped,” manager Paul Molitor said. “It looks like we’re going to send him out for another opinion on Monday, given his history. We want to make sure we do this thing right.”

Castro, batting .143 with a homer and three RBI, missed all of 2011 with Houston when he tore the meniscus and ACL in the knee, requiring surgery. He missed 30 games in 2012 with more problems in the knee, then had a cyst in the knee drained in September 2013, then had minor arthroscopic surgery in the knee later that month.

All-Star righthander Ervin Santana, who had surgery on his right middle finger, will face hitters on Monday and Thursday in Fort Myers, Fla. If that goes well, he will pitch in an extended spring training game May 21, then begin an official minor league rehabilitation assignment on May 26.

The Twins have not decided how many rehab starts Santana will need before he is activated. The Twins hope Santana can throw four innings or 60 pitches in his first rehab start.

“You can talk about if you want him up here for five [innings] and 75 [pitches] or you want to do another one in the minor leagues,” Molitor said.

In his last bullpen outing Thursday, Santana threw 50 pitches, including eight to 10 sliders, Molitor said. The slider is the pitch Santana needs his middle finger to spin properly.

Righthander Trevor May (elbow surgery) started for Class A Fort Myers on Saturday night, striking out five in three scoreless innings. He gave up one hit and three walks, and his fastball hit 93 miles per hour at Dunedin.

Third baseman Miguel Sano (left hamstring) worked out, hit and took some more grounders Saturday in Anaheim, but not at the intensity as the past couple of days. Sano is not totally pain free yet, Molitor said, so the Twins are being careful with him. Sunday’s plan is to reduce his workload again, then increase his activities Monday when the Twins open a homestand.

When asked if the past few days have been positive with Sano, Molitor said: “I think to get him out on the field doing more baseball things was good. I don’t know how to measure it other than that. We have to see how he progresses. Obviously, I’m a little apprehensive with a guy with hamstring history, that body type and all those types of things.”



Molitor added there is still a ways to go with Sano before he can play a full game.

## **FROM THE JAPAN TIMES**

### **Open doors are the key to the future**

By Yoko Ishikura

Many Japanese visited Los Angeles during the Golden Week holidays to watch Shohei Ohtani play for the Angels. I was one of them and was impressed with not only his performance but also how he behaved as if he had been there for a long time. Watching him play in front of so many fans (the stadium was almost full even though the game was on a weekday) made me think of the significance of keeping an organization open to attract the best talent and stay competitive.

We often encourage young people to step into a new world and open themselves up to new experiences. For that to happen, the country or organization that they're interested in must be open to people from the outside. Meanwhile, the cry for a country or organization to make itself great through protectionist measures appears to have recently gained momentum throughout the world.

I have no intention of discussing here the complicated issues of refugees, immigration and integration that are often on the priority list of politicians and governments. I want to discuss the benefits of encouraging the free flow of people by country, city or company both from the individual and organizational point of view.

For individuals, it provides an opportunity to design their own identity if they can start a new phase of their life in a new field. We often "label" people, and individuals may find it difficult to get rid of their label if they stay in the same place. Going to a new place and into a new field gives them a chance to start anew on their own. Stepping into a new field also gives them an opportunity to assess their strengths and weaknesses in the specific but wider field of their interest. Likewise, it provides a chance to identify their hidden talents and develop their capabilities.

On the other hand, it could be a challenge as they may feel insecure and that they don't belong there, leaving them feeling uneasy for a while because they are out of their comfort zone. In fact, in Japan we have a term that describes the light depression that many young people feel this month of the year just after finishing the first month on a new job or at university. It's called "May depression." Many new graduates who have started their first job in April have come back to campus to have a chat with me in May. I did not realize why at first, but it was their way of mitigating their concern and fear by returning to the familiar place where they had spent the last four years.

What are the benefits for a country or organization encouraging free movement of people? If a country or organization wants to attract people from outside, it needs to continue making efforts to be the best place in their field of interest. People are attracted to places where their talents are appreciated and developed. Once a place is perceived to offer a friendly environment for talented people to pursue their aspirations, people with similarly high aspirations and potential for capability development will come. A

virtuous cycle will kick in, and the place will become even stronger as competent people with strong interests gather to create healthy rivalries and positive competition among themselves.

On the other hand, if a country or city builds a wall to drive away people from outside, it will lose the vitality and energy to stay at the top. Good people leave and others follow.

The same holds true with an organization. Many companies advocate “open innovation” with people from outside of the organization to stay competitive in a fast-changing business environment. To make sure this leads to tangible benefits, organizations must continue making their place and project attractive enough for outside experts to find value. Open innovation is flexible and adaptive, and not fixed or permanent.

If these are the benefits of open entities with free flows of people, why the recent surge in protectionist sentiments and the interest in a wall? We see a similar tendency among some companies that advocate open innovation but have difficulty implementing it.

Let us go back to the story of Shohei Ohtani, who was named Rookie of the Month for April in Major League Baseball’s American League. He seems to be free from May depression. Why did the 23-year-old Ohtani go to the MLB, even though he was a superstar in Japan? It is simply that the MLB is the best and most competitive place for baseball, with excellent players from around the world. He wanted to be in the best place so he could develop his talent to the full. Though it is still only a few months since he began his U.S. career, he has been phenomenal and is expected to become even better in that environment.

We can take a look at Ichiro Suzuki, who at age 44 has had a stellar career in the United States, to see how MLB provided him with the best opportunity to develop his talent. If the MLB had not been open to him and he had stayed in Japan, I doubt his performance would have reached this level.

The MLB is open and remains the best place for baseball as it keeps attracting and retaining the most competent players. Following the same logic (though national governments may have other issues), I question whether the U.S., with the administration of President Donald Trump so keen on building a wall along the American border with Mexico, will stay the best place for innovation, entrepreneurship and new business model creation. The open policy of the U.S. made it the best place for these activities. Organizations such as the MLB are open to outsiders, regardless of their origin.

Turning our eyes to Japan, can we say that Japanese companies are open and receptive to free movement of people like the MLB? My answer is unfortunately “no.” They may not advocate building a wall, but the fact that many of them have had relatively little interest in recruiting the best talent from around the world indicates they may have an invisible wall. Such a policy may have resulted in the difficulty Japan has had in making its population diverse and realizing open innovation.

My suggestion to individuals — regardless of their nationality, race or background — is that you seek the best place in the world in your field of interest, go there and develop your capability by interacting and competing with the best people there. Stay away from an organization that is not open, as your talent will be wasted.

To countries and organizations, my suggestion is stay open and keep trying to stay at the top. Once you close the door and protect what you have, you are doomed to lose your competitiveness. After all, people with high potential are the key to competitiveness, and they will be driven away if you shut the door to your place.