



# ***Press Clips***

**(October 18, 2018)**

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**FROM OC REGISTER****Angels complete first round of manager interviews**

By Jeff Fletcher

The Angels have completed their first round of managerial interviews, talking with 10 candidates, and it's possible they could complete subsequent interviews in time to make a decision before the World Series, a source said Wednesday.

Major League Baseball prohibits teams from making major announcements during the World Series, which starts Tuesday. If the Angels aren't ready by then, the news might not be formally released until November.

The four confirmed candidates among the 10 are Brad Ausmus and Eric Chavez, who are special assistants to General Manager Billy Eppler; Chicago Cubs bench coach Brandon Hyde; and Houston Astros bench coach Joe Espada. It is also likely that Angels bench coach Josh Paul and third-base coach Dino Ebel were interviewed.

Ausmus is the only one of the confirmed candidates who has major league managerial experience. He managed the Detroit Tigers from 2014-17.

If the Angels pick Espada, obviously he would not be formally announced until after the Astros are eliminated. They are currently trailing 2-1 in the American League Championship Series against the Boston Red Sox, with Game 4 scheduled for Wednesday night.

As the Angels have sought to replace Mike Scioscia, whose contract expired after a 19-year run at the helm of the organization, the Angels have conducted an exhaustive search for their next manager.

Each interview has lasted eight or nine hours, which includes a written portion that takes about two hours, the source said.

The written portion of the interview is intended to give the candidates more time to formulate their answers to situational and analytically based questions.

When Eppler said after the season what he wanted in a new manager, he said one of the main characteristics will be a manager who has a "probability-based" mindset.

**Angels Offseason Options: CC Sabathia**

By Jeff Fletcher

*(This is the latest in a series of quick profiles on players who fit for the Angels to add over the winter. They are purely "informed speculation," based on what we know about the Angels' roster needs along*

*with General Manager Billy Eppler's preferences and history. We'll have a new one every weekday, until the GM Meetings, which are the unofficial start of the hot stove season.)*

### **CC SABATHIA, LHP, New York Yankees**

**The basics:** Sabathia had gone from being one of the best pitchers in the game to little more than an innings-eater a few years ago, but he's enjoyed a revival that has made him once again better than average, even heading into his age 38 season.

**2018 season:** Sabathia posted a 3.65 ERA in 153 innings over 29 starts. It was his third straight season starting at least 27 games with an ERA under 4.00.

**Contract stats:** Sabathia is a free agent. Considering his age, he probably won't be getting anything other than one-year offers, perhaps some with an option. He signed a one-year, \$10 million deal to come back to the Yankees last winter.

**Why he makes sense:** The Angels need durable pitching and, despite Sabathia's age, he's been just that recently. He's started 115 games over the past four seasons. Over that same span, Matt Shoemaker has started the most games for the Angels: 72. Sabathia looks even better when considering he's pitched in a hitter-hitter-friendly ballpark in a hitter-hitter-friendly division. His adjusted-ERA last season was 120, meaning he was 20 percent better than the average pitcher. Sabathia also could be a convenient one-year replacement for Shohei Ohtani, who is expected back in the rotation after Tommy Jon surgery in 2020. Finally, there is the Yankee connection. Billy Eppler was part of the Yankees' front office throughout most of Sabathia's time there. Sabathia also grew up in the Bay Area, so perhaps he'd like to pitch for a California team for the first time in his career.

**Why he doesn't:** Despite his recent success, Sabathia is still going to be 38 years old, which makes him risky. Over the last 10 years, only 11 pitchers have made 20 starts at age 38 or older. Sabathia had a strong tenure with the Yankees, and last year he was a free agent before going back. Perhaps he'd just like to stay there.

## **FROM THE LA TIMES**

### **After months of toxic politics, Anaheim and Disney need to get back on track**

By Ron Miller

The Disneyland Resort last week canceled its plans to add another luxury hotel to its property. The decision, which was all but inevitable following months of toxic politics in Anaheim, is a loss for everyone in the community.

The city estimates that it will lose out on \$1 billion in tax revenue over the next 40 years — money that would have funded much-needed city services including improving neighborhoods, protecting public safety, lowering emergency response times, maintaining infrastructure and assisting homeless persons.

The city's finance director told the City Council that the projected tax revenue from Disney's project and others (now also imperiled) was crucial to balancing the budget starting in 2021. There is no Plan B.

How did things get this bad this fast?

All observers of Anaheim politics for the last few years know that the city's former policy of incentivizing the construction of luxury hotels by offering 70% rebates on the room occupancy tax had become controversial. Heated rhetoric, even name-calling, became the norm at the biweekly City Council meetings. Still, it was a big shock when, after more than a year of planning and meetings, city officials notified Disney that because it had moved the location of its planned hotel about 1,000 feet on the property site, the company was no longer eligible for the tax rebate program. Lawyers began to debate, but when it became clear the city was not going to back down, Disney put planning for the hotel on hold.

A few weeks later, Disney and Anaheim tore up the tax rebate deals because of how divisive they had become, but the damage was done. Without the rebate, the investment required to build a four-diamond property stopped making clear economic sense. Disney shelved the project shortly thereafter.

At the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council, this cancellation hit very hard. We represent 15 trades covered by 48 local unions and district councils — more than 100,000 working people. Nearly 3,000 of them would have worked on that hotel, and they will miss out on a chance to ply their crafts on a project close to their homes. The Disney hotel was going to be built under a hard-fought-for project labor agreement, which gave construction preferences to Anaheim residents and veterans through our Helmets to Hardhats program. Instead, those middle-class jobs — the kind that are increasingly rare for workers without college degrees — have evaporated.

Meanwhile, UNITE-HERE Local 11 — which led the petition drive to put a minimum-wage measure on the Anaheim ballot, creating another political wrinkle — recently reached a deal with Disney to raise the pay for *all* of its members to \$15 per hour, and in many cases higher. The bargaining table is where wages, benefits and working conditions should be negotiated — not the ballot box. Yet with the scrapping of this hotel, more than 1,000 permanent jobs that would have been covered by that hard-fought wage increase will never be created, and Local 11 will have 1,000 fewer members.

Disney, for its part, is losing out on a chance to amplify its other major investments in Anaheim. With the 14-acre Star Wars: A Galaxy's Edge land under construction, a high-end hotel would have been a perfect compliment.

Anaheim may lose out most of all. Since Disney was attacked for pursuing a project that most communities would welcome, the city has been branded as a locality with challenging politics. Disney has said it may look elsewhere for future investments. The news this week that the Angels baseball team is also opting out of the final 10 years of its stadium lease in Anaheim underscores this point.

Could no one see this coming and head it off?

At the building trades, we believe in partnerships. When labor, business, government and community come together around a project, positive results follow. Government and elected leaders create an environment that attracts investment and that respects working people. Capital follows and the

economic activity provides a wide range of jobs — from construction and entry-level jobs to salaried and management roles — that help residents provide for their families. The wages and tax revenue are invested back into the community, benefiting all.

This model was successful in Anaheim for decades. Then it fell victim to the local manifestation of the nation's bitter political climate, in which groups set out to make sure their "enemy" loses a battle, instead of focusing on the big picture where everyone wins.

Disneyland Resort got a new president this year. The election on Nov. 6 will bring in new leadership to the city, including a mayor, so there's an opportunity to change the tone at City Hall. This is a moment when all involved should look for opportunities to rebuild the partnerships that benefit Anaheim's visitors, its residents and its workers.

Let's hope that going forward Anaheim can put the politics of destruction behind it. When it comes to local economic development, no one wins by making the other side lose. We win only when we all win.

**FROM MLB.COM**

## **MLB shows support for Spirit Day**

By Chad Thornburg

Major League Baseball is taking a stand against bullying. The 30 clubs will again support Thursday's Spirit Day -- a worldwide, largely social media-based anti-bullying effort targeting LGBTQ youth -- as part of National Bullying Prevention Month.

Spirit Day, as well as MLB's Shred Hate initiative -- which aims to combat bullying in schools and is now supported by 10 MLB clubs (the Twins, Nationals, Cubs, White Sox, Dodgers, Angels, Phillies, Rangers, Pirates and Red Sox) -- is part of MLB's commitment to using its platform to help reduce incidents of bullying amount young people.

"We want every kid that may love baseball, whether they're LGBTQ youth or not, to feel welcome and safe," said MLB vice president and special assistant to the Commissioner Billy Bean, a former Major League outfielder who is openly gay. "[We want to] let them know that they are a part of the baseball family and we're going to stand up right beside them."

Spirit Day was created in 2010 as a response to LGBTQ youth who have taken their own lives as a result of bullying. Millions wear purple on the day as a sign of support and to speak out against bullying.

Several MLB clubs will be wearing pins or purple clothing in support of Spirit Day, in addition to joining the social media campaign and supporting anti-bullying programing at local schools.

The Brewers will take donations to the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin and match up to \$10,000 for the day. Royals mascot Sluggerrr will be on hand at a local Kansas City-area school for an **anti-bullying program** featuring videos from several Royals players.

"We're the sport of Jackie Robinson," Bean said. "The one unique part of LGBTQ diversity awareness is the LGBTQ is every race, every gender, every age, every nationality. We're a part of everyone. ... The more inclusive that we can become, the more opportunities we're going to have to have the best and brightest people want to work in our sport and participate as athletes, and definitely when they walk through the turnstiles, they're going to feel welcome."

The Red Sox, in partnership with Fenway Sports Group president Mike Gordon's Gordon Family Foundation, have made a \$200,000 pledge to support its neighborhood LGBTQ health center, Fenway Health. The donation will benefit Fenway Health's youth, anti-bullying and anti-violence programs, including its Violence Recovery Program and the Sidney Borum, Jr. Health Center, which provides safe, non-judgmental care for young people ages 12-29.

"Spirit Day is meant to bring attention and awareness to bullying among LGBTQ youth, and there is no better way to affect real change related to this kind of abuse -- whether its verbal or physical -- than by supporting the great work being done right in our own neighborhood at Fenway Health," said Red Sox president and CEO Sam Kennedy in a team release. "We are lucky to have a facility in our community with the highest level of leadership and expertise in this area, and are thankful to Mike and Christina Gordon for their partnership, generosity and thoughtfulness around this important topic."

Professional sports and the LGBTQ community haven't always been a natural fit, with inclusion efforts being a relatively new push in the space -- throughout its history baseball has only had two players (Glenn Burke and Bean) come out as gay, and neither did so publicly until after their careers -- but it's been a focus of MLB's in recent years, particularly since Bean's hiring as MLB's first Ambassador of Inclusion in 2014.

Some of MLB's biggest stars -- **Mike Trout, Nolan Arenado, Javier Baez, Mookie Betts, Aaron Judge, Francisco Lindor, Sean Doolittle, George Springer** and **Justin Verlander** -- participated in a Shred Hate PSA titled "Join Our Team" for National Bullying Prevention Month.

"Sometimes in the sports world, we're a step or two behind, because we try to build up an image -- all sports do -- of masculinity," Bean said. "And sometimes it takes a great athlete to make a comment that is accepting and really breaks a barrier."

Spirit Day and the Shred Hate campaign will have a unique spotlight today with all eyes on Game 5 of the American League Championship Series between the Red Sox and Astros in Houston, the lone **postseason contest** scheduled for the day.

"[Thursday] is just one moment, but it's a wonderful moment to allow a very important segment of our society to feel loved and welcomed and supported," Bean said.

## Here's what happened in Wednesday's AFL action

Here's a team-by-team breakdown of how all 30 teams' prospects fared in Arizona Fall League action on Wednesday:

## AL East

### Blue Jays (Surprise)

**Blue Jays top prospect** Vladimir Guerrero Jr. (**No. 1 overall**) posted his second non-multi-hit performance during the Fall League season as he went 1-for-4 with a single. The 19-year-old phenom is hitting .538 with five doubles and nine RBIs and has hit safely in all six of his games. No. 9 Cavan Biggio went 0-for-4 with a walk and also recorded an outfield assist when he helped double a runner off first base in the seventh inning. Right-hander Jackson McClelland pitched around three walks to complete two hitless innings in relief. He's posted four hitless frames between two appearances.

### Orioles (Glendale)

Orioles pitching prospects Chris Lee and Tyler Erwin had near opposite nights on the mound. Lee struck out four over four scoreless innings and Erwin walked three, while only recording one out. Tanner Chleborad also threw in the game and fired one scoreless frame. Martin Cervenka entered the game as a pinch hitter and finished 0-for-2.

### Rays (Peoria)

Rays **No. 17 prospect** Joe McCarthy scored a run and walked three times out of the No. 3 spot in the lineup. Brandon Lawson allowed one earned run on two hits and two walks with three strikeouts in 1 2/3 innings of relief.

### Red Sox (Mesa)

Bobby Dalbec, the **Red Sox No. 6 prospect**, went 0-for-4, while Josh Ockimey (No. 10) didn't fare much better, finishing 1-for-4. Esteban Quiroz also went 0-for-4 and is now hitting .250. Josh Taylor got the start, but had a rough go of it as he gave up three hits in two innings. Taylor gave up three runs, but only one was earned.

### Yankees (Scottsdale)

Yankees prospects struggled offensively as Thairo Estrada (**Yankees No. 16**), Estevan Florial (No. 2) and Steven Sensley went 1-for-11.

## AL Central

### Indians (Glendale)

Yu Change, the **Indians No. 6 prospect**, Li-Jen Chu and Connor Marabell went 1-for-13. Rob Kaminsky struck out two and retired all four batters he faced.

### Royals (Surprise)

No Royals prospects played on Wednesday.

### Tigers (Mesa)

**Tigers No. 8 prospect** Daz Cameron went 0-for-3, while Jake Rogers (No. 12) picked up a single and went 1-for-3. Daniel Woodrow also went 1-for-2 with an RBI. A trio of Tigers pitching prospects were also in action as Sandy Baez (No. 26), Eduardo Jimenez and John Schreiber all threw for the Solar Sox. Baez threw a scoreless 1 1/3 innings, while Jimenez and Schreiber combined to give up three runs (two earned) in 2 2/3 innings.



**Twins (Salt River)**

No Twins prospects played on Wednesday.

**White Sox (Glendale)**

**White Sox No. 17** prospect Zack Burdi struck out two while retiring the side in order. Danny Dopico was stuck with a hard-luck loss, but performed well as he gave up an unearned run and fanned three in 1 2/3 innings. Luis Alexander Basabe (No. 9) raised his average to .273 with a 2-for-4 night. Laz Rivera went 1-for-4 and scored a run.

**AL West****A's (Salt River)**

Luis Barrera went 1-for-4 and scored a run.

**Angels (Mesa)**

**Angels No. 4** prospect Jahmai Jones had a tough night at the plate, finishing 1-for-4 with a trio of strikeouts. Jones is now hitting .250 in the Fall League.

**Astros (Scottsdale)**

Ronnie Dawson went 0-for-4.

**Mariners (Peoria)**

Mariners **No. 9 prospect** Wyatt Mills (1 1/3 innings pitched, one walk, one strikeout) and David McKay (one inning, one walk, two strikeouts) both made scoreless appearances out of the bullpen. Catcher Joe DeCarlo scored a run and walked three times as part of an 0-for-2 showing.

**Rangers (Surprise)**

Sagueros starter Tai Tiedemann could not escape the first inning, as he allowed three earned runs on three hits and two walks while recording only two outs. Demarcus Evans, the Minors' strikeouts-per-nine-innings leader (16.6) among relievers in '18, fanned three batters but allowed two earned runs on two hits and two walks in his lone relief inning. **Rangers No. 15** prospect **C.D. Pelham** scuffled as well, giving up one earned run on one hit and three walks. Third baseman Charles Leblanc went 0-for-4 with a strikeout.

**NL East****Braves (Peoria)**

Braves **No. 6 prospect** Cristian Pache (No. 68 overall) went 2-for-5 with two singles and two RBIs, while outfielder Izzy Wilson tallied his first Fall League double to finish 2-for-4 with a run and a stolen base. Javelinas shortstop Ray-Patrick Didder went 0-for-3 out of the leadoff spot, but he drew three walks and stole two bases.

**Marlins (Salt River)**

**Marlins No. 16** prospect Jordan Yamamoto put together a strong performance for the second time in as many Fall League starts. The right-hander gave up one run on two hits and struck out six over three innings. Tommy Eveld, Chad Smith and Kyle Keller also took the mound and each threw a scoreless

inning. Keller struck out the side. Offensively, Monte Harrison (No. 1) drove in a pair of runs with RBI singles, finishing 2-for-3 and Brian Miller went 1-for-4.

#### **Mets (Scottsdale)**

**Mets No. 2** prospect Peter Alonso went 0-for-3, but did drive in the winning run when he drew a bases-loaded walk in the bottom of the 11th. Andres Gimenez (No. 1) entered the game as a pinch-runner and scored the winning run on Alonso's walk. Gerson Bautista gave up one run on one hit in 1/3 of an inning.

#### **Nationals (Mesa)**

**Nationals No. 2** prospect Carter Kieboom went 0-for-3, but also scored a run. Meanwhile, Daniel Johnson (No. 7) and Jake Noll both went 0-for-4.

#### **Phillies (Scottsdale)**

Austin Listi drew a walk in his only plate appearance, while Darik Hall went 1-for-3 and Arquimedes Gamboa (**Phillies No. 11**) went 1-for-4. Luke Leftwich gave up one hit, but also struck out the side in his inning of work.

#### **NL Central**

##### **Brewers (Peoria)**

**Brewers No. 1 prospect** Keston Hiura (No. 30 overall) recorded his Fall League-leading 16th RBI -- a total he's amassed in only six games -- as he went 1-for-5. First baseman Weston Wilson went 0-for-4 with three strikeouts and committed an error, his third in two games this fall.

##### **Cardinals (Surprise)**

**Cardinals No. 30 prospect** Connor Jones allowed one earned run on three hits in 2 1/3 innings of relief, striking out four. Shortstop Tommy Edman and catcher Jeremy Martinez each went 1-for-4 in a game that the Saguaros mustered only five hits. Second baseman Andy Young's double was the club's only extra-base hit, and he also walked twice and scored a run. Lane Thomas went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts.

##### **Cubs (Mesa)**

**Cubs No. 6** prospect Nico Hoerner went 1-for-4, while Manuel Rondon threw two scoreless innings. He didn't yield a hit, but walked two and struck out two.

##### **Pirates (Surprise)**

**Pirates No. 8** prospect **Bryan Reynolds** went 0-for-1 with two walks and a first-inning sacrifice fly that put Surprise on the board. Will Craig singled and struck out twice in a 1-for-4 performance. 6-foot-6 righty Geoff Hartlieb was sharp out of the Saguaros' bullpen as he racked up four strikeouts across two scoreless innings.

##### **Reds (Scottsdale)**

**Reds' No. 3** prospect Taylor Trammell drove in Scottsdale's first run, but that was the extent of his night as he went 1-for-4 with an RBI. Alfredo Rodriguez (No. 23) went 0-for-4. A trio of Reds pitching prospects also got in the game as Ty Boyles, Alex Powers and Wyatt Strahan finished the game with a combined 3 2/3 scoreless innings.

## NL West

### D-backs (Salt River)

**D-backs' No. 5** prospect Daulton Varsho reached base in all four of his trips to the plate. Varsho went 2-for-2 with two RBIs and also drew a pair of walks. Jazz Chisholm (No. 3) went 1-for-5, but made some nice plays in the field and Dominic Miroglio went 0-for-4.

### Dodgers (Glendale)

Andre Scrubb gave up one run on two hits in an inning. Cody Thomas went 0-for-3 and drew a walk.

### Giants (Scottsdale)

**Giants No. 10** prospect Heath Quinn, C.J. Hinojosa (No. 28) and Matt Winn struggled at the plate and combined for a 1-for-12 night. Melvin Adon (No. 19) and Garrett Williams (No. 20) fared much better on the mound. Williams, who started for the Scorpions, gave up three hits over four scoreless innings while Adon followed him and struck out four in two perfect frames.

### Padres (Peoria)

**Padres No. 23 prospect** Hudson Potts connected on his first Fall League homer, a three-run shot with two outs in the first inning that put the Javelinas ahead for good. He went 2-for-5 and also stole a base. Toolsy outfielder Buddy Reed (No. 13) paced the offense with his 3-for-5 showing from the bottom of the lineup. He scored a team-high two runs and stole two bases. Peoria starter **Miguel Diaz** allowed one earned run on two hits over four innings to earn the win, and fireballer Dauris Valdez closed it out with a scoreless ninth.

### Rockies (Salt River)

Tyler Nevin, the **Rockies No. 11 prospect**, upped his AFL RBI total to seven as he finished 2-for-4 with two RBIs. On the mound, Jesus Tinoco (No. 20) and Mitch Horacek combined for three scoreless innings.

## Key 2018-19 free agents for all 30 MLB teams

By Thomas Harrigan, Do-Hyoung Park and Chad Thornburg

An impressive collection of talent will hit the open market when free agency gets underway this offseason, and players are eligible to sign with a new team five days after the conclusion of the World Series. Here is a division-by-division breakdown of the key free agents for all 30 Major League clubs.

### NATIONAL LEAGUE EAST

#### Atlanta Braves

**Key free agents:** RHP **Brad Brach**, 1B **Lucas Duda**, 3B **Ryan Flaherty**, OF **Nick Markakis**, C **Rene Rivera**, RHP **Anibal Sanchez**, C **Kurt Suzuki**, LHP **Jonny Venters**

Markakis was a valuable member of a youthful Braves club in 2018, providing veteran leadership and making the All-Star team for the first time in his career. Atlanta has a stellar farm system that is loaded with pitching prospects, which is one of the reasons why Sanchez is unlikely to be back after his

impressive rebound campaign. But without an obvious replacement for Markakis in right field, the door remains open for the soon-to-be 35-year-old to return. Suzuki has formed a productive catching tandem with **Tyler Flowers** over the past two seasons, but the 35-year-old may be too expensive to bring back for a part-time role.

### **Miami Marlins**

**Key free agents:** None

The Marlins' roster is replete with players who are at the early stages of their big league careers, putting them years away from free agency. After trading multiple big-name players last offseason, Miami will likely now look to deal veterans **Starlin Castro** and **Martin Prado**, as they are owed nearly \$27 million combined in 2019.

### **New York Mets**

**Key free agents:** LHP **Jerry Blevins**, OF **Austin Jackson**, C **Devin Mesoraco**, RHP **AJ Ramos**, INF **Jose Reyes**

There's a chance the Mets won't bring back any of these players after they combined for -1.7 Wins Above Replacement in 2018, per FanGraphs. With **Travis d'Arnaud**, **T.J. Rivera** and **Juan Lagares** returning from injuries, the Mets have obvious replacements for Mesoraco, Reyes and Jackson next year. Blevins is more likely to be back than Ramos, whose recovery from right shoulder surgery is expected to extend into next June and possibly longer.

### **Philadelphia Phillies**

**Key free agents:** 3B/OF **Jose Bautista**, INF **Asdrubal Cabrera**, LHP **Aaron Loup**, C **Wilson Ramos**

All four players on Philadelphia's list were acquired late in the 2018 campaign as the Phillies made a playoff push that ultimately fell short. Instead of bringing back Ramos, who is sure to fetch a sizable multi-year deal, the Phils may give 25-year-old **Jorge Alfaro** another chance to show he can handle starting duties behind the plate. Cabrera could be a fallback option if the Phillies are unable to land **Manny Machado** in free agency.

### **Washington Nationals**

**Key free agents:** OF **Bryce Harper**, RHP **Jeremy Hellickson**, RHP **Kelvin Herrera**, RHP **Greg Holland**, 1B **Mark Reynolds**, C **Matt Wieters**

Harper will be one of the top free agents available this offseason, and the Nats will likely make a major push to keep him in Washington. The club might also be interested in bringing back Holland and Hellickson, but the two righties are sure to draw interest from other clubs after boosting their value with the Nats. Washington is expected to try to upgrade at the catcher spot, which could leave Wieters looking for a new home.

## **NL CENTRAL**

### **Chicago Cubs**

**Key free agents:** RHP **Jesse Chavez**, LHP **Jorge De La Rosa**, LHP **Jaime Garcia** (club option), LHP **Cole**

**Hamels** (club option), OF **Jason Heyward** (can opt out of his contract), RHP **Brandon Kintzler** (club and player options), 2B **Daniel Murphy**, RHP **Pedro Strop** (club option), LHP **Justin Wilson**

The Cubs have many decisions to make this offseason, most notably regarding the \$20 million club option for Hamels, who was acquired from the Rangers at the non-waiver Trade Deadline and recorded a terrific 2.36 ERA over 12 starts. They also have a bevy of bullpen arms that are set to depart or have club options. The Cubs could try to retain Chavez and Strop, and Murphy could also be back (particularly given **Addison Russell's** suspension), as president of baseball operations Theo Epstein spoke highly of the second baseman's contributions after his acquisition from the Nationals.

### **Cincinnati Reds**

**Key free agents:** RHP **Matt Harvey**

Cincinnati elected to keep Harvey at the non-waiver Trade Deadline instead of flipping him to a contender, and now face a decision about the right-hander, given that he has expressed openness to returning and the Reds will be seeking starting pitching depth this offseason. Outside of Harvey, the Reds don't have any key departures or options to worry about this winter, though **Scouter Gennett** and **Billy Hamilton** are due for free agency following the 2019 season.

### **Milwaukee Brewers**

**Key free agents:** LHP **Gio Gonzalez**, OF **Curtis Granderson**, RHP **Jeremy Jeffress** (club option), LHP **Dan Jennings**, C **Erik Kratz**, RHP **Jordan Lyles** (club option), LHP **Wade Miley**, 3B **Mike Moustakas** (mutual option), IF **Eric Sogard**, RHP **Joakim Soria** (club option)

The Brewers have most of their pitching depth locked up beyond this season, with Gonzalez, an in-season acquisition, and Miley, who was initially signed to a Minor League contract before the season, the only two starters set for free agency this offseason. Soria, a key piece of the Brewers' bullpen in their playoff run, has a \$10 million team option for 2019, while closing option Jeffress has a much cheaper \$3.175 million team option. The 38-year-old Kratz and 37-year-old Granderson are also bound for free agency. Given their security all over the roster, the Brewers are set to contend again in 2019 even if they don't make a big offseason splash.

### **Pittsburgh Pirates**

**Key free agents:** IF/OF **Josh Harrison** (club option), IF **Jung Ho Kang** (club option), SS **Jordy Mercer**

After making a splash by trading for **Chris Archer** in 2018, the Pirates appear to be mostly set with their pitching staff but will be looking for a bat in the offseason, likely at shortstop, especially if they don't end up bringing Kang back after his late-season cameo. Even if they don't make a Manny Machado-sized splash at shortstop, the market is deep this offseason, with **Jose Iglesias**, **Freddy Galvis** and **Adeiny Hechavarria** among the names that will be in play. It seems unlikely that the Pirates will pick up Harrison's \$10.5 million option.

### **St. Louis Cardinals**

**Key free agents:** 1B **Matt Adams**, RHP **Bud Norris**, C **Francisco Pena**, RHP **Tyson Ross**

**Adam Wainwright** already avoided free agency by agreeing to a one-year deal to return for his 15th season with the Cardinals. Improving the bullpen to build around **Jordan Hicks** will be a priority for the

Cardinals, especially with the departure of Norris, who provided stability at closer for much of the season. Though Adams likely won't be on the Cardinals' radar again, St. Louis is thought to be looking for an impact left-handed hitter, with needs at outfield and third base.

## NL WEST

### Arizona Diamondbacks

**Key free agents:** RHP **Clay Buchholz**, LHP **Patrick Corbin**, RHP **Randall Delgado**, 2B **Daniel Descalso**, LHP **Jake Diekman**, 3B **Eduardo Escobar**, 1B **Paul Goldschmidt** (club option), OF **Jon Jay**, C **Jeff Mathis**, OF **A.J. Pollock**, C **Chris Stewart**, OF **Yasmany Tomas** (player option)

The D-backs could lose two key contributors this winter, with Corbin and Pollock likely to exceed Arizona's price range, but Buchholz, Descalso and Mathis are strong candidates to return. Neither Goldschmidt nor Tomas is expected to hit the open market. The D-backs are sure to pick up Goldschmidt's \$14.5 million club option for 2019, and Tomas will undoubtedly exercise his player options for '19-20, valued at \$15.5 million next year and \$17 million in '20, after spending all of '18 in the Minors.

### Colorado Rockies

**Key free agents:** C **Drew Butera**, OF **Carlos Gonzalez**, OF **Matt Holliday**, 2B **DJ LeMahieu**, RHP **Seunghwan Oh** (club option), RHP **Adam Ottavino**, OF **Gerardo Parra**

The Rockies will have to decide whether they want to compete for LeMahieu this winter or if they're ready to turn the reins at second base over to one of their middle-infield prospects, **Garrett Hampson** and Brendan Rodgers. They also face decisions in the outfield, where Gonzalez, Parra and Holliday are impending free agents, and in the bullpen with Ottavino and Oh, who has a \$2.5 million option for 2019 with a \$250,000 buyout.

### Los Angeles Dodgers

**Key free agents:** RHP **John Axford**, 2B **Brian Dozier**, C **Yasmani Grandal**, RHP **Daniel Hudson**, LHP **Clayton Kershaw** (opt out), SS **Manny Machado**, RHP **Ryan Madson**, LHP **Hyun-Jin Ryu**

Machado is among the headliners in this year's star-studded free agent class, and longtime Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw could add his name to the mix if he opts out of his contract. The Dodgers will try to retain Machado, whom they acquired from the Orioles at the non-waiver Trade Deadline, but they'll have stiff competition as he's likely to cash in for a big payday. The oft-injured Ryu posted a 1.97 ERA through 15 regular season starts in 2018 and pitched well in the playoffs to improve his stock heading into free agency.

### San Diego Padres

**Key free agents:** C **A.J. Ellis**, SS **Freddy Galvis**

The Padres' 2018 roster will remain mostly intact with only Galvis and Ellis entering free agency, and both are candidates to return. Ellis is less likely to be re-signed, however, with young catchers **Austin Hedges** and **Francisco Mejia** in the mix. San Diego may also let Galvis walk if he wants a multi-year deal, with Fernando Tatis Jr. (**San Diego's No. 1 prospect**, per MLB Pipeline) nearing big league readiness

and **Luis Urias** (San Diego's No. 4 prospect) likely to take over as the club's starting second baseman in 2019.

### **San Francisco Giants**

**Key free agents:** OF **Gregor Blanco**, RHP **Madison Bumgarner** (club option), LHP **Derek Holland**, C **Nick Hundley**, RHP **Mark Melancon** (can opt out of his contract), OF **Hunter Pence**, 3B **Pablo Sandoval**

The Giants are expected to pick up Bumgarner's \$12 million option, and Melancon is almost certainly staying put for the final two years of his four-year, \$62 million deal, but the club will likely part ways with veterans Pence and Blanco. The Giants may try bring back Holland, who enjoyed a bounceback campaign and anchored an injury-riddled Giants rotation in 2018, and Hundley, who capably backed up **Buster Posey**.

### **AMERICAN LEAGUE EAST**

#### **Baltimore Orioles**

**Key free agents:** OF **Adam Jones**

The O's list has just one man on it, as they traded nearly every player on an expiring contract, including Manny Machado, **Zach Britton** and Brad Brach, during their 2018 roster purge. Baltimore would have dealt Jones as well, but he was unwilling to waive his 10-and-5 rights. Jones may be interested in returning, but he would likely need to accept a significantly reduced role as the Orioles look to the future.

#### **Boston Red Sox**

**Key free agents:** RHP **Nathan Eovaldi**, RHP **Joe Kelly**, RHP **Craig Kimbrel**, 2B **Ian Kinsler**, IF **Eduardo Nunez** (player option), 1B/OF **Steve Pearce**, 2B **Brandon Phillips**, LHP **Drew Pomeranz**, LHP **David Price** (can opt out of his contract), LHP **Chris Sale** (club option)

Even if the Red Sox pick up Chris Sale's \$15 million club option for 2019, which they likely will, and David Price doesn't opt out of the four years and \$127 million remaining on his contract, they still have a number of important players hitting free agency. Kimbrel is the biggest name among them, though it's unclear if Boston will be willing to hand out a big contract for a player who regressed some from '17 to '18 and was shaky in the playoffs. The Red Sox will probably look to re-sign Eovaldi, who excelled after joining the club in a July trade (3.33 ERA, 2.88 FIP).

#### **New York Yankees**

**Key free agents:** LHP Zach Britton, OF **Brett Gardner** (club option), LHP **J.A. Happ**, SS **Adeiny Hechavarria**, RHP **Lance Lynn**, OF **Andrew McCutchen**, RHP **David Robertson**, LHP **CC Sabathia**, 2B/OF **Neil Walker**

The Yankees have a busy offseason ahead of them, especially on the pitching side of the ledger. Even if prospect **Justus Sheffield** is ready to claim a rotation spot behind **Luis Severino** and **Masahiro Tanaka**, that still leaves two open starting jobs. Meanwhile, the Yankees' vaunted bullpen could lose two key pieces in Robertson and Britton. Gardner was New York's longest-tenured player in 2018, but the club may pass on his \$12.5 million club option (\$2 million buyout) after the veteran outfielder posted a .690 OPS this past season.

**Tampa Bay Rays****Key free agents:** OF **Carlos Gomez**, RHP **Sergio Romo**

Romo was an integral member of the Rays' pitching staff for much of the 2018 season, racking up 25 saves and making five appearances as an "opener." However, he recorded a 10.00 ERA in September and will be 36 years old on Opening Day in '19. The cost-conscious Rays may opt to move on and give an opportunity to a younger alternative. As for Gomez, the veteran outfielder is unlikely to be back after posting a .634 OPS over 118 games in 2018.

**Toronto Blue Jays****Key free agents:** RHP **Tyler Clippard**, RHP **Marco Estrada**, 1B **Justin Smoak** (club option), INF **Yangervis Solarte** (club option)

Much like Baltimore, Toronto dealt many impending free agents during the 2018 season, including **Josh Donaldson**, J.A. Happ, Steve Pearce, **Curtis Granderson** and John Axford. With **Rowdy Tellez** looking ready for an expanded role at first base, the Jays could pick up Smoak's reasonable \$8 million club option and then trade the veteran this offseason. Estrada is likely gone after recording a 5.27 ERA with a 4.97 FIP in 61 starts over the past two years, as the Blue Jays can likely get similar production from a younger and cheaper pitcher.

**AL CENTRAL****Chicago White Sox****Key free agents:** RHP **Jeanmar Gomez**, RHP **Miguel Gonzalez**, RHP **Nate Jones** (club option), LHP **Hector Santiago**, RHP **James Shields** (club option)

The White Sox are close to emerging from their rebuild, and the club could look for more pitching help this offseason, since **Michael Kopech** is now sidelined for 2019 after undergoing Tommy John surgery. They have a \$4.65 million option for Jones that they could exercise, but it seems unlikely that they'd exercise Shields' \$16 million club option.

**Cleveland Indians****Key free agents:** RHP **Cody Allen**, OF **Michael Brantley**, OF **Melky Cabrera**, RHP **Carlos Carrasco** (club option), OF **Lonnie Chisenhall**, OF **Rajai Davis**, 3B **Josh Donaldson**, OF **Brandon Guyer** (club option), LHP **Andrew Miller**, LHP **Oliver Perez**, IF **Adam Rosales**, RHP **Josh Tomlin**

Miller headlines a productive crop of prospective free agents departing Cleveland this season, with outfield and the bullpen being the two areas that stand to be hit hardest by the departures. Allen, Brantley and Miller are eligible for the \$17.9 million qualifying offer. The Indians do have some security in the bullpen with midseason acquisitions **Brad Hand** and **Adam Cimber** both controllable for several more seasons, but bolstering the relief corps will be an offseason priority for the Tribe, who got subpar seasons from both Allen and Miller in 2018. Outfield is also an area of need, especially if Brantley departs, with no clear-cut starter at any of the three spots entering the offseason.

**Detroit Tigers****Key free agents:** SS **Jose Iglesias**, LHP **Francisco Liriano**, C **Jarrod Saltalamacchia**



Iglesias, Liriano and the retiring **Victor Martinez** are the key departures for the rebuilding Tigers, who also dealt impending free agent **Mike Fiers** to the A's in August. The Tigers will likely be in the market for a shortstop, as they don't have an immediate heir lined up in the event of Iglesias' departure, and will likely look to add to the rotation.

### **Kansas City Royals**

**Key free agents:** SS **Alcides Escobar**, RHP **Jason Hammel** (mutual option), RHP **Wily Peralta** (club option)

After trading Jon Jay, Lucas Duda, Kelvin Herrera and Mike Moustakas this season, the Royals figure to let Escobar walk, as **Adalberto Mondesi** is now their starting shortstop. The Royals will almost certainly pay a \$2 million buyout to get Hammel off the books instead of exercising his \$12 million mutual option for 2019, but they could bring back Peralta, their closer, on a cheaper \$3 million team option, especially since they'll likely be looking for bullpen help this offseason.

### **Minnesota Twins**

**Key free agents:** RHP **Matt Belisle**, 2B **Logan Forsythe**, C **Chris Gimenez**, 1B/DH **Joe Mauer**, 1B/DH **Logan Morrison** (club option), RHP **Ervin Santana** (club option)

The most pressing offseason question for the Twins will be at first base with the possible departure of Mauer to either free agency or retirement and Morrison's disappointing performance in 2018, after which the Twins are not expected to pick up his \$8 million option for 2019. The departures of Forsythe, Brian Dozier (traded to Dodgers) and Eduardo Escobar (traded to D-backs) also leave openings in the middle infield for the Twins. The Twins need lots of help in the bullpen and could always use more starting depth, with Santana's option unlikely to be picked up.

### **AL WEST**

#### **Los Angeles Angels**

**Key free agents:** RHP **Jim Johnson**, RHP **Garrett Richards**, RHP **Junichi Tazawa**, OF **Chris Young**, OF **Eric Young Jr.**, RHP **Blake Wood**

The Angels will retain much of their core. Johnson will likely draw interest on the open market for clubs in need of dependable bullpen arms. Richards pitched well in 16 starts this season, but will be out of action until 2020 after undergoing Tommy John surgery. Young also suffered a season-ending injury (labral tears in both hips) but is expected to be ready for Spring Training.

#### **Houston Astros**

**Key free agents:** DH **Evan Gattis**, UTIL **Marwin Gonzalez**, LHP **Dallas Keuchel**, C **Martin Maldonado**, RHP **Charlie Morton**, LHP **Tony Sipp**

Keuchel figures to be one of the most sought-after starting pitchers on the market this winter. The 2015 AL Cy Young Award winner has spent his entire career with the Astros, but could anchor another team's staff in 2019. Morton also figures to draw considerable interest coming off his first All-Star season at age 34. Maldonado will be part of a deep class of veteran backstops.

#### **Oakland A's**

**Key free agents:** LHP **Brett Anderson**, RHP **Trevor Cahill**, RHP **Jeury Familia**, RHP **Edwin Jackson**, OF **Matt Joyce**, 2B **Jed Lowrie**, C **Jonathan Lucroy**

The A's looming free agents are headlined by a pair of veterans in Lucroy and Lowrie. Lucroy is more likely to return with **Franklin Barreto** ready to take over as Oakland's everyday second baseman. Joyce is likely the odd man out in a crowded A's outfield. It's unclear if the A's will try to retain any of their veteran starting pitchers.

### **Seattle Mariners**

**Key free agents:** 2B **Gordon Beckham**, DH **Nelson Cruz**, LHP **Zach Duke**, RHP **Hisashi Iwakuma**, OF **Cameron Maybin**, RHP **David Phelps**, UTIL **Andrew Romine**, OF **Denard Span** (mutual option), RHP **Adam Warren**

Cruz represents the biggest free agent choice for the Mariners this winter. Both sides have expressed interest in a reunion, but Seattle must decide whether it wants to commit to a multi-year deal with the 38-year-old slugger or utilize that money elsewhere, with needs on the pitching staff and in center field. Span has a \$12 million mutual option with a \$4 million buyout. Iwakuma left the Mariners in September to pursue pitching opportunities in Japan.

### **Texas Rangers**

**Key free agents:** SS **Elvis Andrus** (can opt out of his contract), 3B **Adrian Beltre**, C **Robinson Chirinos** (club option), RHP **Bartolo Colon**, RHP **Doug Fister** (club option), RHP **Yovani Gallardo**, LHP **Matt Moore** (club option), LHP **Martin Perez** (club option)

The Rangers are awaiting Beltre's decision on his baseball future, and if the third baseman opts to continue playing, they could re-sign him. Andrus could opt out of his contract, leaving four years and \$58 million on the table, but is more likely to stay put. The Rangers will likely pick up Chirinos' option, and decline their options on Moore and Fister. Perez's option is for \$7.5 million and it remains to be seen what Texas will do with the left-hander coming off a down year. Colon and Gallardo aren't expected to return.

## **FROM THE ATHLETIC**

### **Who are the best free agent fits for the Angels?**

By Brent Maguire

Playoff baseball is in full swing, but many teams are preparing for an upcoming offseason that features an all-time great free agency class. Stars such as Bryce Harper and Manny Machado lead a group of free agents that is packed with talented players across numerous positions. With so many options, the activity will be frantic for many clubs.

One of them will almost certainly be the Los Angeles Angels.

The Angels finished with an 80-82 record for the second consecutive year and finished under .500 for the third straight season. Not only do they have to replace Mike Scioscia, who will no longer manage the Angels after 19 years, but they also have several glaring holes that need to be filled.

Free agency begins in about a month, which means discussion about potential landing spots will emerge very soon. *The Athletic's* Fabian Ardaya kicked off the Angels' offseason with a primer examining what's ahead for the team and what the club needs to do to fix its issues. Now, it's time to look at specific players who make sense from both a value and financial perspective.

Before we do that, it's important to observe the current payroll situation for the Angels. As of now, the projected payroll for 2019 sits at \$164.7 million, which includes projected arbitration raises for many players. The luxury tax for 2019 will roughly be around \$200 million, which means the Angels would have nearly \$35 million to spend. However, with Mike Trout and Andrelton Simmons slated to hit free agency after 2020, that number probably sits closer to the \$20 million to \$25 million range.

That gives the Angels enough money to find a handful of decent players, a few solid contributors or one big free agent. Right now, teams are roughly paying \$9-10 million for one Win Above Replacement (WAR) on the free agent market. WAR isn't a perfect statistic, but it's a decent barometer to gauge a player's worth. This means the Angels can roughly add two or three wins this winter.

With all of this in mind, let's examine some of the Angels' weaknesses and the available players who make sense for the club.

### **Starting Pitching**

The Angels starters were slightly below average (19th in WAR and ERA) and that was with Shohei Ohtani on the mound for 51 2/3 productive innings (1.0 WAR and 3.31 ERA). Ohtani underwent Tommy John surgery at the end of the season and will strictly be a hitter in 2019, removing the one frontline starter from the equation.

Andrew Heaney, Tyler Skaggs and Jaime Barria all had very productive seasons in 2018 but they project more as mid-rotation or back-end type starters and there isn't a ton of depth behind those three. Matt Shoemaker, Nick Tropeano, Alex Meyer, Parker Bridwell and J.C. Ramirez are all either hurt or have had limited success recently. Felix Pena filled in admirably but likely isn't more than a depth starter. Top prospects Griffin Canning and Jose Suarez will both likely contribute in 2019 but depending on prospects in their first year is always risky.

This will likely lead to the Angels looking to the free agent market. The starting pitching class doesn't have the same firepower (unless Clayton Kershaw opts out of his deal) but still features big names such as Patrick Corbin, Dallas Keuchel and Charlie Morton, who all had extremely productive 2018 seasons.

Corbin churned in a monster age-28 season (6.3 WAR and 3.15 ERA in 200 innings) and is the prize of the starting pitching crop. He saw his velocity drop 1.6 mph but altered his pitch mix and struck out way more batters while walking less. The former Angels farmhand (sent to Arizona in the Dan Haren trade) would be a gigantic addition to the rotation but he'll cost a pretty penny, likely approaching the \$100 million mark.

Keuchel will be 31 next year and has had a heavy workload recently, especially with the Astros deep playoff runs, but was very good in 204 2/3 innings (3.6 WAR and 3.74 ERA). His emphasis on ground-balls and control could fit in nicely with an extremely good Angels infield defense. His track record is strong and will likely get him a large multi-year deal approaching \$75-100 million.

Morton had a career resurgence when he signed with Houston and has been crazy productive in the past two years, ranking 21st in WAR (6.3) and ERA (3.36) among starting pitchers. Morton's value is hard to predict moving forward because he'll be 35 next year but he's increased his average fastball velocity in five straight years, peaking at 95.7 mph this year. Value-wise, he should receive a pretty big multi-year deal but his age could prevent that from occurring.

There are tons of other options available for the Angels if they'd rather target back-end arms or pitchers with hidden value. J.A. Happ, C.C. Sabathia, Lance Lynn, Trevor Cahill and Marco Estrada are veteran arms who could provide decent value over a year or two. Hyun-Jin Ryu and Drew Pomeranz are interesting injury-prone arms with lots of risk but also mid-rotation upside they have flashed in the recent past.

After a third straight season of major injury issues within the rotation, it's almost a given the Angels will target one of these starting pitchers. The need for talent at other positions could lead to the Angels acquiring one of the lower-tier arms but it's possible the team targets a big arm depending on how the offseason goes.

### **Relief Pitching**

The Angels bullpen was thoroughly mediocre in 2018 (20th in WAR and 13th in ERA) a year after finishing as a top-10 unit in baseball. The bullpen is littered with average-ish relievers and a few standouts, such as rookie Ty Buttrey, who was electric in his 16 games and Jose Alvarez, who has quietly been very productive the past four seasons. Blake Parker, Justin Anderson and Cam Bedrosian are the three other cost-controlled relievers who likely have a spot next year.

Other in-house options include Taylor Cole (0.4 WAR and 2.75 ERA in 36 innings), Hansel Robles (-0.2 WAR and 3.75 ERA in 56 innings) and Noe Ramirez (0 WAR and 4.37 ERA in 82 1/3 innings). Angels GM Billy Eppler has shown in the past that he'd much rather pursue value options for his bullpen than spending big bucks on volatile arms. However, this free agent class is deep with potential impact arms that could boost the Angels bullpen.

Craig Kimbrel, Adam Ottavino, Andrew Miller, Cody Allen, David Robertson, Zach Britton and Kelvin Herrera will all be available in what looks to be a potentially historic relief pitcher class. Kimbrel and Ottavino had monster seasons in 2018 and will likely receive big deals, especially Kimbrel, who is on pace to be one of the best relief pitchers in baseball history. Miller's and Allen's poor seasons played a part in the Indians underperforming but they're not too far removed from pitching at elite levels. Robertson is still going strong, Britton is still generating an insane amount of ground balls (73 percent) and Herrera is a viable late-innings option.

Many of those pitchers will receive multi-year deals and given Eppler's track record of not paying for relievers, he'll likely look to the lower tier of relievers. Brad Brach, Joe Kelly, Tyler Clippard, Greg Holland, Justin Wilson and Jake Diekmann are just a handful of many interesting relievers who Eppler could target.

This is the one area where we'll see the least amount of activity as Eppler has tried to piece together bullpens in each of his three years as general manager. It's possible the club signs one of the big arms if

prices drop enough but it's more likely that Eppler signs a lower-tier arm or doesn't sign any of them at all.

### **Catcher**

The Angels got a surprisingly good amount of production from their catchers in 2018. They ranked 15th in WAR (1.7) thanks to a group of six catchers who were just good enough to keep the group afloat. Martin Maldonado and Rene Rivera combined for 1 WAR before they departed in trades, leaving Jose Briceno and Francisco Arcia handling at bats in the second half. Both catchers were decent enough to create a useful platoon behind the plate.

Briceno looks like a capable MLB catcher but Arcia's .226 OBP prevents him from being much more than Triple-A insurance moving forward. The Angels will have to acquire another catcher, whether that's via trade or free agency, where there are a few intriguing options.

Yasmani Grandal is the big name at the catcher position thanks to a phenomenal four-year stretch. Since 2015, Grandal is the third most valuable catcher (11.2 WAR) due to his above-average offense (116 wRC+) and elite pitch framing. A switch hitter, Grandal hits both lefties (106 career wRC+) and righties (120 wRC+), is very durable (115 games each of the last five seasons) and will only be 30 years old next season.

Grandal is a certified beast who will probably receive one of the biggest free agent contracts ever for a catcher, making him an unlikely choice for the Angels. Wilson Ramos also hits free agency and has been very productive since his breakout 2016 season (6.6 WAR and 103 wRC+ since then). He'll be 31 next year, has a torn ACL under his belt and isn't a great defensive catcher but his offense would be a big add to the position.

Grandal and Ramos may price themselves out of the Angels range, leading to other options such as Kurt Suzuki, Maldonado and Jonathan Lucroy. None of those three have the impact that Grandal and Ramos have but they would nonetheless provide some value and depth to a position that needs it. Eppler has shown a clear emphasis for defense behind the plate so a reunion with Maldonado would make sense but Suzuki and Lucroy make some sense.

### **First Base**

This may be the trickiest position to address for the Angels due to the injuries, poor production and money owed – \$28 million in 2019 – to Albert Pujols. He's coming off another poor season (-0.2 WAR and 90 wRC+) that was capped by surgery on both his knee and elbow. Entering his age-39 season, it's clear that the Angels need to address first base while it's unclear they will actually do so.

Shohei Ohtani's surgery means he may not be ready for designated hitter duties right away in 2019, meaning the club really needs an option for first base and designated hitter. This is a relatively weak free agent class at first base, with names such as Steve Pearce, Joe Mauer, Matt Adams and Lucas Duda. With prospect Matt Thaiss being close to MLB-ready, the Angels could sign one of these players to handle first base duties while the club sorts out its injuries and monitors Thaiss.

Pearce continues to alternate good years and bad years with a good year coming in 2018 (1.6 WAR and 140 wRC+). He'll be 36 next year so he'll likely sign a one-year-deal, which would favor the Angels. Mauer, Adams and Duda project as league-average bats, which is not ideal for first base, but the Angels may need that kind of production next year.

The Angels already have a tough offseason as is but the Albert Pujols dilemma and addressing this weak spot will be interesting. There aren't a whole lot of options available and Thaiss isn't an impact prospect, meaning a trade could be in the works for the club.

### **Second Base/Third Base**

Combining these two positions makes sense for an Angels club that has two players, David Fletcher and Zack Cozart, who will likely handle both second base and third base duties next season. While both players project as low-end everyday players, both come with risks that call for another infield option to be in the mix. Fletcher's limited power and on-base ability limit his ceiling and Cozart will be 33 years old coming off shoulder surgery. Prospect Luis Rengifo will likely be in the mix for an roster spot but at 21 years old, he may need another year.

Luckily for the Angels, there are loads of options at both positions. We can rule Manny Machado all but out because he'll receive a monster contract and will likely try to move back to shortstop. Still, there are plenty of other options for the Angels. At second base, Jed Lowrie, Brian Dozier, Ian Kinsler, D.J. LeMahieu, Asdrubal Cabrera and Daniel Murphy will all be available. Third base has less options but Eduardo Escobar, Josh Donaldson and Adrian Beltre are all interesting options.

Fletcher and Cozart both project as above-average defenders with subpar bats, meaning the club could afford to add a bat-first option at either position. With Andrelton Simmons manning shortstop, this makes even more sense to add a player with an emphasis on offense. This probably rules out players like Kinsler and LeMahieu.

Lowrie, Cabrera, Murphy and Escobar all fit the mold of offensive-first players who can handle multiple positions. Lowrie's big five-win season this year might make him a tad expensive for the Angels but the other three options seem to make some sense. Escobar had the most productive season of the three and is the youngest of the bunch at 30 years old, making him a candidate for a multi-year deal.

If the Angels are feeling bold, the club could make a move for Josh Donaldson, who played in just 52 games this season. This is a high-risk/high-reward move and might be deemed too dicey for Eppler but if Donaldson bounces back to his 2017 level (5.1 WAR and 151 wRC+), he'd be a huge addition.

This is a position the club could stay in-house with but given the risks of both Fletcher and Cozart, along with the large amount of free agents available, it seems wise to take a look at some of these players.

### **Realistic Outcome**

As established at the beginning, the Angels will have around \$20-25 million to spend on free agents if they want to have wiggle room for a Trout and Simmons extension. That means they will add roughly a few wins if they utilize this money in free agency. Unfortunately, the club can't fill every pitching hole and add a catcher, first baseman and another infielder.

Eppler tends to spend more money on position players rather than pitchers so this is a trend that could continue. Eppler can probably squeeze a veteran starter and mid-tier relief pitcher into the budget, which probably uses \$8-12 million of the available funds. That gives the Angels roughly \$12-16 million to fill holes at catcher, first base and second base or third base.

Obviously, things can change in a hurry if the right player is available for the right price but the Angels are more likely to spread their money around to acquire a handful of players. The club's vastly improved farm system also gives it trade chips to use this winter, a scenario that will likely be explored.

The Angels project roughly as a .500 team in 2019 so they aren't too far off from competing. With a decent amount of money to spend, along with some viable trade chips, the club could put itself in a playoff position with a smart offseason. Given the amount of options available in this free agent class, it's almost a given the Angels will be active in some role in an attempt to get back in the playoff mix in 2019.

### **FROM BLEACHER REPORT**

## **Building Each MLB Team's Free-Agency Wish List Ahead of 2018-19 Offseason\***

By Jacob Shafer

The American and National League Championship Series are in full swing. The baseball world's eyes are rightly focused on the here and now.

Soon enough, however, the offseason sweepstakes will commence and the MLB landscape will shift.

While we wait, here's a look at each club's free-agent wish list, based on roster needs and financial resources.

As any general manager will tell you, it's never too early to get a jump on the coming winter.

### **American League West**

#### **Houston Astros: A catcher, a top-level starting pitcher, a power bat**

The Houston Astros repeated as AL West champs and are trying to repeat as MLB champs.

One blemish during the regular season? The catching trio of Brian McCann (.212 average), Max Stassi (.226 average) and Martin Maldonado (.231 average), whose collective offense didn't befit a title contender.

Houston could go the trade route and try to acquire an impact backstop such as the Miami Marlins' J.T. Realmuto. Or, it could target a free agent such as Wilson Ramos, who hit .306 with an .845 OPS between the Rays and Philadelphia Phillies.

With the combined 41 home runs of Evan Gattis and Marwin Gonzalez hitting free agency, the Astros may also seek a power bat capable of playing designated hitter and/or the outfield.

And if the Astros don't re-sign left-hander Dallas Keuchel, they may also be on the hunt for a top-tier starting pitcher, although budget constraints could limit them to more middle-of-the-pack options.

#### **Los Angeles Angels: Starting pitching, a catcher, infield depth**

The Los Angeles Angels won't have two-way Japanese star Shohei Ohtani in the rotation in 2019 due to Tommy John surgery, and they'll be without Garrett Richards because of a combination of Tommy John surgery and free agency.

If they can make it work financially, the Halos should pursue an ace such as Corbin.

That may be tough, since they could also use an upgrade at catcher, where they're counting on the inexperienced duo of Francisco Arcia and Jose Briceno. They also need depth in the infield, where they're leaning on unproven youngsters David Fletcher and Taylor Ward.

Here's the bottom line: If the Angels want to entice Mike Trout to sign a lifetime contract, they'll need to be aggressively active this winter.

#### **Oakland Athletics: A catcher, starting pitching, bullpen depth**

After a surprise 97-win season that earned them a wild-card berth, the Oakland Athletics should be buyers this winter within their limited means.

They could bring back veteran catcher Jonathan Lucroy or shop for a replacement.

They could also use depth in the rotation and bullpen, with Brett Anderson, Trevor Cahill, Jeurys Familia and Edwin Jackson all ticketed for free agency.

To build on their latest small-market success story, Billy Beane and Co. need to get creative.

#### **Seattle Mariners: Starting pitching, a power bat**

The Seattle Mariners missed the playoffs for the 17th consecutive year, the longest active streak in baseball.

Not coincidentally, their starting rotation finished 21st in the game with a 4.35 ERA, the worst mark of any club with a winning record.

The M's need to go after an ace. They also need to either re-sign designated hitter Nelson Cruz, who clubbed 37 home runs with 97 RBI in his age-37 season, or ink a comparable bat to replace Cruz's production.

This is a make-or-break offseason for general manager Jerry Dipoto, who needs to get Seattle over the hump or pack his bags.



## Texas Rangers: Starting pitching, a third baseman

It's time for the Texas Rangers to shift into unequivocal rebuild mode.

With that said, they'll have holes to fill.

Most notably, the Rangers could use depth in the starting rotation. They're unlikely to pick up club options on Doug Fister (4.50 ERA) and Matt Moore (6.79 ERA), and Yovani Gallardo (5.77 ERA) and Bartolo Colon (5.78 ERA) probably won't return.

Texas will also await the retirement decision of third baseman Adrian Beltre. If the likely future Hall of Famer doesn't hang it up, he might return to Arlington for a victory lap and to mentor the team's young players.

*\*Article cut to only include AL West-related material.*

## FROM MLIVE

### Angels, Reds showing interest in ex-Tigers manager Brad Ausmus

By Brandon Champion

Brad Ausmus may get another shot to manage in Major League Baseball as soon as next year.

Ausmus, who spent 4 contentious years as Detroit Tigers manager, is reportedly being considered for the same position with the Cincinnati Reds. According to Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic, Ausmus is one of several candidates the team is considering.

Brad Ausmus, David Bell and Joe Girardi remain in mix for #Reds' managerial vacancy, sources tell me and @ctrent. Team might be prompted to act sooner than later due to competition for candidates.

Former Yankees skipper Joe Girardi and 12-year MLB veteran and current AAA manager David Bell are also on the Reds' shortlist, according to Rosenthal, who noted the team "might be prompted to act sooner than later due to competition for candidates."

Ausmus also interviewed for the Los Angeles Angels managerial opening, according to FOX's Jon Morosi. He currently serves as special assistant to the general manager for the team.

#Angels have formally interviewed Brad Ausmus and Eric Chávez in their managerial search, source confirms. Team is moving closer to a decision, although it is unclear who the frontrunner is. @MLB @MLBNetwork

Ausmus is well respected throughout the league in part due to his 18-year MLB catching career, but fans in Detroit certainly had mixed feelings toward the 49-year-old Ausmus, who went just 314-332 in his four seasons as Tigers manager.

Detroit made the playoffs in his first season as manager but were swept in the ALDS by the Baltimore Orioles.

In addition to the Red and Angels, the Toronto Blue Jays, Minnesota Twins and Baltimore Orioles also have managerial openings.