



Clips
(June 10, 2010)

From the Los Angeles Times

Angels pull out the stops in 7-1 victory over Oakland

Torii Hunter sees sign too late and goes on to score, sparking a four-run rally to break open a one-run game in the sixth inning. Joe Saunders needs only 101 pitches to throw complete game.

By Mike DiGiovanna

June 9, 2010 / 11:09 p.m.

Reporting from Oakland — The Angels were a work of minimalism Wednesday night, their hit total reaching nine but the scoreboard showing just one run in the sixth inning, when Torii Hunter took matters into his own hands.

And right out of third-base coach Ron Roenicke's hands.

Hunter, on second base with one out, sped into third on Juan Rivera's sharp single to center field, and Roenicke, who was filling in for Dino Ebel while the team's regular third-base coach attended his daughter's high school graduation, thrust both arms into the air.

Hunter blew right through Roenicke's stop sign and scored standing up when first baseman Daric Barton cut off Matt Carson's strong throw from the outfield.

The run sparked a four-run rally that blew open a one-run game and propelled the Angels toward a 7-1 victory over the Oakland Athletics, their 10th win in 12 games.

"I had my head down and saw it late, and I kept running through the stop sign," said Hunter, who had three hits and a run batted in. "I apologized to Ron. That's my buddy. I didn't want to show him up.

"But I was going full speed when I saw him, and I was like, I can't stop, or my legs would keep running and my upper body would be at third. I didn't want to blow out or anything."

After Hunter's daring dash, which gave the Angels a 2-0 lead, Kevin Frandsen reached on a fielder's choice, Robb Quinlan hit a run-scoring single, and Erick Aybar blasted a two-run triple to center, one of four hits for the Angels' leadoff batter, for a 5-0 lead.

That was more than enough support for left-hander Joe Saunders, who needed only 101 pitches to throw his second complete game of the season, allowing one run and seven hits to improve to 5-6 with a 4.35 earned-run average.

Saunders, who was 1-5 with a 7.04 ERA after six starts, is 4-1 with a 2.63 ERA in his last seven starts. He is 11-4 with a 3.50 ERA in 13 career starts against the A's.

Saunders ran into trouble in the first and seventh innings, when the A's put the first two runners on.

But he cut through the heart of the order in the first, getting Kurt Suzuki to pop to second, Kevin Kouzmanoff to fly to right and Adam Rosales to ground to short.

After Kouzmanoff singled and Rosales walked to open the seventh, pitching coach Mike Butcher came to the mound. Ryan Sweeney hit the first pitch, grounding into a 6-4-3 double play, and Jake Fox hit a first-pitch grounder to second to end the inning.

"Butch said you've got two more pitches to get out of this inning," Manager Mike Scioscia said. "And he did."

Saunders lost his shutout bid in the ninth, when Barton doubled and scored on Kouzmanoff's single.

The Angels tacked on an insurance run in the eighth when Rivera hit a solo homer to center, a shot that will probably send Carson onto baseball's blooper reel. The young center fielder is lucky the play didn't send him to a hospital.

Carson did not slow as he raced to the warning track, and he slammed full speed into the wall, an absolute face plant. It was almost as if he didn't know the wall was there.

"He's still alive, that's good," said Hunter, the center fielder who has won nine Gold Gloves. "I've been there before. Not on a home run ball; I don't think I've ever seen that. I felt bad for him, but he got back up."

Several Angels could be seen laughing in the dugout after the play, but after the game, several A's players, after watching the play again, came out of the video room laughing. Except for Carson, who had an ice pack on his face.

"I tell you what, he was accelerating," Scioscia said. "He was fortunate. He hit that wall hard."

ANGELS FYI

Another Francisco Rodriguez makes a name for himself

The 27-year-old relief pitcher, recalled from triple-A Salt Lake in late May, has not allowed an earned run in 7 1/3 innings of six appearances.

By Mike DiGiovanna

June 9, 2010 /9:46 p.m.

Reporting from Oakland -- With a name like Francisco Rodriguez and the job of Angels relief pitcher, you better be good. The namesake of the team's former closer, who calls himself "the Mexican Francisco Rodriguez," has not disappointed.

The Angels, who were having trouble finding relievers who could throw strikes and get outs, recalled Rodriguez from triple-A Salt Lake in late May. Entering Wednesday, the 27-year-old right-hander had not allowed an earned run in 7 1/3 innings of six appearances.

Equally impressive: Rodriguez, who walked 194 in 391 2/3 minor league innings from 2006 to 2009, has not walked a batter, while striking out nine and giving up only three hits.

"I was working on my fastball command in the minor leagues, and I'm doing better with that," Rodriguez said. "When I'm hitting my spots with the fastball, the cut fastball and curve work better."

Rodriguez, who was called up April 14, made his big league debut the next day and was sent back to Salt Lake on April 20, called it a "thrill" to be in the same bullpen as Scot Shields and Brian Fuentes. But he is no longer in that just-happy-to-be-here mode.

With a 94-mph fastball and a nice mix of secondary pitches, Rodriguez, who signed with the Angels after spending six years in the Mexican winter and summer leagues, has played his way into a more prominent role.

"He's really given our bullpen a shot in the arm," Manager Mike Scioscia said.

Rodriguez met the original Francisco Rodriguez, the former Angels closer who is now with the New York Mets, in spring training in 2006 but said he does not feel any pressure to fill his shoes.

"It's kind of funny being here with the same team and the same name and following those big footprints he left," Rodriguez said. "But I'm not trying to be like him. He's a great reliever. I really enjoy watching him pitch."

All in the family

Among the Angels' picks on the final day of the draft Wednesday were Central Arizona junior college pitcher Andrew Schugel, the son of Angels major league scout Jeff Schugel, and Chandler-Gilbert (Ariz.) JC third baseman Kenny Hatcher, nephew of Angels batting coach Mickey Hatcher.

The Angels chose 55 players in all and had five of the top 40 picks, including first-round selections Kaleb Cowart (18th overall), Cameron Bedrosian (29th) and Chevy Clarke (30th).

"Every team thinks they had a great draft when you walk out of the room, and we do too," Angels scouting director Eddie Bane said. "We'll know in a few years, but I'm happy with it."

Short hops

Infielder Maicer Izturis, who missed games Sunday and Monday night because of a sore knee but played Tuesday night, did not start Wednesday night, but he is scheduled to play Thursday. "We wanted to split up the night-day games," Scioscia said.

From the Orange County Register

Saunders launches Angels past A's

By DAN WOIKE

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

OAKLAND – The last time Joe Saunders faced Oakland and Dallas Braden, Braden was fresh off a perfect game and Saunders was struggling finding the strike zone.

That night in Anaheim, Saunders tossed a complete-game shutout, helping the Angels beat the A's 4-0.

Wednesday in Oakland, the two lefties faced off again, and for the second time this season, Saunders was the better pitcher, hurling the Angels (33-29) past the A's 7-1 at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum.

Saunders held the A' (31-30) to just one run for his second complete game of the season.

"Tonight, I felt like I honestly didn't have my best stuff," Saunders said. "A lot of the credit goes to the defense. They played unbelievably behind me."

Saunders needed just 101 pitches for the complete game, getting a number of quick outs and a crucial double play in the seventh.

"Joe's been really pitching well after a rough start," Mike Scioscia said. "He's had the ball in good zones and been able to take secondary pitches into his starters. He was pitch efficient. He got groundballs when he needed them and some double plays."

Offensively, Erick Aybar set the tone, singling in the third, doubling in the fifth and tripling in the sixth. Aybar's bid for the cycle ended in the ninth when he lined a single into left.

The Angels' offense exploded for four runs in the sixth, coming on RBI singles for Juan Rivera and Robb Quinlan and Aybar's two-run triple. Juan Rivera homered for the ninth time this year in the eighth, and Hideki Matsui drove home a run in the ninth.

Prior to the sixth, the Angels had nine runners on base but managed only one run.

"It was a big lift just getting one on board... But that was important," Scioscia said. "It was important to put some numbers up there so Joe could relax and make some pitches. We had some big hits in that inning, and Erick killed that ball."

The team finished the game with 16 hits – two behind the club's season high.

Saunders (5-6) earned a win for the fourth time in his last five decisions.

Oakland's only run came on Kevin Kouzmanoff's one-out RBI single in the ninth.

The four-game series concludes Thursday afternoon at 12:37 with Ervin Santana (6-3, 3.29) facing Oakland and Trevor Cahill (4-2, 2.31)

From espn.com

Saunders goes distance as Angels crush A's

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Torii Hunter ran right by as third-base coach Ron Roenicke signaled him to stop in the sixth inning. Hunter insists if he'd attempted to hold up, he would probably be hobbling and hurt right now.

Joe Saunders didn't care how the runs came, he was thrilled with every bit of support he received.

Saunders pitched a complete game, Erick Aybar had a two-run triple among his four hits and the Los Angeles Angels beat the Oakland Athletics 7-1 on Wednesday night. Hunter singled in the Angels' first run in the third and scored to start a four-run sixth when he ran past Roenicke's stop sign on Juan Rivera's base hit.

"I've been around, I don't want to do that," Hunter said, acknowledging he meant no disrespect. "Once I get going, I can't shut that off. I would blow something out. I just had to keep going."

Roenicke, typically the bench coach, was filling in for an absent Dino Ebel. A's left-hander Dallas Braden dropped to 0-4 with a 4.75 ERA in six starts since his perfect game against Tampa Bay on May 9.

Saunders (5-6) took a shutout bid into the ninth inning before giving up Kevin Kouzmanoff's RBI single. Saunders, who shut out the A's 4-0 on May 14 in Braden's first

start after that perfecto, was efficient all night this time in an impressive 101-pitch outing that took 2 hours, 26 minutes.

"Again we run into Big Joe," Braden said.

Rivera homered in the eighth as the first-place Angels rebounded from a 10-1 loss a night earlier for their seventh win in eight games -- and seventh in eight contests at Oakland.

Saunders allowed seven hits, struck out two and walked one in his fourth career complete game. He faced the minimum in the second, fourth, fifth, sixth and eighth innings and got Ryan Sweeney to ground into double plays in the fourth and seventh.

The lefty received plenty of run support to win back-to-back starts for the second time this season. Saunders beat the A's for the seventh time in the last nine matchups, and his 11 victories versus Oakland are the pitcher's most against any opponent.

"I was getting quick outs," Saunders said. "When you feel comfortable on the mound and everything feels right, confidence is key."

Rivera and Robb Quinlan had RBI singles in the sixth, with Quinlan's hit chasing Braden (4-6). Aybar then tripled off Brad Ziegler. Hideki Matsui hit a run-scoring single in the ninth.

Improving to 8-2 during their current 14-game stretch away from home, the Angels have won eight games on a road trip for the first time since June 22 to July 1, 1987. That time, they went 8-1 against Texas, Chicago and Cleveland.

A's center fielder Matt Carson slammed face-first into the wall trying to chase down Rivera's solo drive, but he was OK and stayed in the game.

"I jostled my jaw a little bit. I saw the replay," Carson said. "I thought I had another step, and I didn't. My next step was to put my foot on the wall and there it was. I hit it flat, fortunately. I played water polo and got a few elbows but nothing like that."

The A's chuckled about it afterward. So did Hunter, also a center fielder.

"Man, he's still alive. That's good," Hunter said. "I've been there before, not on a home run."

Oakland had little success against Saunders a night after producing a season-high 18 hits to snap a six-game home losing streak to the Angels.

Braden matched a season high by allowing 11 hits for the second straight start. He yielded five runs, four earned, in 5 2/3 innings. Braden said he has been experiencing forearm tightness all week.

"I felt like I couldn't finish all my pitches," he said.

Still, he felt good enough to stay in the game.

"I wanted the ball. I wanted to stay in," Braden said. "Any time I'm in that situation I'm confident I can get outs. I always want to go deep. I guess the numbers weren't in my favor there. I don't worry about things like that."

After Hunter singled home the go-ahead run in the third -- it was unearned after shortstop Cliff Pennington's throwing error started the inning -- Oakland left fielder Jake Fox saved a second score with a strong throw to the plate and a perfect lunging tag of Quinlan by catcher Kurt Suzuki.

Game notes

Kouzmanoff matched his career-best hitting streak of 10 games. ... Angels 3B Maicer Izturis had the night off. He missed two games with a sore hamstring and knee before returning to the lineup Tuesday night. ... Oakland OF Gabe Gross was held out of the lineup after tweaking his back Tuesday while sliding into home. ... A's CF Rajai Davis, whose left hamstring tightened up on a triple Monday, missed his second straight game. Manager Bob Geren said Davis wouldn't play in Thursday afternoon's series finale and will be re-evaluated Friday. ... Geren's third baseman son, Bobby, was drafted by the A's in the 36th round out of San Ramon Valley High. He has committed to Princeton and appears headed to college. "Pretty good opportunity," the elder Geren said. ... Los Angeles 1B Kendry Morales, who broke his left leg jumping on home plate in a celebration following his game-ending grand slam vs. Seattle on May 29, will undergo surgery Thursday.

Scioscia guides the Angels with a steady hand

*By Tim Kurkjian
ESPN The Magazine
Archive*

The Los Angeles Angels lost their ace, John Lackey, and their leadoff man, Chone Figgins, to free agency after last season. They lost their best hitter, Kendry Morales, last week after he broke his leg in a celebration at home plate. Plus, their closer, Brian Fuentes, is struggling with a 5.52 ERA. And yet, there are the Angels, as always, right around first place.

They have talented players, but the biggest reason for their success this year, and over the years, is manager Mike Scioscia. He, of course, will acknowledge none of this.

"It's his consistent approach to the day," said Rays manager Joe Maddon, who was on Scioscia's staff with the Angels for six years. "Whether they win or lose, the players see the same guy the next day. The players support that. And, he is fearless. He is never afraid to answer questions, even when something went wrong. It does make a difference to the players. They look at him as a guy who will put things on his shoulders every day."

Scioscia has been the Angels manager for 10 years, and is signed through 2018. The players know he will be there in 10 years. They know if they don't play hard for him every day, they'll be gone in 10 minutes. That's the difference with the Angels and some other teams: stability in the manager's office. Since 1995, the Baltimore Orioles, Kansas City Royals, Cincinnati Reds, Florida Marlins and Houston Astros have each had eight managers. When players aren't sure who the long-term manager is going to be, and are playing for an interim guy, sometimes they don't play as hard.

Scioscia arrived in Anaheim in 2000 after the Angels had gone 70-92 in 1999. They went 82-80 the next year. They have been under .500 twice in his 10 seasons, and his winning percentage is .556. That is the highest winning percentage by an Angels manager, and he has the most wins in club history. The past six seasons, he has won five American League West titles, and one second-place finish. In 2002, the Angels won the World Series with Scioscia leading the way. He was named AL Manager of the Year in 2002 and 2009. No manager in recent years had to overcome what Scioscia did last year when his team opened the season with two key starting pitchers on the disabled list; then a third, Nick Adenhardt, was killed in a car crash. Scioscia helped hold that team together when it easily could have crumbled. Instead, it rolled to the West title with 97 wins.

Scioscia sets the same environment every day: relaxed, but intense. It starts in spring training, every morning at 9:30. Scioscia assigns tasks and duties for his players to be presented in front of teammates as a part of a team-building exercise. A former pitcher, Chris Bootcheck, is a golfer, so Scioscia had him explain in front of the team how a golf club is built. Scioscia sent pitcher Jarrod Washburn to do a report from a local ostrich festival. The next morning, he arrived in the clubhouse with an ostrich; then-Angels pitcher Ramon Ortiz leaped into his locker and screamed in Spanish, "Get that big chicken out of here!"

"It's all about having fun," Torii Hunter said.

Tim Kurkjian is a senior writer for ESPN The Magazine and an analyst for "Baseball Tonight."

Angels shouldn't chase first baseman

Morales' injury has some wondering if a move should be made, but L.A.'s not in position

*By Mark Saxon
ESPNLosAngeles.com*

OAKLAND -- The question that seems to be hanging over the Los Angeles Angels ever since Kendry Morales went down with a grimace on top of home plate, his left ankle in pieces, is this: Do they fork over big money and go after a power-hitting first baseman?

The names of potentially available boppers -- Paul Konerko, Prince Fielder, Lance Berkman, Adam LaRoche -- have been tossed around for weeks. The motivation -- a seemingly smooth path to another playoff appearance -- isn't such a stretch.

But it's probably not going to happen and, frankly, it probably shouldn't. It's the wrong move in early June and it's probably the wrong move in late July.

Even in the midst of their six-game winning streak -- which ended emphatically with a 10-1 loss in Oakland on Tuesday night that knocked them into second place -- the Angels weren't giving off the aura of a World Series contender. Even with, say, Konerko hitting home runs fairly regularly in the second half, was this team ever going to make any noise in October?

How do you like the Angels chances against the New York Yankees again? How about the Tampa Bay Rays, even the Minnesota Twins? In their current incarnation, the Angels would be first-round fodder and, these days, their fans don't get too worked up about making playoff appearances. They have higher aspirations, and so does the organization.

And if you put all your efforts and concentrate all your finances on the first-base problem, what do you do about your leaky bullpen, your mediocre starting rotation and your lack of a leadoff hitter? First base might not even be the most pressing infield hole. What about third? The foundation of the Angels' offense is weak at the pillars: the corner infield spots.

"Are they really one guy away?" one veteran scout wondered Tuesday.

If you didn't realize that before, watching Michael Ryan and Kevin Frandsen converge on an infield popup in the fourth inning Tuesday -- Frandsen diving for naught -- should have summed it up. No offense to Ryan and Frandsen, but they're not the kind of corner infielders who carry teams deep into October.

I asked manager Mike Scioscia if he can continue mixing and matching at the corners all year. His answer, basically, was "yeah." Then again, what choice does he have? In other words, Angels fans, you can settle in for a long summer of Ryan, Frandsen, Robb Quinlan, Maicer Izturis & Co. Those guys should be good for, what, about eight home runs between them?

"I think things can settle if we can just get some guys producing," Scioscia said.

Tuesday night was one of Jered Weaver's worst starts in years and, when he falters, this team doesn't look like much of anything. Weaver's 114th pitch was a belt-high fastball over the middle of the plate that Kurt Suzuki sent soaring in the air and, eventually, bouncing up the steps beyond the left-field fence. That three-run blast was the 12th hit Weaver gave up in just over six innings. He hadn't been knocked around this way since Aug. 1, 2007.

The Angels' lineup, meanwhile, looked flummoxed facing an array of mediocre Oakland arms. It started with five good innings from converted reliever -- and fairly recent call-up -- Vin Mazzaro. It continued. In the seventh, Erick Aybar took a called third strike on the outside corner on a floating, 73 mph curveball from lefty Jerry Blevins.

The AL West has had the appearance of a rudderless mess all season. The Angels are right in the middle of that mass of mediocrity and one move, no matter how much of owner Arte Moreno's money it costs, isn't going to change that.

Scene and heard

Like the rest of the baseball-watching world, the Angels got caught up in Stephen Strasburg's debut for the Washington Nationals on Tuesday. They were able to watch the first five innings of his electric, 14-strikeout start on the clubhouse TVs here before heading out to the field to stretch.

Some of the Angels' pitchers related it to their first major league outings. Joe Saunders noted Strasburg seemed to be having trouble throwing his slow curveball early in the game, so he was throwing the hard slider.

"He's probably got so much adrenaline going right now, he can't slow his arm down," Saunders said.

Quote of the day

"I think from where he came into the league a couple years ago to where he is now, he's by far the most improved ... definitely catcher and, maybe, player in our league." -- Scioscia on Suzuki, a Cal State Fullerton alum.

Looking ahead

Angels Blog

Oakland's Dallas Braden (4-5, 3.77 ERA) hasn't won since pitching his perfect game on May 9. Entering Wednesday's start against the Angels here, he's 0-3 with a 4.45 ERA since then and opponents have hit .277 against him. The Angels were one of the teams that beat him, getting to him for four runs in their 4-0 win on May 14.

In that game, Saunders (4-6, 4.78), who pitches for the Angels on Wednesday, threw a complete-game shutout, holding Oakland to four hits and striking out six. He has tended to pitch well against the A's, winning six of his past eight games with a 2.58 ERA.

From angelsbaseball.com

Saunders, Halos assert dominance over A's

Southpaw goes distance as Angels keep pace in AL West

By Lyle Spencer / MLB.com

06/10/10 2:00 AM ET

Box >

OAKLAND -- Athletics center fielder Matt Carson ran headfirst into a wall and lived to tell about it.

His teammates ran into a buzz saw.

Angels southpaw Joe Saunders didn't believe he had his premium-grade stuff, but it was good enough to outduel Dallas Braden and hold the A's scoreless for eight innings en route to a 7-1 decision on Wednesday night in front of 18,285 at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum.

Erick Aybar, who fell a home run shy of a cycle, slammed a two-run triple against reliever Brad Ziegler after Braden departed, having yielded run-scoring singles to Juan Rivera and Robb Quinlan in the four-run sixth that gave Saunders room to breathe the cool night air.

"Honestly, I didn't have my best stuff," Saunders said. "A lot of credit goes to the defense. The defense played unbelievable behind me. Both [Braden] and myself were kind of battling tonight. It was just a case of being fortunate to make a few pitches and get the ground ball for a double play."

Torii Hunter singled home the Angels' first run in the third, and his third hit of the night - - and a single by Hideki Matsui -- opened the sixth. Braden fell to 4-6 as Saunders moved to 5-6 with his fourth win in his past five decisions.

Chasing Juan Rivera's ninth home run of the season in the eighth inning, Carson smacked face-first into the wall, full tilt, but was uninjured.

"Man, he's alive -- that's good," said Hunter, who has lost his fair share of battles with walls.

"He was accelerating," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said of Carson, who claimed he thought he had time for one more step before climbing the wall. "He's fortunate. Obviously, he's got one thing in mind -- he thought he had a chance for it. He hit that wall hard."

The Angels remained a half-game behind the Rangers in the American League West, as Saunders' bid for a third career shutout and second of the season against the A's ended in the ninth. Daric Barton doubled leading off and scored on Kevin Kouzmanoff's one-out single through the middle.

On May 14 at Angel Stadium, Saunders blanked the A's on four hits and two walks.

"Again, we run into big Joe," said Braden, who also was on the losing end of that duel in May coming off his perfect game one start earlier.

An AL All-Star in 2008, Saunders has rebounded from a bad start with strong work in six of his past seven outings. He moved to 11-4 in his career against Oakland, the most wins he owns against any team.

"Joe's been pitching really well after a rough start," Scioscia said. "He's had the ball in good zones and is able to take his secondary pitches into the game. He pitched tonight. That's good to see."

Saunders felt he had been nibbling too much in April, when his ERA reached 7.04 and he claimed a 1-5 record after six starts.

"I've been getting ahead in counts, throwing strikes," Saunders said. "The biggest thing is, when the team scores a run, to go out and throw up a zero. That's a shutdown inning. That's what I try to do."

Saunders delivered nothing but shutdown innings until the ninth.

His 53-28 career record and .654 winning percentage have Saunders second among active players in the AL to teammate Jered Weaver, who is 55-29 for a .655 success rate. Boston's Josh Beckett slipped to third (66-35, .653).

A throwing error by shortstop Cliff Pennington on Kevin Frandsen's ground ball leading off the third inning set up the first Angels run, which arrived when Hunter slammed a two-out single to left. Quinlan was thrown out trying to score by left fielder Jake Fox.

The A's opened the first inning with a pair of singles, but Saunders put away the next three hitters and fell into a smooth groove. Twice, in the fourth and seventh, he induced double plays -- the seventh having begun with a single and a walk.

"He had a little trouble starting the seventh with 3-0 counts," Scioscia said. "But he came back and got out of that inning."

Aybar, who singled in the third inning, doubled in the fifth and tripled to dead center in the sixth, was bidding to become the sixth hitter in club history to produce a cycle when he singled in the ninth. It was most recently accomplished by Chone Figgins in 2006.

"Erick's starting to come alive on the offensive side," Scioscia said. "He got a great bunt down and killed that ball to right-center. It's good to see him this last little stretch start to feel comfortable in the batter's box."

The teams wrap up the four-game series in a matinee on Thursday. The Angels are 8-2 on the 14-game trip, and their 18-8 record since May 14 is the AL's best over that stretch.

Angels' Aybar falls homer shy of cycle

Leadoff hitter triples home two in sixth inning vs. Oakland

By Lyle Spencer / MLB.com

06/10/10 12:36 AM ET

OAKLAND -- With a single, double and triple in consecutive at-bats against the A's on Wednesday night, Angels shortstop Erick Aybar fell a home run shy of the cycle at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum.

Aybar came to bat for a fifth time in the ninth inning, but singled and eventually scored the Halos' final run in their 7-1 victory.

There have been six cycles in Angels history, a feat reached by five players. The most recent was accomplished by Chone Figgins on Sept. 16, 2006.

The likelihood for Aybar wasn't great, given that he had only one home run in 234 at-bats coming into the game this season and 10 in 1,318 career at-bats.

Then again, Aybar's two-run triple in the sixth was laced off the center-field wall.

Familiar names highlight Draft's final day

Angels select sons of former baseball stars in latter rounds

By Lyle Spencer / MLB.com

06/09/10 11:03 PM ET

OAKLAND -- Right-handed pitcher Cameron Bedrosian isn't the only son of a former baseball star selected by the Angels in the 2010 First-Year Player Draft, which concluded on Wednesday with Rounds 31-50.

With their first pick on the final day of proceedings, the Angels tabbed Mike Sodders. An infielder at New Mexico State, he is the son of Mike Sodders, Baseball America's 1981 National Player of the Year after driving Arizona State to its fifth College World Series title.

An infielder who grew up in Moreno Valley, about 60 miles east of Anaheim Stadium, Sodders, like his father, is a hitting machine -- judging by his numbers at New Mexico State. He batted .380 with 15 homers and 46 RBIs in 37 games as a senior, slugging at a .733 clip.

As a junior, Sodders batted .422 and was the first New Mexico State player to win multiple All-America honors.

That was almost identical to the .424 his father batted in '81 with 22 homers and 100 RBIs for the Sun Devils. Drafted in the first round by Minnesota, Sodders blew out a rotator cuff after a big spring in 1984 and never made it to the Major Leagues. He was inducted into the Arizona State Athletic Hall of Fame in 2009.

Another familiar name arrived in Round 32 in Drew Beuerlein, a catcher at UNLV whose cousin, Steve Beuerlein, was an NFL quarterback for 14 years. Beuerlein, who hit .354 as a junior with 10 homers and 60 RBIs in 57 games, hit .407 in 2009 despite missing half the season with a broken hand.

Beuerlein attended Desert Mountain High School in Scottsdale, Ariz., the same school that produced first-round compensation pick Taylor Lindsey.

The Angels selected 55 players -- 33 collegians, five from the junior college ranks and 16 high school athletes.

"We are pleased with this year's Draft, especially with the luxury of having several early picks," said Eddie Bane, who has spent the past seven seasons as the Angels' director of scouting. "It was a tremendous opportunity to select quality players and individuals early in the Draft.

"We feel we added significant depth to our organization over the course of the last three days."

The Angels had five picks among the first 40 in the Draft, led by third baseman Kaleb Cowart of Cook County (Ga.) High School, the 2010 Gatorade National High School Baseball Player of the Year.

Bedrosian, of East Cowata High School in Sparpsburg, Ga., son of 1987 National League Cy Young Award winner Steve Bedrosian, was also one of Los Angeles' early selections.

Center fielders Chevez "Chevy" Clarke of Marietta (Ga.) High School and Ryan Bolden of Madison Central (Miss.) High School also joined Lindsey in the opening round.

In Round 38 on Wednesday, the Angels tabbed third baseman Jace Brinkerhoff of Utah Valley University. He led the nation in batting (.456), hits (118) and runs (88), and ranked fourth with 85 RBIs.

In Round 47, the Angels selected third baseman Kenny Hatcher, the nephew of hitting coach Mickey Hatcher. Another pick with ties to the organization was right-hander Andrew Schugel, the son of Angels' Major League scout Jeff Schugel.

The Angels picked 11 California residents: Sodders, right-handers Jesus Valdez (Oxnard), Brian Diemer (Cal Berkeley), Justin La Tempa (Huntington Beach); Eric Cendejas (Cal State University Stanislaus) and K. "Vinnie" Saint John (Laguna Beach); catchers Jake Rodriguez (Elk Grove), Francis Larson (Dana Point) and Timothy Helton (Upland); shortstop Jesus Campos (Cal State Los Angeles) and second baseman James Allen (Vista).

Halos are the glue to a diverse community

Skipper Scioscia helped to bring an identity to franchise

By Tom Singer / MLB.com

06/09/10 11:00 AM ET

The notion that the latter-day success of the Angels somehow furthered the exponential growth and awareness of Orange County is a classic case of revisionist history.

From the vantage point of the approaching 2010 All-Star Game, which will brightly showcase Orange County's amazing kaleidoscope of people, businesses and attractions, as well as its baseball team, it is easy to see a mutual rise. Not so, however.

Sure, the validating TV series *The O.C.* hit the airwaves in the summer of 2003 -- a few months after the Angels shined the spotlight on the region by winning the World Series.

But for 35 years prior to that, Orange County had swelled and flourished and spread like a demographic blob with little reflection on the Angels, thank you very much.

The capture of a franchise's first World Series would erupt other cities into revelry, cars honking and strangers hugging deep into the night.

A couple of hours after the Angels' dismissal of the Giants in Game 7 of the 2002 Fall Classic, a reporter cruised through empty mid-evening streets (the West Coast game had begun at 5 p.m. PT) to his Irvine hotel where the desk clerk, spotting the media credential swinging from his neck, asked:

"Ahh, baseball ... when is the next game?"

That sort of oblivion is unimaginable now. At the time, it was nearly understandable. Where would the party have erupted, anyway? What city? Can there be a civic celebration in a region where the only Main Street is in Disneyland?

This is where the Angels have made a difference, giving an incredibly-dispersed community a unifying centerpiece.

The Angels have become the glue.

"I can't compare it to what it was like before, because I wasn't around," said Angels manager Mike Scioscia -- the starch in the glue. "I just know the amount of support that is out there now. Fans have been waiting for this franchise to achieve, and they've come out in force, that's for sure."

"The last 10 years or so, people who moved here from all over the country have become Angels fans," said Ned Bergert, the Angels' head athletic trainer who has been with the club since 1979. "People are just more cognizant of Angels stuff. Like, they'll see you go into a coffee shop in the morning in a suit and a tie, and they'll ask, 'So where are you going on the road?'"

However one defines a bedroom community, that is what Orange County was to Los Angeles. Although, in this affluent case, master-bedroom community was more like it.

Orange County revolved around the center of the Southern California galaxy, Los Angeles. Undefinable and often unnavigable, Orange County was less an address than a quilt of towns sewn together by freeways.

There are 34 incorporated cities within the 948 square miles of Orange County, none larger than Santa Ana. With a population of 339,000, Santa Ana is No. 1 in Orange County and No. 54 in the United States.

Nothing sums up Orange County's subordinate status better than the distribution of media, the megaphone of any entertainment entity: Of the major outlets servicing the Southland, all 10 TV stations, eight of nine radio stations and nine of 10 newspapers are based outside of the O.C.

No wonder Buzzie Bavasi, the legendary baseball man who came West with the Dodgers from Brooklyn long before becoming the Angels' general manager in 1977, always fingered as the Angels' main competition not the rest of the American League, but the Dodgers.

Reflective of their locale, the Angels had historically also been a so-called bedroom community to Major League Baseball. Transplants from the Midwest and the East Coast retained their baseball allegiances and filled Anaheim Stadium to give teams such as the Yankees, Red Sox and Tigers a distinct home-away-from-home advantage that rankled Angels players of the '70s and '80s.

A snapshot from 1978 was typical: The Angels averaged crowds of 33,923 for their 11 home games against the Yankees and the Red Sox -- and 19,746 for the 70 games against everybody else.

The Angels' early opportunities to galvanize Orange County unraveled into disappointments that merely dispersed people back into their provincial little corners.

The 1979 Angels, whose mantra was "Yes We Can!" three decades before the Barack Obama campaign helped itself to it, were run out of the American League Championship Series by the Orioles.

The 1982 and 1986 Angels both suffered historic ALCS collapses -- blowing leads of 2-0 in the five-game series of '82, and of 3-1 when the series grew to seven games in '86.

The effect of those performance spikes was immediate -- and also transient, in the wake of the ensuing pits. The Angels led the AL in attendance in 1983, and ranked second in both '80 and '87. But from 1991-2001, the Angels never ranked higher than sixth in league attendance

"The fan support has always been here," said Tim Mead, Angels vice president of communications in his 30th year with the club. "I remember people always saying that

this will eventually be a gold mine for somebody, once we lived up to the potential. And we finally did."

Since the Angels pitched their tent in 1966, Orange County population has essentially doubled, topping three million in 2008. But the population was already exploding right through those dreary '90s, without impacting the Big A.

And then the Angels went red, and blue, and everything changed.

In January 2002, the team's new color-scheme was introduced with a splashy unveiling, featuring red as the primary color, arguably one of the most important contributions made by Disney during its brief ownership.

Aside from the obligatory Hollywood -- and as it turned out, prophetic -- references to a Hunt for Red October, the hue not only made it easier for people to identify *with* the Angels, they were easier to identify as being *for* the Angels as they painted Orange County, and certainly the Angel Stadium stands, red.

Two years earlier, the Angels had swooped in for a legitimate Dodgers Blue-blood to replace Terry Collins as their manager. At the time, there was little reason to view the hiring of Scioscia as any more than the latest attempt at feeding off the Dodgers' success - - a campaign that in the past included such feeble mimicry as signing a small, underwhelming Mexican left-hander (Angel Moreno) in the immediate glow of the 1981 Fernandomania touched off by Fernando Valenzuela.

Instead, the arrival of Scioscia proved to be a tables-turning event.

In their first 36 years of co-existence, the Dodgers had two managers (Walter Alston and Tom Lasorda) and the Angels had 14, not counting interim cameos. The Dodgers are already on their fourth manager of Scioscia's tenure, with who knows how many more to go before his 10-year contract is up.

Having a consistent face for the franchise means continuity, stability and identity. All of which, in turn, spell tradition.

"It's important when fans can identify with someone. It's very important to fans to have a focal point," Mead said. "We're blessed with having Mike, in the first year of 10 more years so he'll be here 20 years.

"With the Dodgers, you always knew what you got, with only a handful of changes, manager and front office, all those years. Before Mike, we were known as Reggie Jackson and the Angels or someone else and the Angels.

"Now we're just 'the Angels.' Not even 'Mike Scioscia and the Angels.' What we lacked for so many years was an identity. Mike Scioscia and (former general manager) Bill Stoneman put us on the map."

You study a map of Orange County, and all those city borders crisscrossing a relatively small space look like the disjointed branches of a family tree, which until recently lacked a trunk.

Now the Angels have given Orange County a foundation. They are that disparate geographic family's trunk.