



***Clips***  
***(July 9, 2010)***

*From the Los Angeles Times*

## **Many All-Stars will see something extra in their checks**

Dozens of players have contracts that call for benefits from \$25,000 to \$125,000 if they make the team. Dodgers are in the minority, giving no such extra incentive but paying more in guaranteed money.

By Ben Bolch

July 9, 2010

Reporting from Chicago — Talk about money for nothing.

If, as expected, Jered Weaver replaces the New York Yankees' CC Sabathia on the American League All-Star roster, the Angels ace will slip on a uniform Tuesday, step onto the Angel Stadium field and wave to the home fans.

For which he will \$50,000 richer — even though he won't be eligible to play.

Like Sabathia, Weaver won't be able to participate in the All-Star Game because of a rule that restricts pitchers who start for their teams on the previous Sunday, when he is scheduled to face Oakland.

Weaver's selection to the team, therefore, is largely ceremonial.

But that won't stop him from joining the dozens of players cashing in on All-Star bonuses in their contracts.

Although the total bonus figure for this year's All-Star teams has not been tabulated, it will no doubt be a bundle. Last year's All-Stars made more than \$2.3 million.

The two Dodgers stars will be in the definite minority. Right fielder Andre Ethier and closer Jonathan Broxton won't make anything extra because the Dodgers are among a handful of teams that don't offer All-Star bonuses.

That's a team policy, General Manager Ned Colletti said, stemming from a philosophy that players are expected to perform at a high level. Instead of giving bonuses, the Dodgers offer slightly more guaranteed money, according to a team official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss player contracts.

In other words, a Dodgers player might receive an extra \$25,000 guaranteed in exchange for forfeiting the chance to earn a \$100,000 bonus.

Ethier said he is fine with that arrangement.

"There are a few teams who have not [offered bonuses] based on their salary structure," said agent Paul Cohen, whose clients include former Angels Troy Percival and Jim Edmonds.

It can amount to some substantial savings. The Boston Red Sox will dole out at least \$200,000 to their five All-Stars.

Among those who are receiving bonuses this year, the benefit ranges from the \$25,000 made by Minnesota catcher Joe Mauer and a handful of other players to the \$125,000 pocketed by Philadelphia pitcher Roy Halladay.

Angels center fielder Torii Hunter said he would probably donate his \$100,000 bonus to his charity, the Torii Hunter Project.

The biggest stars don't always make the most prodigious bonuses. St. Louis first baseman Albert Pujols, a three-time National League most valuable player, will make an extra \$50,000, while Seattle pitcher Cliff Lee, a two-time All-Star, will make \$100,000.

"Whether [the bonus] is \$100,000, \$50,000, \$25,000, it's more of an ego thing," Cohen said. "And probably enough to make sure you can fly out all the family and relatives to the game and make sure you're not out of pocket too much."

Do players who earn seven-figure salaries really deserve to be awarded for being recognized as among the best in their league?

"You can take all bonuses and make the argument that, hey, you're getting a salary to do whatever, why should you get a bonus for performing what you're getting paid for?" Angels Manager Mike Scioscia said.

"That's not always the way contracts are made. And certainly for a young player who's just starting to come into his own and signing a contract, there's nothing wrong with getting a bonus."

The perks of All-Star selection can also go beyond one-time cash bonuses; some players have option years in their contracts become guaranteed by making the team. Last year, five players had automatic increases in contract options triggered by becoming All-Stars, with Pittsburgh second baseman Freddy Sanchez and Cleveland catcher Victor Martinez each getting a \$100,000 raise in their 2010 options.

Then there is Alex Rodriguez.

As part of the 10-year, \$252-million contract he signed with Texas before the 2001 season, Rodriguez earned \$100,000 for being an All-Star and another \$100,000 were he to receive the most fan votes in the league.

After he moved to New York, the Yankees assumed that responsibility.

But, like the Dodgers, the Yankees also have a policy of not awarding bonuses for All-Star selection — or even for such honors as league MVP, Gold Glove or Silver Slugger. So, in 2007, when Rodriguez was awarded a new contract, it didn't include an All-Star bonus.

Now he just settles for the \$275 million on his 10-year deal.

Times staff writers Baxter Holmes and Jim Peltz contributed to this report.

## Angels' Ervin Santana not receiving offensive support

The starter has pitched at least eight innings in each of his last two starts, compiling a 2.76 earned-run average, but he is 0-2 in that span.

By Ben Bolch

9:27 PM PDT, July 8, 2010

Reporting from Chicago — Ervin Santana smiled when he could have smirked. He chuckled when he could have cried.

The Angels' starter has pitched at least eight innings in each of his last two starts, compiling a 2.76 earned-run average.

He's also 0-2 in that span.

A pair of stellar starts has been obscured by his team's lingering offensive woes, but a nearly jovial Santana seemed to be making the best of it Thursday at U.S. Cellular Field following the Angels' 1-0 loss to the Chicago White Sox.

"I know we're doing our best to score runs," said Santana, who allowed one run in eight innings. "We didn't get the job done but it's all right. We have another game tomorrow."

The Angels have averaged only 3.6 runs over their last 17 games, and their seven victories in that stretch were largely a function of outstanding starting pitching.

"Our pitching is doing great. Our pitching is awesome," center fielder Torii Hunter said. "But offensively, we're just not playing the way we're capable of playing. We're just going through the motions. ... You don't even have to look at numbers; you can just feel it."

Santana's numbers are on the upswing. He has pitched at least 6 2/3 innings and allowed four earned runs or fewer in each of his last four starts.

"Ervin has been as consistent as any pitcher in our league for the last six or seven starts," Manager Mike Scioscia said.

Veterans' day off

Scioscia gave Hideki Matsui and Bobby Abreu the day off, saying he wanted his slumping veterans to "mentally take a little breather and go from there."

Matsui is hitting only .200 this month, with no extra-base hits in 20 at-bats. The designated hitter is batting .253 overall with a .334 on-base percentage and .404 slugging percentage, all figures that put him on pace to establish career lows for his eight years in the major leagues.

Abreu has just five hits in his last 55 at-bats, dropping his average from .272 to .250.

Scioscia said he considered using Matsui or Abreu as a pinch-hitter with two outs in the seventh inning and Cory Aldridge at the plate with the bases empty and the Angels trailing by a run, "but Cory has as much power as anyone on the team and has a chance to get an extra-base hit or drive the ball."

Aldridge struck out swinging to end the inning.

## Heightened alert

Major League Baseball had warned the Angels about the possibility of riots in Oakland this weekend before a former transit police officer was convicted of involuntary manslaughter in the shooting of an unarmed man, ending a racially charged trial that had been moved to Los Angeles.

Johannes Mehserle, who is white, fired a single round into the back of Oscar J. Grant III, who was black and lying face-down on the station platform during the New Year's Day 2009 incident at an Oakland train station.

The Angels are staying at a San Francisco hotel and traveling by bus to Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum for the three-game series that starts Friday, said traveling secretary Tom Taylor.

Outfielder Reggie Willits said no one in the organization had addressed players about the possibility of riots.

## **Angels are shut out by White Sox, 1-0**

L.A. batters manage just two hits off John Danks as Chicago completes a four-game sweep. 'The offensive continuity has not slowed down,' Manager Mike Scioscia says, 'it's just disappeared.'

By Ben Bolch

7:00 PM PDT, July 8, 2010

Reporting from Chicago — Mike Scioscia held Hideki Matsui and Bobby Abreu out of his lineup amid deepening slumps.

It only seemed as if the rest of the Angels batters took the day off.

The Angels' offense bottomed out Thursday afternoon at U.S. Cellular Field during a 1-0 loss to the Chicago White Sox, managing two hits and three baserunners against a pitcher who entered the game with a .500 record.

John Danks stifled the Angels during a complete-game shutout, striking out seven and walking none as the White Sox completed a four-game sweep. The Angels did not get their first hit until Reggie Willits led off the seventh inning with a single past diving shortstop Alexei Ramirez.

"We're losing games and it looks like we're not even competitive; we're just out there," Angels center fielder Torii Hunter said. "We just don't look like ourselves."

The Angels' sixth loss in seven games dropped them to 5 1/2 games behind Texas in the American League West (pending the outcome of Thursday night's Orioles-Rangers game) and prompted Scioscia to address his players after they concluded a series in which they scored five runs, collected two extra-base hits and batted .138 (four for 29) with runners in scoring position.

"The offensive continuity has not slowed down," Scioscia told reporters, "it's just disappeared."

Danks (8-7) dispatched the Angels quickly, needing only eight pitches to get through the fourth inning and seven to get through the fifth amid a series of what Scioscia described as "giveaway at-bats" during a game that lasted only 1 hour 50 minutes.

It was the second time in the last six games that an opposing pitcher has held the Angels without a hit through the first six innings; Kansas City's Bruce Chen did it Sunday at Angel Stadium.

Ervin Santana, who limited the White Sox to three hits and one run in eight innings, was the Angels' starting pitcher in both games. Santana made only one mistake Thursday, plunking leadoff hitter Juan Pierre on the arm with a pitch in the first inning.

"I was trying to throw inside," Santana said. "It was a little bit up and I hit his arm. It happens."

Pierre advanced to third on Alex Rios' double to left field and scored on Paul Konerko's sacrifice fly. And that was pretty much it for both offenses.

The Angels, with two out in the third, finally had a baserunner when Cory Aldridge got aboard thanks to third baseman Omar Vizquel's fielding error, but Erick Aybar popped out to catcher A.J. Pierzynski in foul territory to end the inning.

It took four more innings for Willits to break through with his single.

"Every at-bat I had, I was trying to battle him," Willits said of Danks, "but he kept making good pitch after good pitch after good pitch."

Howie Kendrick followed Willits' hit with a single to center, giving the Angels runners on first and second with nobody out. Danks then jammed Hunter with a cutter, getting him to ground into a fielder's choice that put runners on first and third with one out.

That's where the runners remained. Mike Napoli popped out to second baseman Gordon Beckham and Juan Rivera hit a one-hopper back to Danks.

Scioscia chose to put a positive spin on the Angels' sagging fortunes afterward, saying he told his players they were capable of much greater success than they had achieved over the last week.

"This is basically the same group of guys right here that eight days ago was beating some teams that are playing the best baseball in the league and maybe in baseball," he said. "So it's in there for us to play at the level we need to reach our goals."

*From the Orange County Register*

## **Angels held to two hits in latest loss**

By BILL PLUNKETT

2010-07-08 14:07:53

CHICAGO - Ervin Santana sure knows how to shut down a lineup – his own.

For the second time in the past six games, the Angels were held without a hit through six innings. Santana was on the wrong end of six perfect innings by Royals left-hander Bruce Chen on Saturday in Anaheim. The Angels couldn't muster any support for Santana again in a 1-0 loss to the Chicago White Sox on Thursday afternoon.

The two-hit shutout by Sox left-hander John Danks completed a four-game sweep of the Angels who scored five runs on 22 hits in the series with only two extra-base hits (a pair of doubles in Monday's loss). The Angels have now lost six of their past seven and are in danger of fading out of touch with the first-place Texas Rangers by the All-Star break.

After the latest ineffectual effort, Angels manager Mike Scioscia kept the clubhouse doors closed to address the team (at least the third time this season he has had one of these post-game monologues). But Scioscia said he kept the message positive.

"The gist of it was eight days ago we were playing great baseball," Scioscia said. "We were swinging the bats much better, playing at a high level. The level we've played at over the last six, seven, eight, nine games – whatever it is – we're just not doing things on the field we're capable of doing.

"That was the gist of it. Eight days ago, we were playing great baseball. Some guys are definitely trying too hard. That's definitely part of it. Some guys are a little tired. But when you're tired, that's when you have to dig down and grind through it."

Scioscia gave slumping veterans Hideki Matsui and Bobby Abreu a "mental day off" against the left-handed Danks. The replacement parts didn't do any better.

Danks retired 18 of the first 19 batters he faced, the only exception an error by third baseman Omar Vizquel that allowed Cory Aldridge to reach base in the third inning. Reggie Willits finally broke up the no-hitter with a single through the left side of the infield leading off the seventh. Howie Kendrick followed with another single but both runners were stranded when Torii Hunter bounced into a forceout, Mike Napoli popped out and Juan Rivera grounded back to the mound.

Thanks to some early-count swinging that Scioscia characterized as "giveaway at-bats," Danks dismissed the Angels in less time (1:53) than the two teams spent in a rain delay before Wednesday's game (2:20), sending the Angels off to Oakland in time to catch the conclusion of ESPN's LeBron-a-thon from their Bay Area hotel rooms.

The Angels were 4 for 29 (.138) with runners in scoring position during the series. Hunter and Kendrick had 13 of their 22 hits while the rest of the lineup went 9 for 98 (.092).

"We know that. You don't even have to bring it up," Hunter said of the poor offensive statistics. "We know it by how many runs we're scoring – 1, 2, 1, 2. We're not even getting guys on base that much. It's pretty bad, I know it."

While Hunter described Scioscia's post-game talk as "positive" and "uplifting," his own opinion of the team's play of late was neither.

"I've said this before – sometimes it's the way you lose games," Hunter said. "We're losing games where we don't even look like we're competitive. We're just out there. The last seven or eight games, we don't even look like ourselves."

"No excuses. We've got to go out and play better baseball."

## **Angels keep running into problems**

By BILL PLUNKETT

2010-07-08 19:58:47

CHICAGO – Often during Mike Scioscia's reign as Angels manager, his teams have been characterized as playing a "National League style" because of their reliance on baserunning to create offense.

That would come in handy right about now with that offense mired in a deep slump. But those Angels aren't these Angels.

This year's Angels have fewer of the elements necessary to play that type of game.

"We talked about this in spring training — this team is built more on batter's box offense than any team we've had in awhile," Scioscia said before the Angels did almost no baserunning in a two-hit shutout loss to the Chicago White Sox on Thursday.

That "batter's box offense" hasn't emerged as planned either. The Angels rank 22nd in the majors with a .399 slugging percentage, a mark that would be their lowest since Scioscia became manager in 2000.

At the same time, the Angels seem to kill as many rallies as they create with their baserunning.

Through Wednesday's games, the Angels rank ninth in the majors with 58 stolen bases, a dropoff for a team that finished second in the majors last season (148) and has had at least 100 steals in each of the past nine seasons.

More costly, the Angels have been caught stealing 32 times, tied for second in the majors. Only the White Sox (40) have been thrown out more. The Angels stolen-base percentage (.65) ranks 28th in the majors. Only San Francisco and Kansas City are worse.

The Angels are also going first-to-third on singles less often than in recent seasons. A staple of their offense under Scioscia, the Angels led the majors with 119 of those corner-to-corners last season. This year, they have done it just 50 times (tied with the Giants for ninth in the majors).



That was to be expected with plodders like Hideki Matsui and Juan Rivera in the lineup (and Kendry Morales before his injury). But the penchant for running into outs disappoints Scioscia.

"Not good at all," he said of the stolen base rate (well below the league average of 73 percent).

"Any team like ours that is aggressive is going to run into some outs. That's just part of the whole deal. It's not a low-percentage style. You're not saying, 'This is a 10-percent chance to steal. Let's do it.' No — you're saying, 'This is a high-percentage chance to create some offense.'"

Scioscia did admit that "when you have a downturn (offensively), some guys may try to create offense and run into some outs in an attempt to create some things."

That finger points directly at Torii Hunter who has been thrown out 10 times in 17 steal attempts, often in situations where he was guilty of overaggressiveness.

But Scioscia also points out the caught-stealing totals are inflated by busted hit-and-run plays — a missed sign or a missed swing by the batter leaving the runner vulnerable.

#### FRIDAY'S GAME

RHP Joel Pineiro (9-6, 3.96) opposes Oakland RHP Vin Mazzaro (4-2, 3.81) at 7:05p.m. The game will be broadcast by FSN, KLAA/830 and KWKW/1330 (Spanish).

*From Angelsbb.com*

### **Santana outdueled by Danks in loss**

Scioscia delivers 'positive' message following sweep

By Lyle Spencer / MLB.com

07/08/10 5:51 PM ET

CHICAGO -- Class dismissed.

The Angels, the class of the American League West for three consecutive seasons and five of the past six, were reeling on Thursday in the wake of a four-game sweep at the hands of the scalding White Sox.

Ervin Santana was on his game for the Angels, but so was John Danks. The southpaw delivered a gem, shutting out the run-starved Angels, 1-0, on two singles to complete the sweep in front of 27,734 at U.S. Cellular Field.

"We have to play better -- and we will," said Torii Hunter, the Angels' All-Star center fielder and most straightforward clubhouse voice. "There's too much talent in here to be

playing like this. Our pitching has been awesome. We're just not playing the way we're capable of playing, the way we're supposed to play."

Danks' no-hit bid ended when Reggie Willits, batting second in a revised lineup, singled cleanly through the left side leading off the seventh inning. But the Angels expired, having scored five runs in 36 innings in a bleak, wet series that included four hours worth of rain delays.

"Anyone that says they don't think about it is a liar," Danks said of the no-hitter. "You know immediately what's going on out there.

"Actually, as weird as it sounds, it was pretty fortunate that it was a 1-0 game because you can't get ahead of yourself. The job at hand is still to win the ballgame. As nice as it would have been to throw a no-hitter, the main priority is to win the ballgame."

Howard Kendrick followed Willits with a single, but Hunter hit into a forceout, and after Mike Napoli popped up, Danks kept Willits from scoring when he handled Juan Rivera's shot headed for center field and threw him out to end the inning.

"Sometimes you guess," said Hunter, who has been carrying the offense along with Kendrick. "I guessed wrong and got jammed. That's all."

Danks threw cutter after cutter, slicing the Angels to ribbons.

"He was definitely on his game," Willits said. "Every at-bat I had I was trying to battle. He kept making good pitches, especially the cutter and the changeup away. He used the four-seam fastball enough to keep you honest and elevated it.

"In that last at-bat, he threw some changeups and then went back to the cutter."

Willits wasn't intent on breaking up a no-hitter when he slapped the base hit. He just wanted to get on base, he said, get something started.

"I don't ever think about no-hitters and things like that in the game," Willits said. "You can't score without a guy on base. That's how everybody looks at that."

The White Sox seized a first-inning lead when Santana hit Juan Pierre with a pitch leading off, yielded a double to Alex Rios and retired Paul Konerko on a sacrifice fly to Willits in center.

Santana lamented the pitch to Pierre on an 0-2 count that glanced off the leadoff man.

"I was trying to throw inside, and it got up a little bit," Santana said, shaking his head. "I was throwing strikes today. That's the main key. But that one moved too much on me, and he didn't get out of the way of it."

Down a run, Santana found a groove, escaping a first-and-third predicament in the third by getting Konerko to ground into a double play. The right-hander retired 12 in a row after issuing a two-out walk to Andruw Jones in the fourth.

But Danks never relented, his White Sox claiming their 22nd win in the past 27 games.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia talked to his club after the game, presenting what Hunter described as a "very positive" message designed to "try to lift us up."

Scioscia referred to the recent past, when the club was rolling, as a more accurate gauge of their abilities than this recent tailspin that has produced losses in six of the past seven games.

"It's not three years ago -- we're going back two weeks," Scioscia said. "It's in there, and hopefully we'll start moving forward."

"The gist of it is, eight days ago we were playing great baseball. We were swinging the bats better, playing at a high level. The last six, seven, eight games, we're just not doing things on the field we're very capable of doing on a consistent basis."

"It's not because of effort. That's one thing, that the guys in that room play as hard as anyone on the planet. Our issues on the offensive side are something that can be fixed."

Hunter has a message of his own to his younger teammates -- play the game and don't stress.

"The younger guys are trying to step up," Hunter said. "We don't have Kendry Morales, and they're trying to do too much. It's up to us vets -- me, [Hideki] Matsui, Bobby [Abreu] -- to tell them to forget that. Put that pressure on us. We know how to handle it."

Neither Matsui nor Abreu was in Thursday's lineup, Scioscia giving both veterans a day off to catch their breath before a three-game weekend series with Oakland wraps up the first half.

Nobody has to tell Hunter and Co. they're losing ground to the Rangers in the division they have dominated.

"We hear it, we see it," Hunter said. "I've been around a long time. I've seen a lot of things change in September. Play hard, no matter what. It's like we're going through the motions. If you don't play hard, you're not giving yourself a chance."

## Anaheim ready to make more ASG memories

By Tom Singer / MLB.com

07/08/10 9:00 AM ET

As the countdown continues to the 81st All-Star Game, daydreams of anticipation grip the 68 players and field staffs chosen to represent the American and National Leagues in Major League Baseball's annual midsummer blowout.

They all look forward to the experiences and memories awaiting them, speaking in almost-reverent tones of what lies ahead.

For many, the Anaheim memories are already in the past, framed and indelible. On July 13, Angel Stadium will host its record-tying third All-Star Game.

Typical of the dynamic Orange County it reflects, the ballpark has had a different configuration each time it has been the All-Star stage -- from the original 43,000-seat Anaheim Stadium in 1967, to the enclosed 64,593-seat Anaheim Stadium in '89 to the present 45,050-seat Angel Stadium.

The physical surroundings have changed, but the emotional ties to those unforgettable Southern California early evenings never will for those who lived them.

In their own words:

July 11, 1967, a new day for the All-Star Game. Rather, a new dusk: To assure a sizable Northeast television audience, the game starts at 4:30 p.m. local, shadowy, time.

Joe Torre, NL starting catcher: "I think it was the first twilight game, so they could show it back east at prime time. Ed Runge was the plate umpire, and I think we set a record for strikeouts -- and a good number of them were called."

The game went 15 innings -- averaging two whiffs for every one of them, in between all that missing, the Phillies' Dick Allen somehow connecting for a solo homer in the top of the second and the Orioles' Brooks Robinson for a tying blow in the bottom of the sixth. Of the 30 strikeouts, 11 were looking -- or squinting.

"Players were complaining about [Runge's] strike zone the whole game," Torre said. "[Carl Yastrzemski] had one called outside and Runge said, 'I don't know why they're complaining; they know the strike zone.' And with that, I just moved a little farther off the plate."

Tony Perez, the 25-year-old third baseman of Cincinnati's Big Red Machine sitting on the bench as an NL reserve said, "At the start of the game, the hitters were in the sun and did not see the ball very well. So many great players struck out in that game. Roberto

Clemente struck out four times, something I'd never seen before. But he had a lot of company."

A total of 20 future Hall of Famers were on the two All-Star rosters, 15 of them position players. The Yankees' Al Downing took over in the top of the ninth and pitched two scoreless innings, retiring five of the six Hall of Famers he faced, to keep alive the AL's hopes of only its second win in the last 11 All-Star Games.

"The National League was running hot then," Downing said. "Truth is, that was like a moral victory that we went 15 innings with those guys."

Each of the 12 pitchers who took the mound had at least one strikeout. Of the 13 future Hall of Famers who batted in the game, nine struck out.

Perez joined that list shortly after entering the game as a defensive replacement in the bottom of the 10th.

"I came up in the 12th inning," he said. "Catfish Hunter was pitching, and I had never seen him before. He started me off with a fastball, and made good pitches and struck me out. But at least I got to see him, I got to see all his pitches."

Hank Aaron, Orlando Cepeda and Clemente played all 15 innings for the NL, and combined to go 2-for-18. Harmon Killebrew, Tony Oliva and Tony Conigliaro played all 15 innings for the AL. They, too, were a collective 2-for-18.

Hunter, who had entered in the 11th, was in the midst of his fifth inning of work when Perez came up with one out in the 15th. Cepeda had led off with a drive caught deep in the right-center gap. It was getting dark.

"I've always been a student of hitting, and now this was my second time seeing Hunter," Perez said. "I thought he'd start me with another fastball. He'd been pitching for a while, and might've lost something off the fastball. I got a hold of the first pitch."

Tom Seaver, the Mets' 22-year-old rookie right-hander, came on in the bottom of the 15th to earn a save with a hitless inning that included the 30th strikeout and, incredibly, only the second walk of the 38th All-Star Game.

"In picking the biggest thrill of my lifetime, I'd pick the '67 All-Star Game," said Perez. "It was the biggest, personally. It was my first All-Star Game. Top hit that home run to win that game and be the MVP, it was something special. And I would never have even played if the game doesn't go into extra innings. I still remember everything about that day, that week."

July 11, 1989, to Bo-ldly go where no man has gone before.

Tony La Russa, A's and AL manager, spent the short flight from Oakland to Orange County trying to cull a starting lineup from a roster replete with middle-of-the-order types: "I didn't know what I was going to do."

Dave Duncan, La Russa's pitching coach, sitting in the adjoining seat: "I wouldn't want to face [Bo Jackson] leading off a game. He can hit the ball out of the ballpark, get on base, steal a base, hit a double, hit a triple. He seemed like the perfect guy."

"It made a lot of sense," La Russa said. "The pitcher's trying to figure out what he's got, and all of a sudden, he makes a mistake, it can be more than a single. [Bo was the] most explosive talent playing at the time."

The pregame buzz was deafening over the choice to lead off with the Royals' Jackson, who showed up in Anaheim with 21 homers and 23 steals a few months after having rushed for 580 yards for the Raiders.

Kansas City pitcher Mark Gubicza accompanied by his teammate to his second consecutive All-Star appearance: "Oh, yes. The Bo Show. The greatest athlete I've seen, bar none. This was in the midst of the whole 'Bo Knows' campaign, and he was as big at the time as Kobe Bryant, Tiger Woods -- anybody we have now."

But, before the game, a little fun. Workout Day had become an attraction, climaxed by a skills competition among All-Stars showing off arms, legs and bat-control.

Barry Larkin, the Reds' 25-year-old shortstop leading the Majors with a .342 average at the break, turned to make a throw as the middle-man on the NL relays team: "I remember hearing something pop like a gun-shot or firecracker when I threw the baseball in the relay race. After a few more throws, I felt swelling and I eventually tore my ulnar collateral ligament. I couldn't throw the ball more than 15 feet.

"At the time, I didn't know the severity of the injury, but unfortunately, it really came at a very inopportune time. It was so disappointing. I was playing well at the time and everything was really coming together. In 1989, I began to really establish myself and things were taking off for me personally. I was on fire, but before you know, it was over."

The Show must go on. Soon after Doc Severinsen and his Tonight Show Band performed the last non-vocal rendition of the national anthem prior to an All-Star Game, the NL jumped out to a 2-0 lead on first-inning RBI singles by Kevin Mitchell and Howard Johnson off Dave Stewart. The bottom of the first brought Rick Reuschel to the mound and Bo Jackson to the plate.

"I was all pumped up, sitting in the bullpen talking Nolan Ryan's ear off," said Gubicza. "I was saying, 'This is not a good matchup for Rick Reuschel. He's a sinkerball pitcher, and Bo loves the ball down.' Most right-handed hitters like it high, but Bo loved to go down and get it."

Vin Scully, behind the NBC mike next to former broadcaster Ronald Reagan: "Jackson does baseball and football, and you did football ... "

"Yes, I played the Gipper," Reagan said. "But before that, I also played football. Bo down there, that's a pretty interesting hobby he has for his vacation ... when baseball ends, he winds up playing football."

"He's remarkable ... and look at that one!" Scully responded. "Bo Jackson says hello!"

"Where the bullpens were located back then, you could hear the crack of the bat," Gubicza said. "Bo had a unique sound when he got into one, and I recognized it. Then you could hear the crowd make this sound that was like, 'Oh, my God.' Nobody moved. Everybody just watched it keep going, thinking, 'This thing is gargantuan.'"

"I thought I made a good pitch," Reuschel said. "He just went down and got it. I heard about his power and strength -- and I saw it first-hand."

Mike Scioscia, warming up to go behind the plate in his first NL All-Star appearance: "I was down in the bullpen, getting ready to go in the game, when Bo hit that ball about 8,000 feet. It was incredible. It just seemed to travel forever."

Larkin watched laid up in his hotel room: "I just remember it being a bomb and wasn't too caught up in the hype around the home run. ... I remember saying to myself that was 'one of the farthest balls I'd ever seen hit.'"

"It landed over where the trees are now, way out there," Gubicza said. "It still had some distance to go when it landed. It was awesome to see. Playing with Bo, I was used to him doing incredible things. But that was amazing, even for Bo."

Mark McGwire, the AL's young starting first baseman: "The one thing I do remember is that Bo Jackson was the star of the show. He was a stud."

There was a lot more All-Star baseball to be played. Wade Boggs, the very next batter, in fact also homered. Nonetheless, Jackson's detonation secured his MVP honors for the 60th All-Star Game even before Nolan Ryan -- 42 and a decade after he'd last worn an Angels uniform -- took the Anaheim Stadium mound in the top of the second.

"Of all my All-Star appearances, that was probably my most memorable and the one I enjoyed the most," Ryan said. "I had just signed with the Rangers after all those years in the National League [with the Astros], and a week before that, I had pitched in Anaheim for the first time since leaving the Angels. I received a really nice reception from the fans that day, and it was the same way when I went back for the All-Star Game. At that point of my career, I thought I was done pitching in All-Star Games, so to be able to make it again and to get to pitch again in Anaheim made it a very special moment for me in my career."

Gubicza, who followed Ryan's two shutout innings with one of his own: "To follow Nolan to the mound, that was a huge thrill. As soon as I was done with my inning, I went back to Nolan and was chewing his ear off."

Don Mattingly, who came off the AL's bench in the sixth inning and in the seventh, delivered a two-out double off Jay Howell for his only All-Star hit in his ninth and final at-bat: "I think it was a breaking ball. He threw me a curveball and it was low, I thought it was low. And I remember the umpire called it a ball, and the whole bench over there was yelling that was a strike. I'm like ... I thought it was down. That's what I kind of remember."

The AL's 5-3 victory hardly dented the NL's All-Star dominance, still 37-to-20 strong. But it was a crack.

Willie Randolph, the onetime Yankees great who represented the Dodgers in his sixth and final All-Star Game: "We cared about winning a lot. It was around the time that the National League was still kind of dominating the American League and we took it very personally. It was special because I made it in both leagues. To be able to go to go to the National League and make the All-Star team my first year was a special thrill for me."

"It was my second All-Star Game and being there was great," said Larkin. "But unfortunately, I don't have too many fond memories of the game because of what happened the day before. I was disappointed, but it doesn't haunt me because injuries are a part of the game."

As are memories, of which many more are on-deck.

## **All-Star FanFest kicks off in Anaheim**

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com

07/09/10 12:05 PM ET

ANAHEIM -- The 2010 Major League Baseball All-Star Week officially arrived in Anaheim on Friday with the start of MLB All-Star FanFest.

It kicked off Friday morning at 8:40 PT with the opening ceremonies for FanFest, which is a five-day event at the Anaheim Convention Center that serves as the launch for MLB All-Star Week that culminates with the 81st MLB All-Star Game, to be held on July 13 at Angel Stadium.

Hall of Famer and FanFest spokesperson Rod Carew was there for the ribbon cutting, along with Angels owner Arte Moreno, Angels chairman Dennis Kuhl, city of Anaheim Mayor Curtis Pringle and MLB executive vice president of business Tim Brosnan.



"It's a great experience for all fans," Carew said. "This a great game. I think what Major League Baseball has done, instead of just focusing on the All-Star Game and the players, it's also for fans to be able to come here and participate here at FanFest."

FanFest is the world's largest interactive baseball fan event, featuring more than 40 baseball attractions and exhibits at the 450,000 square-foot Anaheim Convention Center.

FanFest, now in its 20th year, features attraction such as life-sized video batting and pitching cages, clinics from Major League legends, free autograph sessions with former Angels, MLB legends and Hall of Famers, memorabilia and much more.

"I think this event really appeals to families because there's something for everyone here - - whether you're 7 years old or 70 years old," said MLB director of special events Jackie Secaira-Cotto. "Baseball is a sport that connects generations."

It also features plenty of history lessons with the National Baseball Hall of Fame bringing 104 artifacts from Cooperstown, N.Y., and the Negro Leagues exhibit, which honors 35 players who played in the Negro Leagues.

And there's also the Hometown Heroes exhibit that honors the host Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim with 100 different players featured as part of the exhibit.

"It's a history lesson for all the kids who come through FanFest," said Carew, who played in 18 All-Star Games. "There's so much they're going to see and learn. I just tell moms and dads to bring them to FanFest and to experience it, because it only comes here every once in a while."

It will also feature plenty of current and former Major Leaguers, including Angels All-Star center fielder Torii Hunter, who is also a spokesperson for the event.

Hunter, along with other big leaguers such as the Twins' Joe Mauer and the Rays' Evan Longoria, are scheduled to appear on Monday, with a chance for fans to get autographs and participate in a baseball clinic run by Hunter.

"MLB All-Star FanFest is a family event that brings people closer to the sport and I am honored to be a part of it," Hunter said. "I know it will be an experience fans will remember for the rest of their lives."

The event will also feature plenty of former Angels such as Tim Salmon, Jim Fregosi, Doug DeCinces, Wally Joyner, Clyde Wright, Chili Davis and Fred Lynn.

Several Hall of Famers are also scheduled to attend, such as Tony Gwynn, Cal Ripken, Dave Winfield, Earl Weaver, Dick Williams, Harmon Killebrew, Rollie Fingers, Lou Brock, Gaylord Perry, Fergie Jenkins, Luis Aparicio, Bob Feller, Paul Molitor, Juan Marichal, Goose Gossage, Orlando Cepeda and Gary Carter.

All FanFest attractions are free with the price of admission, including autograph sessions with current and former greats. Tickets are \$30 for adults and \$25 for children 12 and under (children two and under are admitted free), senior citizens and military personnel. It's open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. PT from Friday to Monday and open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesday. Tickets can be purchased at [allstargame.com](http://allstargame.com).

"Everything is included in the price except for food and souvenirs," Secaira-Cotto said. "So you don't pay for autographs, you don't pay for going into the batting cages and so on. Everything is included, so it's a great deal."

The event simply kicks off a week of events leading up to Tuesday's All-Star Game at Angel Stadium, including Sunday morning's All-Star Game Charity 5K & Fun Run, which will be attended by former Angels greats Bobby Grich and Carew.

And then there's Taco Bell All-Star Sunday, starting with the XM All-Star Futures Game, which will begin at 5 p.m. PT and can be viewed live on ESPN2, ESPN2 HD and MLB.TV. And after the Futures Game, the Taco Bell All-Star Legends & Celebrity Softball Game will be played at Angel Stadium.

Monday features the State Farm Home Run Derby, which is part of Gatorade All-Star Workout Day, and will be broadcast live on ESPN, ESPN HD, ESPN Deportes, ESPN 3D and ESPN Radio in the United States beginning at 5 p.m. PT

Marlins shortstop Hanley Ramirez, Brewers outfielder Corey Hart, Cardinals outfielder Matt Holliday, Tigers first baseman Miguel Cabrera, Red Sox designated hitter David Ortiz and Blue Jays center fielder Vernon Wells are scheduled to participate in the event.

And then Disneyland helps kick off the All-Star Game festivities on Tuesday with the MLB All-Star Red Carpet Show presented by Chevy. The event, which begins at 11:30 a.m. PT, is scheduled to feature all Major League Baseball All-Stars as well as the AL and NL All-Star team managers, as they make their way down an approximately 6,000 square-yard red carpet stretching three quarters of a mile from the corner of South Harbor Blvd. at Convention Way to Disney Way before continuing down Main Street U.S.A. at Disneyland park.

It all leads up to the 81st MLB All-Star Game, which begins at 5 p.m. PT and will be televised nationally by FOX and around the world by Major League Baseball International. ESPN Radio will provide exclusive national radio play-by-play, while MLB.com will offer extensive online coverage.

## Pineiro takes streak into Oakland

By Cash Kruth / MLB.com

For the past four seasons, Angels pitcher Jered Weaver has been one of the club's top two starters. After the free-agent departure of John Lackey this offseason, Weaver has shifted to the role of bona fide ace, posting All-Star-caliber numbers.

With Weaver's ascension to the top of the rotation, Los Angeles was in need of a No. 2 pitcher. Look no further than Friday's starter, right-hander Joel Pineiro.

Pineiro (9-6, 3.96 ERA) has posted wins in his past six starts, boasting a 2.08 ERA in 43 1/3 innings during that span. In that time, he's also only walked 12 batters.

While Pineiro has been around the league for a decade, Oakland's Friday starter is a relatively new face, but a pitcher who has been solid this season.

Vin Mazzaro, a 23-year-old right-hander, is 4-2 with a 3.81 ERA in seven starts. Since replacing left-hander Brett Anderson (injury) in the starting rotation on June 8, Mazzaro is 3-2 with a 2.97 ERA.

In his last outing, a 3-1 win against the Indians, Mazzaro won his second straight start, holding Cleveland to one run on seven hits in 7 1/3 innings, striking out seven.

"I'm definitely feeling more comfortable," Mazzaro said after his last start. "I'm cutting down on the walks and getting ground balls when I need to. And the guys behind me are making great plays. Good stuff is happening."

Angels: Big bats need to step up

As the first half of the season nears completion, the Angels still need to get more production from Bobby Abreu and Hideki Matsui, two of their most important bats. Both got a day off from the starting lineup on Thursday in hopes that rest might rejuvenate their bats.

"They're just getting a day off," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "They're a little bit tired. They'll be back out there."

Abreu and Matsui have combined for six runs scored (three apiece) and 10 RBIs (five each) in the past 10 games. Abreu has only four hits and a .091 average, while Matsui is batting .206 with seven hits over that span.

A's: Hurlers headed back soon

Oakland's starting rotation will get a post-All-Star break boost, when both Anderson and Dallas Braden are expected to return. Anderson (elbow tendinitis), could be back as early as July 19, while manager Bob Geren said Braden (left elbow stiffness) also is expected back during the first few games of the second half.

Worth noting

Oakland called up right-handed pitcher Ross Wolf from Triple-A Sacramento and optioned right-hander Tyson Ross to Sacramento on Wednesday. ... The Angels scored a total of five runs in their four-game sweep at the hands of the White Sox, who scored 19 runs.

## **Abreu, Matsui sit out Chicago finale**

By Lyle Spencer / MLB.com

07/08/10 6:10 PM ET

- Reunited at the top
- Pineiro exceeding expectations
- Worth noting

CHICAGO -- As their struggles continue, Bobby Abreu and Hideki Matsui were given Thursday off as the Angels tried to avert a four-game sweep by the White Sox at U.S. Cellular Field.

"They're just getting a day off," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "They're a little bit tired. They'll be back out there" when the Angels wrap up the first half with a weekend series in Oakland.

Abreu, a .299 career hitter in 14 seasons, has fallen to .250 with a 5-for-55 slumber, including only one hit in his past 24 at-bats. He still has a shot at an eighth consecutive 100-plus RBI season with 44, and with 14 steals, he's in position to reach 20 or more for his 12th straight season. Most impressively, he's a lock, if he stays healthy, to match Willie Mays' all-time record of 13 consecutive seasons playing at least 150 games.

Matsui's average has dropped to .253 with an 8-for-46 dry spell, with two hits in his past 15 at-bats. Matsui is a .292 career hitter with 90 or more RBIs in five of his six seasons with the Yankees before moving to the West Coast. Hampered by hamstring issues, he played only 51 games in 2006, producing 29 RBIs. He has 46 RBIs this season in 82 games.

### **Reunited at the top**

CHICAGO -- Erick Aybar, Reggie Willits and Howard Kendrick batted at the top of the order for several seasons together in the Angels' farm system, and they were back in that role for Thursday's series finale against the White Sox.

Aybar has been the Angels' regular leadoff man, replacing Chone Figgins, and has put together solid numbers -- .282 batting average, .342 on-base percentage -- after a sluggish start. But Willits and Kendrick haven't had a great deal of Major League experience in the second and third spots.

Willits, whose multiple talents and discipline are ideal for the No. 2 spot, has flourished there in 16 career starts, hitting .344 with a .452 on-base percentage and .393 slugging percentage. He has scored 13 runs in those games. Kendrick, making his ninth start in the No. 3 hole, hit .265 with a .286 OBP and .324 slugging mark in his previous eight opportunities.

Kendrick and Torii Hunter, the cleanup man, have been carrying the Angels' offense of late. In the first three games of the series with the White Sox, they've combined to go 12-for-20 (.600) while the rest of the club has batted .107 (8-for-75).

"We had a lot of success in the Minors playing together," Kendrick said of the trio atop the order, "and there's no reason why we can't do that here. We'll just play our game and see what happens."

### **Pineiro exceeding expectations**

CHICAGO -- The Angels anticipated good things from Joel Pineiro when they signed him to a two-year, \$16-million free-agent deal in the offseason, and he's one of their performers who has lived up to expectations -- and then some.

Pineiro, who will open a weekend series against the Athletics on Friday night, has won his past six starts with a 2.08 ERA across 43 1/3 innings. The right-hander has issued only 12 walks in those six games, consistently keeping the ball down in the zone and getting groundouts.

"Outside of probably two or three tough starts, J.P. has been extremely consistent," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "He's still evolving as a pitcher with his stuff. He's making some great strides."

Pineiro turned his career around last season in St. Louis with a greater dependence on his two-seam fastball. He is mixing it in effectively now with a breaking ball and changeup along with his four-seamer.

"The key for me is to keep the ball down in good spots and to have a good pace and tempo," Pineiro said. "We have a good defense here, and it's important to keep them in the game. A good tempo does that."

### **Worth noting**

The Angels are paying their second visit to Oakland this weekend to wrap up the first half. Three right-handers -- Vin Mazzaro, Ben Sheets and Trevor Cahill -- are lined up to face Joel Pineiro, Scott Kazmir and Jered Weaver, in that order. ... The Angels are 10-3 at the Coliseum since the start of the 2009 season and have taken 10 of the past 14 overall against the A's, holding a 6-4 edge this season. The Angels haven't lost a season series to the A's since 2003 when Oakland claimed 12 of 20. ... The Angels have outscored their opponents, 53-33, in the first inning this season. ... Manager Mike Scioscia used his 69th different lineup in 88 games in Thursday's series finale against the White Sox. ... At both

ends of the travel spectrum: the Angels lead the Majors in air miles this season with 50,509, and the White Sox experience the fewest: 22,832. That's a big jet-lag gap, to say nothing of all the hours lost traveling west to east.

## Swisher, Votto win tight Final Vote

By Mark Newman / MLB.com

07/09/10 9:20 AM ET

The American and National Leagues have added a couple of booming bats to their bench Tuesday in Anaheim with the selection of Nick Swisher and Joey Votto, now that fans have spoken loudly in the four-day All-Star Final Vote Sponsored by Sprint.

Swisher, the Yankees' right-fielder and social-media titan, held off Kevin Youkilis of the rival Red Sox in the closest race in the nine-year history of the Final Vote to claim the 34th and final spot on the All-Star roster with a final tally of 9.8 million votes. Swisher and Youkilis were followed by Paul Konerko of the White Sox, Michael Young of the Rangers and Delmon Young of the Twins.

"Things like that that make you feel so good," Swisher said. "People were telling me, everywhere I went. I'm just excited and couldn't be happier for all the support."

Votto was a machine throughout the Final Vote. The Reds' first baseman won wire-to-wire, powered by a fury of snub response and leading all vote-getters with 13.7 million en route to becoming the first Cincinnati player to win the All-Star Final Vote. He was followed by Ryan Zimmerman of the Nationals, Carlos Gonzalez of the Rockies and Billy Wagner of the Braves. Padres pitcher Heath Bell was running in fifth the first three days then was removed from the NL ballot after he got the good news that he was replacing Brewers pitcher Yovani Gallardo on the NL roster.

"I did my part to earn an All-Star berth. It means a lot to me," Votto said. "I've always wanted to be an All-Star one day. Today I was finally selected."

Baseball fans and clubs alike feverishly supported the 10 candidates named by All-Star managers Joe Girardi (AL) and Charlie Manuel (NL) during the four days of balloting, particularly through their use of MLB.com's All-Star Campaign Manager program, in which nearly 150,000 fans participated and tallied points for their favorite players, and by forming joint alliances, such as Reds-Red Sox (1975 World Series), Nationals and Rangers (Third Base Ticket) and Rox and (White) Sox, ultimately leading to more than 52 million votes being cast.

Swisher had the all-time campaigning day in Final Vote history on Wednesday, bar none. Using baseball's most-followed Twitter account (1,220,890 followers) to his advantage, he sought out and got endorsements from New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, actress

Jessica Alba and "The Apprentice" co-star Ivanka Trump (among others). Then that night he was a triple shy of the cycle in leading the Yankees to a 6-2 victory over the Athletics.

On Thursday morning, it was announced that he held a narrow lead in a "virtual tie" with Youkilis. It didn't take Swisher long to tweet another kick in the rear to voters. He typed: "We're in the final stretch. Can't thank yall enough for your support. Let's finish strong!" And naturally he used the #SENDSWISH hashtag so that as many fans as possible could find his tweet, along with a link to the ballot.

After hearing that he won, Swisher immediately tweeted: "THANK YOU!!!"

Swisher's approach has been as opposite as could be from that of many other athletes, including most of the Final Ballot candidates. The Wall Street Journal even ran a story Wednesday morning on his enthusiasm of promoting himself publicly. There is no question that it worked.

Swisher entered the night's series opener at Seattle with a .298 average to go along with 14 homers, 48 RBIs and 52 runs.

"If you look at all five guys, everybody is so extremely deserving," Swisher had said during the competition. "Everybody has had a wonderful year. Just to be mentioned in the Final Vote with the other four guys is an honor for me."

By outlasting Youkilis, it meant that Red Sox Nation fell short for the first time in the Final Vote. Boston had produced the winner all three times it had tried, with Johnny Damon and Jason Varitek in 2002-03 as the first two AL winners, and then Hideki Okajima in 2007.

Roughly 45 minutes before the end of the voting period, Youkilis did an interview on the Red Sox's flagship radio station -- WEEI-850 AM -- to thank fans for all their support.

"I just wanted to thank all of Red Sox Nation out there that voted," Youkilis said on WEEI's "Big Show." "Even if I fall short, it was still fun."

Votto had a massive groundswell of public support to launch his Final Vote candidacy. Even though it is an especially deep year for NL first baseman, there was disappointment that a leading NL MVP candidate was left off the ballot. Votto expressed that same sentiment himself after learning he had to win the Final Vote to go.

"I was disappointed," he said on Sunday. "I would've liked to have gotten in on the first vote, but I still consider this an honor to give myself a chance to go to the All-Star Game with a pretty good group of guys."

He got in on the second vote.

Votto is batting .313 with an NL-best 21 homers and 59 RBIs. He was a one-man wrecking crew for the Reds in their series opener against the Mets on Monday at Citi

Field, putting his abilities squarely in the spotlight for all to see. He had two homers that day, went 3-for-4, took the Major League home run lead, and at that point seemed unstoppable.

"I would say I'm relieved," Votto said. "I'm really glad this whole thing is over with. It was kind of taxing on me. I'm excited and I really, really appreciate the fans and their support."

It was the Reds' first attempt at the Final Vote, and they mounted a campaign extravaganza. Almost every Reds player taped television spots urging fans to "Vote Votto." Back in Cincinnati, the club enticed almost 200 fans to Great American Ball Park with free pizzas and had them voting on laptops Wednesday afternoon. Mayor Mark Mallory and U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown stopped by to vote. Digital billboards along local highways told drivers to "Vote Votto" -- and then there were those "Vote Votto" T-shirts worn by Reds players at Citi Field while stretching.

"I'm glad the people voted Joey in, big time. He was very deserving," Reds manager Dusty Baker said. "I don't know if it was an oversight as much as Charlie had an idea that his guy and Joey might make it when he chose the five. I think people should realize that Charlie is more astute and knows what's going on than a lot of people give him credit for."

Zimmerman, who was hitting .296 with 16 home runs and 47 RBIs entering Thursday's action, acknowledged that he wanted to go to the All-Star Game, but was happy to see Votto go to Anaheim. "He deserves it," Zimmerman said of Votto. "He shouldn't have been on the Final Vote. I think he is one of the best players in the first half. It would have been fun to go. Just to be considered is an honor."

Konerko was supported with a "Pauliewood" campaign theme, and he thanked his fans with a letter on whitesox.com. In it, he wrote:

"When you start a baseball season in April, your focus is never on your own stats or on personal accomplishments like making the All-Star team. Your focus is on winning. I'm already looking forward to the second half of this season and helping the White Sox reach the postseason once again."

Konerko's supporters were also backing Gonzalez, as the two clubs unveiled a "Rox and Sox" official voting alliance halfway through the proceedings. More people definitely got to know about Gonzalez -- or CarGo to his Rockies fans. The Venezuelan left fielder played big during the voting, leading his team to within three games of the Padres.

"I'm just going to keep working," he said. "Right now, my mentality is to just try to win, to try to get back to the playoffs and try to be the best player I can be. And, maybe in the future, I'll have the opportunity to go."

Unless he is added as an injury replacement, it means Michael Young will not be on hand to try to keep the AL streak alive again. He was a hero in the 2006 and 2008 games, but the even-numbered-year trend apparently will end. How does he feel about the time off?



"I'd rather go to the game," Young said. "But I haven't had the time off in a long time so I'm going to make the most of it. I don't think there is a guy in the big leagues -- whether he has been to zero All-Star Games or 10 -- who would rather be home than at the All-Star Game."

Seattle is the only club that never has had a Final Vote candidate.

Previous winners of the All-Star Game Final Vote Sponsored by Sprint are: Shane Victorino (NL, 2009); Brandon Inge (AL, 2009); Evan Longoria (AL, 2008); Corey Hart (NL, 2008); Hideki Okajima (AL, 2007); Chris Young (NL, 2007); A.J. Pierzynski (AL, 2006); Nomar Garciaparra (NL, 2006); Scott Podsednik (AL, 2005); Roy Oswalt (NL, 2005); Hideki Matsui (AL, 2004); Bobby Abreu (NL, 2004); Jason Varitek (AL, 2003); Geoff Jenkins (NL, 2003); Johnny Damon (AL, 2002); and Andruw Jones (NL, 2002).

The fun doesn't end with the Final Vote, either. The final phase of All-Star Game voting will have fans once again participate in the official voting for the All-Star Game Ted Williams Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet via the 2010 All-Star Game MLB.com MVP Vote Sponsored by Sprint. Carl Crawford of the Rays won the award in 2009.

The 81st Major League Baseball All-Star Game will be televised nationally by FOX, in Canada by Rogers Sportsnet, Sportsnet HD and Le Réseau de Sport, and around the world by Major League Baseball International, with pregame ceremonies beginning at 8 p.m. ET. ESPN Radio will provide exclusive national radio coverage. MLB Network, MLB.com and Sirius XM also will provide comprehensive All-Star Game coverage.

*From the Associated Press*

## **Danks a lot: Angels swept in Chicago**

By The Associated Press

Posted: 07/08/2010 10:32:05 PM PDT

CHICAGO - For six innings, the Angels couldn't hit what Chicago White Sox starter John Danks delivered.

After losing his no-hit bid to start the seventh, Danks maintained his composure and finished with his first career shutout on a two-hitter as the surging White Sox beat the Angels 1-0, completing a four-game sweep and winning for the 22nd time in 27 games.

"On a day like today, you don't want to be standing around out there, don't want your defense standing around out there," Danks said after game that lasted only 1 hour, 50 minutes on a muggy 79-degree day.

"I was just getting the ball and whatever he put down seemed to be the same pitch I wanted to throw. It just worked out that way."

Danks had no walks and seven strikeouts, winning a duel with the Angels' Ervin Santana.

"My stuff was very good. Quick game, too," Santana said. "He was throwing strikes, I was throwing strikes. Whoever made the mistake wouldn't win. ... It was intense. Impressive."

Chicago got a run off Santana (8-7) in the first as he hit leadoff batter Juan Pierre with a pitch, Alex Rios doubled to left and Paul Konerko delivered a sacrifice fly.

And then Danks made it stand up.

Reggie Willits grounded a single just underneath the reach of Chicago shortstop Alexei Ramirez to lead off the seventh for the first hit against Danks, who'd lost his previous two starts. Howie Kendrick then followed with a single up the middle and the Angels had their first threat of the game.

But Danks escaped, getting Torii Hunter on a fielder's choice, Mike Napoli on a pop and then leaping high to snag Juan Rivera's comebacker before throwing him out.

So when did Danks realize he was working on a no-hitter, which could have been the fifth in the majors this season?

"Fifth inning. Any one who says they don't think about it is a liar," Danks said. "You know immediately what is going on out there. Actually, as weird as it sounds, it was pretty fortunate that it was a 1-0 game because you can't get ahead of yourself. The job at hand it still to win the game."

Chicago won its fifth straight and moved within a half game of idle Detroit for first place in the AL Central.

The only Angel to get on base in the first five innings was Cory Aldridge, who reached on third baseman Omar Vizquel's two-out error in the third. White Sox catcher Pierzynski then made a nice sliding, bobbling catch of Erick Aybar's foul pop to end the inning.

Santana gave up only three hits with three walks and four strikeouts to go with the one hit batsman - the only runner who scored in the entire game.

Manager Mike Scioscia held a very brief team meeting following the loss.

"We haven't looked like ourselves. The White Sox have been on fire. There's no excuse," Hunter said. "We have to go out there and play better baseball. If we lose playing better baseball, that's different. But when you lose and you're not playing great baseball, it feels bad. It's the worst feeling ever."

Erstad back with Nebraska

Longtime Angels star Darin Erstad, one of the most decorated baseball players to come out of Nebraska, has rejoined the Cornhuskers team as a hitting coach.

Erstad was an All-America baseball player for the Cornhuskers in 1995 and the punter on the school's 1994 national championship football team. He was the first player picked in the 1995 draft. Erstad spent most of his career, 1996 to 2006, with the Angels.

## **Danks blanks Angels**

By RICK GANO  
AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO (AP) -- John Danks held the Angels hitless for six innings before finishing with a two-hitter Thursday, and the surging Chicago White Sox beat Los Angeles 1-0 for a four-game sweep and their 22nd victory in 27 games.

Danks (8-7) gave up a leadoff single to Reggie Willits in the seventh, stopping his bid for the fifth no-hitter in the big leagues this season. But after yielding another single, he pitched out of trouble and got his first major league shutout.

Chicago won its fifth straight and moved within a half game of idle Detroit for first place in the AL Central.

Stepping up just a day after the White Sox learned they might be without ace Jake Peavy for the rest of the season, Danks, whose previous low-hit performance was a three-hitter last September against the Indians - his only other complete game - worked quickly and was in control of his pitches from the outset.

The sturdy lefty had no walks and seven strikeouts on a humid 79-degree day, winning a duel with the Angels' Ervin Santana in a game that took only 1 hour, 50 minutes.

Chicago got a run off Santana (8-7) in the first as he hit leadoff batter Juan Pierre with a pitch, Alex Rios doubled to left and Paul Konerko delivered a sacrifice fly.

Willits grounded a single just underneath the reach of Chicago shortstop Alexei Ramirez to lead off the seventh for the first hit against Danks, who'd lost his previous two starts. Howie Kendrick then followed with a single up the middle and the Angels had their first threat of the game.

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The only Angel to get on base in the first five innings was Cory Aldridge, who reached on third baseman Omar Vizquel's two-out error in the third. Catcher A.J. Pierzynski then made a nice sliding, bobbling catch of Erick Aybar's foul pop to end the inning.

Santana gave up only three hits.

NOTES: With the southpaw Danks on the mound, Angels manager Mike Scioscia gave slumping lefties Hideki Matsui (4 for 22 in July) and Bobby Abreu (1 for 24) the day off. "They've played so much, it's good, mentally, just to take a breather," he said. ... Manager Ozzie Guillen was asked how the White Sox would fill the rotation vacancy created by the injury to Peavy, who has a detached muscle behind his pitching shoulder. "I think you got to stay in the organization. You don't just pull up the magic thing and make a trade," Guillen said. "That's not easy. When you go into the trade market, there's a lot going on. I think you've got to stay in the organization." Daniel Hudson, 11-4 at Triple-A Charlotte, is a possibility.

## **White Sox' Danks carries no-hitter into seventh, blanks Angels**

CHICAGO -- John Danks seemed to be in a hurry. No time to waste on a muggy day, not after his Chicago White Sox's teammates had played back-to-back rain-delayed games.

Danks got the ball, took the signs from catcher A.J. Pierzynski and then let it go. And for six innings, the Los Angeles Angels couldn't hit what he delivered.

After losing his no-hit bid to start the seventh, Danks maintained his composure and finished with his first career shutout on a two-hitter as the surging White Sox beat the Angels 1-0, completing a four-game sweep and winning for the 22nd time in 27 games.

"On a day like today, you don't want to be standing around out there, don't want your defense standing around out there," Danks said after game that lasted only 1 hour, 50 minutes on a muggy 79-degree day.

"I was just getting the ball and whatever he put down seemed to be the same pitch I wanted to throw. It just worked out that way."

Stepping up just a day after the White Sox learned they might be without ace Jake Peavy for the rest of the season, Danks, whose previous low-hit performance was a three-hitter last September against the Indians - his only other complete game - worked quickly and was in control of his pitches from the outset.

The sturdy lefty had no walks and seven strikeouts, winning a duel with the Angels' Ervin Santana.

"My stuff was very good. Quick game, too," Santana said. "He was throwing strikes, I was throwing strikes. Whoever made the mistake wouldn't win. ... It was intense. Impressive."

Chicago got a run off Santana (8-7) in the first as he hit leadoff batter Juan Pierre with a pitch, Alex Rios doubled to left and Paul Konerko delivered a sacrifice fly.

And then Danks made it stand up.

Reggie Willits grounded a single just underneath the reach of Chicago shortstop Alexei Ramirez to lead off the seventh for the first hit against Danks, who'd lost his previous two starts. Howie Kendrick then followed with a single up the middle and the Angels had their first threat of the game.

But Danks escaped, getting Torii Hunter on a fielder's choice, Mike Napoli on a pop and then leaping high to snag Juan Rivera's comebacker before throwing him out.

So when did Danks realize he was working on a no-hitter, which could have been the fifth in the majors this season?

"Fifth inning. Any one who says they don't think about it is a liar," Danks said. "You know immediately what is going on out there. Actually, as weird as it sounds, it was pretty fortunate that it was a 1-0 game because you can't get ahead of yourself. The job at hand it still to win the game."

Chicago won its fifth straight and moved within a half game of idle Detroit for first place in the AL Central.

"This could have been the biggest game we have this year," manager Ozzie Guillen said of Danks' performance because it allowed the White Sox to rest their tired bullpen with three games left before the All-Star break.

The only Angel to get on base in the first five innings was Cory Aldridge, who reached on third baseman Omar Vizquel's two-out error in the third. Pierzynski then made a nice sliding, bobbling catch of Erick Aybar's foul pop to end the inning.

Santana gave up only three hits with three walks and four strikeouts to go with the one hit batsman - the only runner who scored in the entire game.

Manager Mike Scioscia held a very brief team meeting following the loss.

"We haven't looked like ourselves. The White Sox have been on fire. There's no excuse," Hunter said. "We have to go out there and play better baseball. If we lose playing better baseball, that's different. But when you lose and you're not playing great baseball, it feels bad. It's the worst feeling ever."

NOTES: With the southpaw Danks on the mound, slumping lefties Hideki Matsui (4 for 22 in July) and Bobby Abreu (1 for 24) got the day off. ... Guillen was asked how the White Sox would fill the rotation vacancy created by the injury to Peavy, who has a detached muscle behind his pitching shoulder. "I think you got to stay in the organization. You don't just pull up the magic thing and make a trade," Guillen said. "I think you've got to stay in the organization." Daniel Hudson, 11-4 at Triple-A Charlotte, is a possibility.

*From SportingNews.com*

## **Angels-Athletics Preview**

The Los Angeles Angels stumble into Oakland with their offense embroiled in a major slump, but having the red-hot Joel Pineiro on the mound may be enough for them to avoid a fifth straight loss.

Pineiro already has a shutout against the Athletics this year, and he'll be looking to win a seventh straight start overall for the first time in his career as the AL West rivals open a three-game set Friday night.

Los Angeles (46-42) began its road trip by totaling five runs during the Chicago White Sox's four-game sweep this week, and its lineup has rarely looked worse than it did Thursday.

The Angels matched a season low with two hits against Chicago's John Danks in a 1-0 loss, getting shut out for the second time in 2010. They've been held to two or fewer runs seven times in eight games this month.

"We haven't looked like ourselves. ... There's no excuse," center fielder Torii Hunter said. "We have to go out there and play better baseball."

There has been nothing wrong Pineiro's performance lately. The right-hander has a 2.08 ERA while winning his last six starts, the first time he's done that since June and July of 2003 with Seattle.

Pineiro (9-6, 3.96 ERA) worked seven innings in an 11-0 win over Kansas City on Sunday. On May 16, he was even better against the A's, pitching a four-hitter for his sixth career shutout in a 4-0 win.

"I was getting ahead in the count and was able to get a lot of groundball outs." Pineiro said after that game. "Everybody knows the sinker is my pitch. So if I keep it down, hopefully it's going to get good results."

Pineiro hasn't started at Oakland since 2006, when he went 0-3 with a 12.51 ERA there while pitching for the Mariners, but the A's also are struggling offensively entering this series.

Oakland (41-45) had Thursday off after losing three straight to the Yankees at home, totaling four runs and 16 hits. Catcher Kurt Suzuki is 3 for 28 (.107) in his last seven games, while Daric Barton is hitless in 12 at-bats in his last four contests.

"With the off-day, we get a much-needed physical and mental day off, and we'll come back here ready to play another tough team," manager Bob Geren told the A's official website after Wednesday's 6-2 defeat.

Vin Mazzaro (4-2, 3.81) will try to help prevent the A's from losing a fourth straight home game for the first time in 2010. The right-hander also will be trying to win a third consecutive start for the first time in his career.

Mazzaro struck out a season-high seven while pitching into the eighth inning of a 3-1 victory at Cleveland on Sunday.

"I've been working on keeping the ball down," Mazzaro said. "It's definitely an encouraging sign. I'm throwing in the zone and cutting down on my walks. Guys are making plays behind me. Good stuff is happening out there."

After going 0-1 with a 7.88 ERA in two starts against the Angels last year, Mazzaro beat Los Angeles on June 8, working five innings in a 10-1 win. That was one of three losses for the Angels in 13 games at Oakland since the start of 2009.

*From ESPNLosAngeles.com*

## **Hunter thinks some Angels are coasting**

By Mark Saxon  
ESPNLosAngeles.com  
Archive

CHICAGO -- Thursday's game had been over for five minutes and about half the Los Angeles Angels were still sitting on the top step of their dugout, staring out at the field. The Chicago White Sox were quietly celebrating their four-game sweep, filing past one another and slapping hands.

What were the Angels watching? Was it the quiet death of their playoff hopes? Maybe a more fundamental question was on their minds: What happened to this team?

The offensive bumblings aren't really so mysterious. When Cory Aldridge, Kevin Frandsen, Reggie Willits and Paul McAnulty are regulars in the starting rotation, you've

got some holes. A couple of the Angels' stalwarts appear to be dealing with declining skill sets. An injury to slugger Kendry Morales has finally left its mark.

Talent is one thing. After Thursday's lifeless 1-0 defeat, which prompted manager Mike Scioscia to call a brief team meeting, at least one player was wondering whether some of his teammates are coasting.

"We might have some guys looking at the standings and seeing the three games off for the All-Star break and kind of getting a little loose, relaxed, don't really want to do much," Torii Hunter said. "You can see it. Hopefully it's not that. Every game, you've got to come out 100 percent ready and ready to play hard.

"That's the only way I know how to do it and I'm pretty sure a lot of guys around here do that. We might have some that thinking about that All-Star break, but not many."

When teams are hitting as poorly as the Angels are, it can appear as if they've packed the station wagon and left for vacation early. Thursday, it looked like they had taxis waiting, the meters ticking away. After sitting through four hours of combined rain delays the previous two nights, the Angels looked tired, defeated and only marginally interested as they stepped into the batter's box.

They swung early, they swung often and they made all sorts of outs, one after the next. The game took one hour and 50 minutes, in part because Ervin Santana nearly matched Danks' mastery.

Danks needed only 64 pitches to get through six innings. He hit a tiny little pocket of turbulence the next inning when Willits and Howard Kendrick bunched the Angels' only hits of the day, but it cleared up quickly with a groundout, a pop-up and another groundout. The final eight batters went down in order. Danks, by the way, had struggled mightily in his previous two starts.

The Angels managed just five runs in the four losses here. It was reminiscent of their 2005 ALCS appearance against these White Sox.

Scioscia said he touched on the topic of "give-away" at-bats in Thursday's team get-together. But the main topic was a reminder of the team's potential, he said.

"What we have to keep perspective on is that it's basically the same group of guys right here that, eight days ago, was beating some teams playing some of the best baseball in the league and maybe in baseball," Scioscia said. "It's in there for us to play at the level we need to [in order] to reach our goals."

You could debate Scioscia's last comment for a while. The first part is a fact.

On July 1, the Angels beat Texas and had taken two of three against the AL West's first-place team, pulling them to within 3.5 games of the lead. After Thursday, the Angels



were drifting into that netherworld between contention and irrelevance. They entered the day 5.5 games behind Texas, which matched their largest deficit of the season.

Unless Bobby Abreu and Hideki Matsui start hitting, the margin isn't going to get much smaller. Abreu and Matsui got Thursday off, partly because Danks is left-handed, but also because they're both stuck in awful slumps. Willits and Aldridge got the starts, giving the Angels a distinctly no-hittable look. It seemed like a real possibility until Willits slapped one past diving shortstop Alexei Ramirez into left field when leading off the seventh.

The Angels could drift far enough out of contention that general manager Tony Reagins doesn't bother to make an impact trade at the deadline. He might even trade some players to trim the payroll. In other words, the Angels are at a slippery spot in their season heading into this weekend's series at Oakland. A series win would seem to be a must to keep this team fighting.

"I've been around a long time and I promise you I've seen a lot of things change in September," Hunter said. "All we've got to do is stay positive and try to figure it out."

Earlier this season, Santana blamed the Angels' struggles on the offense, saying a lack of clutch hitting was the problem. He declined to cast any blame after working eight innings of three-hit ball, allowing just one first-inning run Thursday.

"We're never giving up," Santana said. "We know we're going to start hitting well and we just have to keep pitching well. That's it. One day, we're going to get it."

Checked swings

Scioscia and hitting coach Mickey Hatcher met in the manager's office before the game with Frandsen.

"We yelled at him a lot. We got very mad at him and I threw things at him," Scioscia joked.

Actually, Scioscia wanted to talk to Frandsen about one swing he took during Tuesday night's game that left Juan Rivera hung out on the bases. Frandsen started the season with the San Francisco Giants before being traded to the Boston Red Sox. The Angels claimed him off waivers.

"He swung too hard on a hit-and-run the other day and missed it," Scioscia said. "He came from different organizations. We wanted to make sure what he was trying to do in that situation, what he tries to do in a hit-and-run and try to get him to relax."

Quote of the day

"We've been losing games and we look like we're not even competitive. We're just out there." --Hunter.

## Looking ahead

Joel Pineiro (9-6, 3.96 ERA) might seem like an unlikely choice as a stopper, but he has emerged as one of the Angels' best options. Pineiro has won six straight starts, posting a 2.08 ERA in that span. The last time Pineiro won six in a row was in 2003, his best season in the majors.

The Angels face right-hander Vin Mazzaro (4-2, 3.81).

## Angels warned of possible Oakland riots

By Mark Saxon  
ESPNLosAngeles.com  
Archive

CHICAGO -- Major League Baseball called the Los Angeles Angels last week to warn them about the possibility of riots in Oakland this weekend if a verdict comes down in the case of a transit officer who is on trial for shooting an unarmed man on a train platform.

The case, which involves a white officer and a black victim, has sparked racial tensions in the East Bay, so the trial was moved to Los Angeles. Jury deliberations resumed Thursday.

MLB security phoned Angels traveling secretary Tom Taylor to explain the situation and offer the team extra security. The Angels, who are scheduled to arrive in the Bay Area late Thursday night for a weekend series in Oakland, are staying in a San Francisco hotel and will bus to Oakland Coliseum.

"I don't anticipate anything. We're going to play baseball," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Obviously, it's a high-visibility trial and I'm sure there are going to be emotional reactions, but we're going to play baseball. I don't anticipate any issues."

Johannes Mehserle, a former Bay Area Rapid Transit police officer, is charged with murder for allegedly shooting Oscar Grant III at Oakland's Fruitvale BART station Jan. 1, 2009.

Grant, 22, was shot while Mehserle and another officer were trying to handcuff Grant.

*From SportsIllustrated.com*

## **All-Star Game Talk from South Africa**

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — Look, everybody has a different idea about what baseball's All-Star Game is really about.

- It's a game for the fans.
- It's a reward for the players.
- It's all about watching the best players in baseball.
- It's all about watching the best players IN THE FIRST HALF (which is a different thing).
- It's about acknowledging the best teams.
- It's about acknowledging the best teams IN THE FIRST HALF (which is a different thing).
- It's a real game where winning and losing matters (hey, World Series home field advantage is on the line!).
- It's an exhibition game where there's nothing but personal pride at stake.

And so on... and so on... there really is an endless and fairly unrealistic string of expectations and demands placed on baseball's All-Star Game. It tries to be everything to everyone, and because of this, in the end, it will always spur conversation about how stupid it is. Nothing in the long history of mankind can be everything to everyone — except maybe *The Simpsons*.

There are two of these contradictions I want to talk about for a minute before griping about the snubbing of Joey Votto (and Jered Weaver... and Kevin Youkilis... and others).

The first is this idea of whether the game is for the best players or the best players in the first half. Last year, you may recall, I did a much maligned list of the 100 best players in baseball, and while the list was deservedly torched (I, um, may have been overrating the suddenly hopeless Pablo Sandoval, for instance), my problem was really the All-Star Game's problem — I did not have a clear-enough idea of what that list was supposed to be about. I wasn't sure how much that list was supposed to reflect the first half of the season, and how much that list was supposed to reflect the player's true value. When I do my list again here in a couple of weeks, I think I have that part figured out. It will still get torched, but for different reasons.

Anyway, it's hard. We'll have more about the Reds' Joey Votto in a minute... but the truth basically seems to be that he was left off the list for Philadelphia's Ryan Howard. Now, THIS YEAR that's ludicrous. Votto hasn't just been better than Ryan Howard in every single way possible — but he's been A LOT better in every single way possible. His on-base percentage is 61 points better, his slugging percentage is 68 points better, his OPS+ is 35 points better, his defense at first base has been about three or four grades better, even his TEAM has been better, which isn't necessarily relevant to the conversation but certainly can't hurt the guy.

So, comparing half-season to half-season, this is no contest, Votto is a slam-dunk, no-doubt choice over Howard. But is that really what the All-Star Game is about? You might think so. I might think so. But someone else might think, no, the All-Star Game is about having the biggest stars perform in front of the fans. And over the last five years, Ryan Howard has been a much bigger star than Joey Votto — he has won an MVP and finished second in another year, he has hit more home runs than any player in baseball, he has led the league in RBIs three times, and he has been a central figure in the Phillies' renaissance. Fan voting is obviously a flawed way of looking at things, but it is true that 500,000 more people voted for Howard than Votto.

The point is point of view... what do you want the All-Star Game to be about? And, no matter what you say, is that what EVERYONE ELSE wants the All-Star Game to be about? Probably not. The question of whether Stephen Strasburg belonged in this game always seemed incredibly silly to me, but it gets at the heart of whether the game is entirely for the fans or is more of a reward for the players.

Of course Strasburg doesn't DESERVE to go to the All-Star Game... he has made all of six career starts. And as impressive as he has been (and few in America have banged the Strasburg drum louder than I have), it's not like he has thrown six straight shutouts or anything. I have little doubt that if healthy and focused, Strasburg will be the best pitcher in baseball — sooner rather than later — but the ONLY way he should be in the All-Star Game is if this thing is just a fun exhibition that gives the fans what they want to see.

Well, some people think that's EXACTLY what the All-Star Game should be. It is true, I think, that if you had some sort of American Idol call-in to determine who fans would like to see start in the All-Star Game, Strasburg would have a pretty good shot\*. Strasburg is the hot ticket right now. But is that what the All-Star Game means?

\*I cannot believe, incidentally, that baseball has missed out on this call-in opportunity.\*\* I predict that the NBA will be the first to have a call-in show for the All-Star Game. There could be two shows built around it on ESPN. This will happen, I'll bet. And I don't even want to GET INTO the whole "every team has to have a representative" conversation, which takes this thing in another other direction.

\*\*Come to think of it, I can't believe LeBron James hasn't made his thing Free Agency Idol.

Here's what I think the All-Star Game means — and I will readily admit that this is just my opinion and probably does not match anybody else's: I think the All-Star Game

should focus on the players having the best seasons. Well, before anything else, I like fans voting for the starters. I don't mind that they sometimes pick players having rough seasons, like Yadier Molina, or that they go for their favorites like Ichiro. The game, to me, starts with the fans... that is part of what makes the game more meaningful than any of the other All-Star Games (until NBA Idol begins). Let the fans pick whoever they want. They want Ichiro starting, that's good with me.

And after the starters — I think fans should pick starting pitchers too, by the way — then I think the team should be filled out with the guys having the best years. I think this for two reasons: One, I do think All-Star Games should be rewards for players having good years.

Two, even more, I think by picking the guys having the best years you are giving the fans a look at some new stars to keep an eye on. Let's face it: Most fans are not watching all 30 teams. It's hard enough for goofy bloggers in South African hotel lobbies to do that. Most baseball fans are probably entirely unaware of how good a season Joey Votto is having, or Jered Weaver, or Alex Rios\*, or Josh Willingham. The All-Star Game, it seems to me, should celebrate those players. Yes, some will fall off dramatically and we will say "Can you believe that Ken Harvey made an All-Star Team?" But a lot of time, this will help fans discover new stars. Joey Votto, I am convinced, is absolutely for real.

\*Yes, yes, I am aware how good a season Rios is having and also aware that last year, in picking the worst baseball contracts out there (which I called Ricciardis), I included Alex Rios and Vernon Wells (who I picked No. 1), and that both are having huge comeback years. I heartily accept being wrong in both cases.

So, with my own philosophy in mind of picking players having the best years... here are the players I think got royally snubbed in the All-Star Game process.

#### 1. Joey Votto (Reds)

Yes, well, NL manager Charlie Manuel did not help the "Ryan Howard Deserved It" cause by explaining that he picked Howard because "He's my guy." In a way, I can understand Manuel's dilemma — his job is to be manager of the Phillies and not manager of the All-Star Game. That is to say, there were no personal or professional benefits for him to call Ryan Howard into his office and say, "Look, Ryan, I chose Joey Votto, he's having a better year than you are. Just look at his OPS+!" No, most of us placed in Manuel's shoes would have done exactly what he did.

Then, to me, that's a pretty big flaw in the process. I suppose the reward for winning a pennant is being the All-Star manager, and the only "reward" that really comes with it is being able to pick your own players to spur them on, inspire them, help them out, whatever. But it's just goofy... there should be a better process for this sort of thing. Votto really is having a great year — his numbers so far are only percentage ticks shy of Albert Pujols\* — and it's absurd that he has so far not been picked for the All-Star Game (though he is part of the fan final vote). It's doubly absurd when you realize the reason why.

\*On Sunday, I tweeted this: “Building an All-Star roster is a complicated matter — but here’s a hint. You START with Joey Votto. Then go from there.” I got a bunch of responses from outraged people saying things like “WOT ABUT PUJOLS!!!!!!!!!!!!” Sigh. I of course meant building a roster AFTER the fans picked the starters. But 140 characters really isn’t enough to go into great detail about your views.

## 2. Jered Weaver (Angels)

I’m not entirely sure I understand the Jered Weaver story. He was a high draft pick in 2004 — 12th overall — and widely considered to be a huge prospect. He made it to the big leagues in less than two years, and was something of a sensation — going 11-2 with a 2.56 ERA in his rookie year (and finishing behind Kenji Johjima in the Rookie of the Year balloting... the voters’ scouting eyes might have been a bit off there). Over the next three seasons he would have a 40-25 record with a tidy 113 ERA+. Solid numbers, not spectacular, but certainly good for a mid-20s pitcher who had been hyped. Certainly enough to get noticed. His 2009 season, where he was among the league leaders in ERA, complete games and shutouts, was better than solid.

Then, this year, he has blown up. He leads the American League in strikeouts and strikeouts per nine innings. He is in the Top 10 in ERA, WHIP, and Wins Above Replacement. And, one other thing: The All-Star Game is IN HIS HOME PARK. I mean, this should make the guy the All-Star lock of locks, right?

Only... no. He was not taken. And it gets to my larger point which is: Why is Jered Weaver so underrated? He does seem to fit into the underrated box — he’s in a big market, on a fabulous team, he did not come out of nowhere, his talents are not subtle or difficult to follow. He throws a low-to-mid 90s fastball, a tight curveball, a swing-and-miss changeup and he strikes out 10 per nine innings, and I just don’t get why people don’t know more about him and appreciate his talents. A good argument could be made that Jered Weaver should be STARTING this All-Star Game in front of the home fans. Instead he’s not even on the team at the moment. That’s just lunacy.

Adding to the lunacy is that Yankees manager Joe Girardi picked CC Sabathia who, in addition to not having as good a year as Weaver, is lined up to start on Sunday before the All-Star Game. So he won’t be able to pitch in the game, which would allow Girardi to pick, say, Andy Pettitte, who is also not having as good a year as Weaver. That All-Star managing thing is quite the racket.

## 3. Kevin Youkilis (Red Sox)

Speaking of absurdly underrated players — how does Kevin Youkilis manage to stay underrated? He was the star of Moneyball, for crying out loud. He plays for the Boston Red Sox, for crying out loud. He... well, just, for crying out loud.

Youkilis is one of the biggest stars in baseball, but he just doesn’t SEEM that way to people. Remember the year that Dustin Pedroia won the MVP? That was 2008, and Pedroia seemed to me a viable choice — it wasn’t a strong MVP season for anyone, and Pedroia had a very good year and played a premium position and so on. But it’s probably

worth pointing out that offensively Youkilis was quite a lot better (a 143 OPS+ to 122, for starters), and Youkilis is a fabulous defensive first baseman (which no doubt helped Pedroia defensively, and vice versa) and Youkilis, perhaps even more than Pedroia, offers that grit and crazed intensity that so many people seem to love.

Youkilis is having his best season so far — leads the league in runs, on pace for 40 doubles, 30 homers, 100 walks, has a 159 OPS+ — and he was left off the list for, among others, Alex Rodriguez, who is having a blah season by his sturdy standards. But, hey, those managers have to take care of their own.

#### 4. Francisco Liriano (Twins)

It is a complicated thing, judging pitchers. By conventional measurements, Liriano is having a good but certainly not exceptional season — he's 6-6 with a 3.32 ERA.

So, why is it that according to Fangraphs, Liriano has a staggeringly high 4.2 Wins Above Average — the highest in baseball (yes, higher than, among others, Ubaldo Jimenez, Jon Lester and Cliff Lee)? Well, when it comes to stuff that pitchers can reasonably control, Liriano has been special. He's striking out about 10 per nine innings and his strikeout-to-walk ratio is 116-28. He has allowed two home runs all year. Two.

People may enjoy mocking the statistical acronyms in baseball, but FIP — standing for Fielder Independent Pitching — works hard to separate a pitcher's own contribution from luck and the good/bad work of his fielders, and Liriano's 2.10 FIP is the best in baseball. Then, xFIP takes it to the next level — trying to also bring into account if a pitcher is lucky or unlucky in giving up home runs — and Liriano's 2.88 xFIP is ALSO the best in baseball.

You can decide for yourself what such statistics are worth. I appreciate and understand that lots of people would prefer to stick with the simple stuff — wins, strikeouts, ERA, maybe WHIP, even ERA+ — and baseball is meant to be enjoyed however you would like to enjoy it. But it's probably worth noting that it's at least possible that if you look a bit more closely you will find that nobody in baseball has been pitching better this season than Francisco Liriano.

#### 5. Miguel Olivo (Rockies)

I have always liked Miguel Olivo. Yes, he's a wild pitch machine — poor Miggy couldn't block the plate with a two-foot thick concrete wall and the Indianapolis Colts' offensive line. And yes, he is generally harder to walk than our old dog Hilton, who believed all his little doggie life that running as hard as he could until the leash gagged him, then running hard again until the leash gagged him, then running hard again until the leash gagged him, was more or less how the walking procedure was supposed to go.

But Olivo has his strengths, too. He has a bazooka of an arm, which he loves to show off at all times. He has shown off that arm this year to the tune of throwing out 51% of all stolen base attempts. He's got some pop in his bat — he hit 23 home runs last year in 416 PAs, and he has already hit 11 this year. And, though he may not have the sturdiness of

Jim Sundberg behind the plate, superior pitchers do seem to enjoy throwing to him. Zack Greinke sure did last year, and he won a Cy Young. Ubaldo Jimenez sure has this year, and he would win the first half Cy Young if there was such a thing (the Jack Armstrong Award?). And Olivo's just a very likable guy in general.

Olivo this year is hitting .308/.355/.540 — he has even walked 19 times, which is what he did all of last year. Those are the best offensive numbers for any catcher. His WAR is the best among National League catchers. He's having an All-Star season. But he's not going to the All-Star Game.

Two other choices I personally would have preferred:

- Paul Konerko over David Ortiz

I personally think it's plain lunacy the way the All-Star Game treats "designated hitter" like it's a real position. They have the fans vote on one. Then they have the PLAYERS vote on another. Are you serious? I mean, I am generally PRO designated hitter as a concept, but let's be honest about what it is: It's a place for a hitter not good enough to play the field. That's all.

So, yes, I'm all for picking a designated hitter for the All-Star Game if he's better than every other available hitter at every other position. Ortiz is having what I believe is a miraculous season... I have rarely been so sure that a player was done. But Youkilis is having a markedly offensive better season and should not be marked down because he happens to be a dynamite defensive player. Or if you prefer a more apples-to-apples comparison, Paul Konerko is having a better offensive season than Ortiz, too, and he's basically a designated hitter playing first base.

- Ryan Zimmerman (or just about anybody else) over Omar Infante

The Omar Infante choice has rightly been bashed by just about everybody — a 96 OPS+ utility infielder to the All-Star Game is undoubtedly one of the strangest things I've ever seen. And it wasn't even from Charlie's own team. This isn't even a choice you rip so much as one that makes you worry that Charlie Manuel got hit in the head and you can only hope that he is OK.

But let's take the approach that Charlie chose Infante because he wanted versatility in case the game got out of hand. Even then, he absolutely should have taken Zimmerman, who is a ridiculously brilliant third baseman and can absolutely play shortstop, second base, and probably the outfield if you absolutely needed him out there. The All-Star Game is loaded with bizarre choices through the years, but I think it's quite possible that Omar Infante is the most bizarre in baseball history.



*From the USAToday.com*

## **American League Team Notes**

### **BALTIMORE ORIOLES**

#### **INSIDE PITCH**

The Orioles have made it a practice to wait until the day of a game before announcing a newcomer to the roster.

So the promotion of Chris Tillman from Class AAA Norfolk won't be final until Saturday morning. But all signs point to the promising righty making Saturday's start in Texas.

Interim manager Juan Samuel suggested the team considered reliever Mark Hendrickson for a spot start, but he indicated the team would likely promote a pitcher from the minor leagues instead.

Tillman will be on regular rest Saturday after throwing a one-hitter in his last outing.

With veteran Kevin Millwood missing at least two starts with a strained right forearm, the team will need more than just a spot start. Tillman represents the future, and on a team that sits in last place with no hope of contending, looking toward the future won't upset any timetables.

Hendrickson will be needed in the bullpen, where the relief corps has undergone a taxing week, logging significant innings. With a powerful Texas lineup and a history of yielding high run totals in Arlington, the Orioles would be wise to keep the bullpen as deep and intact as possible.

The only drama in determining how to replace Millwood in the rotation is how to create space on the roster. Infielder Josh Bell and right-handed reliever Frank Mata are the leading candidates to be optioned to Norfolk.

**ORIOLES 6, RANGERS 4:** The Orioles used two runs in the seventh and three in the eighth to battle back from a 4-0 deficit. It was just the second win this month for the Orioles, who had hits from every starter but CF Adam Jones.

#### **NOTES, QUOTES**

—RHP Jeremy Guthrie didn't make it through the fifth Thursday, scattering four runs on seven hits and five walks. He struck out one on 88 pitches in 4 2/3 innings. In his last 14 2/3 innings, Guthrie has walked 12 batters and surrendered 13 earned runs. The bullpen put together 4 1/3 shutout innings Thursday to hand Guthrie a no-decision.

—RHP David Hernandez earned the victory with 1 1/3 innings of relief. Hernandez scattered two hits and struck out one on 26 pitches, improving to 4-7 for the year.

Hernandez becomes the first Orioles pitcher to win four games this season, ending the chance the team would become the first in big-league history without at least a four-game winner at the All-Star break.

—OF/DH Felix Pie homered for the first time since coming off the disabled list. But he also gave the Orioles a scare by taking a Darren Oliver pitch off his right hand in the eighth. He remained in the game and was thrown out at home plate to end the Orioles' three-run inning.

—2B Scott Moore hit his third home run of the season Thursday, going 1-for-3 with a walk while playing second and first base. He is playing fairly regularly, and he will continue to do so as a second baseman if there is a righty on the mound.

—RF Nick Markakis went 1-for-5 with a run scored and also stole his third base of the season. He is batting .306 and has maintained an average of .300 or higher since June 16. He just missed a home run, instead settling for his team-best 26th double.

BY THE NUMBERS: 77 — Games before an Orioles first baseman homered, a skid that ended with Ty Wigginton's two-run homer June 30.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "It sucks. I am glad the ball went out. But this is frustrating." — DH/OF Luke Scott, on straining his left hamstring rounding first base on a June 30 home run.

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## BOSTON RED SOX

### INSIDE PITCH

In an effort to push first basemen Kevin Youkilis and Joey Votto over the top in fan balloting for the final All-Star roster spots in their respective leagues, the Red Sox and Reds joined forces this week for a "Vote Red!" public-relations campaign.

At least it worked for Votto.

In what Major League Baseball labeled Thursday as "the closest race in the nine-year history of the Final Vote," Yankees right fielder Nick Swisher edged Youkilis for the final American League roster spot. Swisher, who promoted himself on his Twitter account and got endorsements from New York mayor Michael Bloomberg and actress Jessica Alba, received 9.8 million votes. MLB didn't release Youkilis' vote total.

Youkilis, who isn't on Twitter but did receive support from Sen. John Kerry, is batting .292 with 17 homers and 55 RBI and leads the Red Sox in on-base percentage (.409) and slugging (.574). Swisher is batting .298 with 14 homers, 48 RBI, a .376 on-base percentage and a .518 slugging percentage.

Votto, meanwhile, was a runaway winner in the National League. He leads the NL with 22 home runs.

About 45 minutes before the end of the voting period Thursday, Youkilis did an interview with the Red Sox's flagship radio station to thank fans for all their support.

"Even if I fall short, it was still fun," Youkilis said.

Youkilis was selected to the previous two All-Star Games.

## NOTES, QUOTES

—RHP Michael Bowden has been a starter throughout his minor league career. But earlier this week, the Red Sox told him he'd be moving into the bullpen at Class AAA Pawtucket, possibly as a precursor to a major league call-up, and Wednesday night, he pitched two scoreless innings at Lehigh Valley.

"We've always thought he's going to impact our club someday, somehow," said Mike Hazen, the Red Sox's director of player development. "The way we look at it, Michael has certainly proven the ability to be a depth starter for us down the road or at some point during the course of the season. We want to take a look at him out of the 'pen and see how he responds to that challenge."

With so many teams still in playoff contention, the trade market can be unpredictable. Entering Thursday's games, 18 teams were still within 6 1/2 games of a wild-card spot, so it isn't easy to identify the buyers and sellers. Also, given the erratic nature of relievers, general manager Theo Epstein said last week that he's wary about giving up too much.

"I think we feel somewhat comfortable with our own guys," manager Terry Francona said. "Theo has been pretty open about how it's a crapshoot (trying to trade for relievers). I agree with him. So, rather than do something like that, give in-house every opportunity."

—LF Jacoby Ellsbury, who has spent the past month at the Athletes' Performance Institute in Arizona, will rejoin the Red Sox and start doing baseball activities on Friday in Toronto. Ellsbury will spend the weekend with the Red Sox and then fly to Fort Myers, Fla., on Monday to continue his work during the All-Star break.

Ellsbury went on the disabled list in late May with fractured ribs, and his activities in Arizona have been limited to mostly weight-lifting and cardio work, with a little light throwing. He's expected to begin more baseball activities this week. Once he goes to Fort Myers, he'll remain there until he's ready to begin a minor league rehab assignment. The Red Sox are hoping he'll be ready to rejoin the team for good by late July or early August.

"It's been awhile. We're excited to see where he's at," manager Terry Francona said.

—LHP Jon Lester was bound to turn his season around after three poor starts in early April. The reversal of fortune began in Toronto on April 28, when he allowed only one hit over seven scoreless innings against the Blue Jays. Ever since, he's 10-1 with a 1.95 ERA and 97 strikeouts in 92 1/3 innings. Lester, named to the AL All-Star team, will make his final start before the All-Star break on Friday night against the Blue Jays in Toronto. Since the start of last season, Lester is 4-1 with a 1.57 ERA and 38 strikeouts in 34 1/3 innings in five starts against the Jays.

—INF Jed Lowrie went 1-for-2 with a walk Thursday in his second rehab game for short-season Lowell. He went 1-for-2 with two walks Monday. Lowrie has been sidelined all season due to mononucleosis.

BY THE NUMBERS: 6 — All-Stars the Red Sox will have after Kevin Youkilis lost the fan vote for the final player on the American League roster.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "It's something you grow up watching as a kid, the home run derby and everything. You see a lot of great players playing that game. It's definitely an honor. Like I said before, I'm going to try to do my best to represent the Red Sox and hopefully do well out there." — LHP Jon Lester, talking about getting selected an AL All-Star for the first time in his major league career.

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## CHICAGO WHITE SOX

### INSIDE PITCH

Winning has obviously erased a lot of problems that were going on with the White Sox earlier this year, but that still doesn't mean that general manager Ken Williams is just sitting on his hands.

However, if Williams is trying to improve the team with a trade, he's going about his business very quietly.

According to manager Ozzie Guillen, he has yet to sit down and have any sort of talk with Williams to see if the GM wants to address the hole left in the rotation by Jake Peavy's likely season-ending injury, go after a bat or stand pat.

While the two weren't even on speaking terms a month ago, they now at least are civil enough to talk business. Problem is, there hasn't been much discussion lately.

"Maybe later on we'll talk about it," Guillen said. "I think you've got to stay in the organization (for a pitcher). You don't just pull up the magic thing and make a trade. That's not easy. When you go into the trade market, there's a lot going on. I think you've got to stay in the organization. Who it's going to be? I don't know who's down there or who's ready to pitch that day."

Daniel Hudson is likely that guy on Sunday, at least for the short-term. If the Sox are forced to look long-term? That very well could rest on how Hudson performs.

That doesn't mean there haven't been trade rumors swirling around the club. The Sun-Times first reported the Sox jumping into the Adam Dunn sweepstakes over a week ago, and now Carlos Quentin and Gordon Beckham have surfaced as possible names that the Nationals are looking at.

"I don't think it's strange, because when you have guys that are considered the prospects of the organization they'll always be talked about in the trade rumors," Beckham said. "I can't really worry about that.

"It's just business. It is. If it was about your feelings, then a lot of things would go differently. But it's not. It's about winning. I'm not surprised. I mean, if we're talking about getting somebody, then usually they're going to talk about me or John (Danks), Gavin (Floyd) or some other young pitcher."

WHITE SOX 1, ANGELS 0: The Sox came into the finale with the Angels on Thursday with an overworked bullpen, but thanks to John Danks, the relievers got a breather. Danks threw a complete-game shutout, taking a no-hitter into the seventh inning before Reggie Willits broke it up with a single through the left side. It was one of only two hits he allowed.

Paul Konerko's sacrifice fly in the first inning was all Chicago needed off Ervin Santana. It was the Sox's fifth consecutive win, and their 22nd win over their last 27 games.

## NOTES, QUOTES

—LHP John Danks outdueled the Angels' Ervin Santana, throwing a two-hit shutout in a 1-0 White Sox victory Thursday.

Danks threw 111 pitches, 81 of them for strikes, fanning seven Angels and walking none. "I was just getting the ball and whatever (C A.J. Pierzynski) put down seemed to be the same pitch I wanted to throw. It just worked out that way."

—INF Omar Vizquel started at third base Thursday, with 21-year-old rookie Dayan Viciedo back on the bench. But with 3B Mark Teahen inching closer to returning from a fractured right middle finger, maybe as early as late July, some decisions will have to be made. Asked to assess if Viciedo has shown more than Teahen, manager Ozzie Guillen wanted to give it more time.

"I think it's early, but still, (Viciedo) gives you some sign that he should be in the big leagues, then all of a sudden, he gives another sign that says I don't know if he's ready yet," Guillen said. "He's going to survive. Of course he will survive, but in the meanwhile, against good pitching he's going to struggle. In the meantime, he's got big hits for us. I see how he handles himself at third base. I don't see any problems there. He's going to make errors because he's a kid."

Now that Vizquel's left knee is better, he will hold down the fort most of the time at third, as well as be a defensive replacement over there late in games when he's not playing.

—OF/DH Carlos Quentin was given one more day off by manager Ozzie Guillen, with the hope that he will return to the starting lineup Friday against Kansas City. He has missed three consecutive games with a sore left knee. "(Wednesday), as soon as he said, 'I don't feel good enough,' then I said you don't play (Thursday) either," Guillen said. "Just to make sure in his mind he knows he is not playing and he can worry about his knee. I expect him to play (Friday)."

—RHP Daniel Hudson has yet to be officially named the starting pitcher for Sunday, but all signs point to the top prospect to get that nod, especially since C A.J. Pierzynski let it out of the bag after the 1-0 win over the Angels on Thursday. "He's been throwing, from every report I got, he's been outstanding," Pierzynski said of Hudson. "He doesn't walk guys. He comes right at them. That's all you can ask for. As long as he doesn't walk guys, he'll be fine. He has good stuff. He throws strikes and has a great changeup, good curveball, good sinker. As long as he's ahead in the count and throws strikes, he should be fine."

—2B Gordon Beckham was again in the starting lineup Thursday, and for the first time this week, Brent Lillibridge wasn't. That doesn't mean that manager Ozzie Guillen was done riding Lillibridge's hot bat out, even if it means putting Beckham back on the pine. Lillibridge owned a career-high, six-game hitting streak heading into Thursday, going 7-for-15 (.467) with six RBI in that time. Guillen will continue putting the both of them in and out of the lineup, at least until Lillibridge cools off some.

—C A.J. Pierzynski was back in the starting lineup Thursday after getting a breather Wednesday, when Ramon Castro caught RHP Freddy Garcia. With a single in the second inning, Pierzynski also broke a 14-at-bat hitless streak. Pierzynski will start Friday against Kansas City, as well.

BY THE NUMBERS: 20 — Homers Paul Konerko had through July 7. If he is able to win the American League homer title, he would be just the fourth Sox player to do it. No Sox player has ever led all of baseball in that category.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "We expected to be a team that was built around strong pitching and trying to manufacture enough runs, and that's how we've got it done lately. Good starting pitching and a strong bullpen... we haven't wowed anybody with offensive numbers. We just played good, consistent defense and pitched well. It took us awhile to form our identity as a team and really understand who we are." — Sox pitcher Jake Peavy, on the philosophy the Sox have had in climbing back into the division race.

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CLEVELAND INDIANS

INSIDE PITCH

The Indians have a handful of veterans who are candidates to be dealt by the trading deadline. One of the more interesting cases is that of Jake Westbrook, who suffered a 5-2 loss to Tampa Bay on Thursday night.

The 32-year-old veteran is in the last year of a three-year, \$33 million deal. He is making \$11 million this season. Over the three years of the contract, Westbrook has had a record of 6-7.

Westbrook missed all of the 2009 season while recovering from elbow reconstruction surgery. He was the Indians' Opening Day starter this season and has pitched decently, but nowhere close to as well as in a three-year period from 2004-06, when he won a total of 44 games.

The Indians almost never re-sign their players when they become free agents. So assuming that's the case with Westbrook, it would obviously make Westbrook very available in a trade.

Whether Westbrook has pitched well enough to be of interest to a contending team is another matter. In 18 starts this season, he is 5-5 with a 4.75 ERA. Thursday was a fairly typical start for Westbrook this year. He pitched six innings and gave up five runs on eight hits, with seven strikeouts and no walks.

It was Westbrook's last start before the All-Star break.

RAYS 5, INDIANS 2: RHP Jake Westbrook gave up three home runs in six innings, accounting for all of Tampa Bay's runs as his record fell to 5-5. The Indians' only runs came on home runs by OF Michael Brantley and 1B Andy Marte.

#### NOTES, QUOTES

—SS Asdrubal Cabrera, out since mid-May with a fractured left forearm, is scheduled to take batting practice for the first Friday. He might begin a rehab assignment during next week if all goes well.

—RHP Jake Westbrook gave up five runs, all of them coming on three home runs, in six innings in a 5-2 loss to Tampa Bay. It was Westbrook's first loss to the Rays since Aug. 12, 2005. In six starts vs. Tampa Bay since then, he had been 5-0 with a 2.81 ERA.

—1B Matt LaPorta missed his third consecutive game Thursday after getting inadvertently elbowed in the head on a play at first base Monday. Manager Manny Acta said he expects LaPorta to be back in the lineup Friday or Saturday.

—OF Michael Brantley led off the game with a home run Thursday at Tampa Bay. It was Brantley's first major league home run.

—2B Jayson Nix was 0-for-5 Thursday. That snapped his six-game hitting streak and his streak of having hit home runs in each of the last three games.

—1B Andy Marte hit his second home run of the season Thursday. Marte was playing in place of 1B Matt LaPorta, who has been given a few days off after getting elbowed in the head. The home run was Marte's first since April 22.

BY THE NUMBERS: 0 — Home runs allowed by Indians pitchers in 36 innings over a four-game series from June 28-July 1 versus Toronto, which leads the major leagues in home runs.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "You get the sign and you're like, 'Did he really just give me that?'"

— DH Travis Hafner, perhaps the slowest runner on the Indians' roster, who scored from third on a squeeze bunt versus Toronto on June 28.

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## DETROIT TIGERS

### INSIDE PITCH

Is he a Hall of Famer, or not?

That's a question 10-year veterans of the Baseball Writers' Association of America will face regarding Johnny Damon in about a decade.

Damon had a very good week in only two games.

On Tuesday, he collected his 2,500th career hit and then upstaged himself with a walk-off, two-run home run in the 11th inning.

The next day, Damon took it upon himself to lay down a sacrifice bunt after Austin Jackson had started a game against Baltimore with a double. One groundout later, Detroit had a 1-0 lead in a game it won 4-2.

"He's a slasher," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said. "He can look bad on one pitch and get it again and hit it for a double. He's a hacker and a slasher, and (he's) done it pretty good for a long time.

"I doubt anybody would say, 'He's got a beautiful swing.' But I mean that in a flattering way. He's going to be going for 3,000 hits, and I think he's going to want to make a run at that. He's had a hell of a career and has been a hell of a player. He likes to play, he really does."

Damon will take 2,502 hits into Detroit's weekend series against Minnesota. He's 36, in reasonably good shape, has adapted very well to playing DH and has a reasonable shot at 3,000 hits depending upon where he plays and how he's used over the next three to four seasons.



He's had a minimum of 144 hits every year since 1998 and should end up around 2,575 when this season ends.

An average of 150 hits over the next three years would get him to 3,000, which many voters look on as a Hall of Fame number. But he's reached the stage where if he stops hitting, he stops playing.

The fact Damon has also driven in runs and scored runs over his career works in his favor. Plus, he's played on winning teams and he's been able to steal a base needed.

His only drawback is a rainbow arm.

"You play the game long enough," Damon said, "and you put yourself in pretty good company.

"I wished I'd thought of this earlier in my career. I was never as greedy as maybe I should've been."

So is Damon a Hall of Famer, or not? In three years, maybe we'll know.

#### NOTES, QUOTES

—RHP Justin Verlander has tinkered with his routine to adjust to pitching with extra rest. It was pointed out to Verlander late last month he was measurably more effective starting every fifth day than when he pitched with five or more days of rest. He had a three-game winning streak snapped June 22 working on an extra day off. Verlander bounced back with a win on his fifth day, then adjusted his throwing sessions so he threw lightly on July 2 — the day before starting on extra rest. The result was a win the next day, when he allowed one run in seven innings. Verlander will start Friday against Minnesota on extra rest.

—1B Miguel Cabrera is putting himself in position to be a threat to win baseball's Triple Crown, which hasn't been done since Carl Yastrzemski of Red Sox completed the feat in 1967. Cabrera entered play Wednesday either first or tied for first in batting average, home runs and RBI, although he ended the day second in home runs. He will take a 16-game hitting streak into Friday's game against Minnesota, second longest of his career to a 17-game streak he had last July.

—3B Brandon Inge did something Wednesday that would have been unthinkable at this time a year ago — he tripled. A year ago, Inge was battling patellar tendinitis in both knees, which caused a massive drop-off in his hitting after the All-Star Game. But after offseason surgery on both knees, he's been slowly getting better. "There wasn't a thought in my head other than getting to third base when that ball hit the gap," Inge said. "Last year, I wouldn't have even tried. I would have wanted to. I would have come around first base thinking, 'C'mon, c'mon, let's make it,' but then I would have come to the realization that I couldn't."

"There aren't many guys who would have played with what he played with," manager Jim Leyland said. "The doctors even marveled how he got through it."

"I didn't want to panic anyone, but I was afraid (my knees) weren't coming around," Inge said. "Earlier in the year, when the adrenaline hit me and I pushed it, I'd get instant feedback from my knees. Now when I push off, the only thought is the goal — of getting where I want to go. I'm just happy to see them truly coming around. I think I'm going to be stronger and better off."

—RHP Robbie Weinhardt and LHP Andy Oliver were teammates and roommates at Oklahoma State. Weinhardt was drafted in 2008 and Oliver last year. "We knew each other really well in college," Weinhardt said, "and we always gave each other a hard time about who would get here first. Well, he beat me." Oliver was brought up from Class AA Erie on June 25, and Weinhardt from Class AAA Toledo on July 7. Both pitchers worked in their first day with the club.

—LHP Andy Oliver will get a return engagement Sunday against the Minnesota Twins and their lefty laden lineup. Oliver started his second game in Minnesota on June 30 and suffered the loss, allowing five runs (two earned, in part because of his own error) on eight hits in six innings.

BY THE NUMBERS: 4 — Seasons out of the last five RHP Justin Verlander has reached 10 victories before the All-Star break. His high for wins is 19, reached last year.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Crying in front of 40,000 people is pretty weak. But I was in a lot of pain and I felt like I had nobody on my side. Me and my wife (Rachel) talked all night and I asked that question over and over 'Why is this happening to me?' She tried to tell me things, but there's no answer. I really thought that was my last bullet. I thought my career was over." — RHP Joel Zumaya, two days after suffering a non-displaced fracture of the tip of his right elbow throwing a pitch to Minnesota LF Delmon Young. Zumaya said he felt at the time like his elbow exploded.

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## KANSAS CITY ROYALS

### INSIDE PITCH

Luke Hochevar, who is on the disabled list with a right elbow sprain, will have restricted work before the All-Star break, further delaying when he might return to the Royals rotation.

Hochevar has not pitched since June 11 and will need a minor league rehab assignment before rejoining the big-league club.

"We're just taking it easy with him until the All-Star break, and he should be 100 percent and be able to start ramping back," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "We're just taking a

cautious approach with him. He's too important to what we're trying to do to push it right now."

Hochevar, the first player selected in the 2006 draft, was 5-4 with a 4.96 ERA in 13 starts before the elbow injury. The Royals were hopeful Hochevar would be able to return to the rotation by late June, missing only two starts, when he went on the disabled list, but it appears early August is a more reasonable target date.

Forty percent of the Kansas City rotation is on the disabled list with right-hander Gil Meche out since late May 25 with a sore shoulder. Meche will throw to hitters this weekend for the first time since going on the disabled list.

## NOTES, QUOTES

—RHP Joakim Soria has converted 18 consecutive save opportunities and has saves in his past 10 mound appearances, including Tuesday and Wednesday in Seattle. In those 10 games, Soria has given up one earned run in 10 innings. In his past 21 appearances, he has permitted three earned runs in 21 2/3 innings for a 1.25 ERA. Soria, the Royals' lone selection to the American League All-Star team, leads the majors with 25 saves.

—RHP Kyle Farnsworth has allowed three earned runs in 27 innings for a 1.00 ERA in his past 20 outings. Opponents have a .174 batting average, 16-for-96, off Farnsworth in that span.

—LHP Bruce Chen, who retired the first 18 batters Sunday in Anaheim before losing his no-hitter on an Erick Aybar single in the seventh, starts Friday at Chicago. Chen is 5-2 with a 3.51 ERA in 17 games, seven starts this season. His five victories have come up against clubs he had not defeated previously — Indians, Tigers, Twins, Cardinals and Angels. He looks to continue that fashion against the White Sox, who he is 0-2 with a 4.94 ERA in eight appearances, including three starts.

—1B Billy Butler has reached base 16 times in 25 plate appearances in the first six games of this trip. Butler has six hits, eight walks and two hit by pitches. Butler, who homered in the ninth Wednesday at Seattle, is one home run shy of 50 for his career.

—The Royals completed their first three-game sweep Wednesday at Seattle since June 12-14, 1995. The winning pitchers in that 1995 series were RHPs Rusty Meacham and Kevin Appier and LHP Chris Haney. They had not won a series at Seattle since Aug. 30-Sept. 1, 2002, before the sweep this week.

BY THE NUMBERS: 29 — Innings, through July 4, in which the Royals had scored this season when they had two out and no one on base — in other words, about 4 percent of the time. They had scored 55 runs in those situations.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I'm going to have to get my dictionary out and find a better word than awesome, great, fantastic, fabulous." — Royals manager Ned Yost, on LHP Bruce Chen, who retired the first 18 Angels he faced on July 3 in beating the Angels.

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## LOS ANGELES ANGELS

### INSIDE PITCH

Any loss sticks in Torii Hunter's craw. But these losses he has found even harder to stomach.

"I've said this before — sometimes it's the way you lose games," Hunter said after Thursday's 1-0 loss to the White Sox. "We're losing games where we don't even look like we're competitive. We're just out there. The last seven or eight games, we don't even look like ourselves.

"No excuses. We've got to go out and play better baseball."

Thursday's loss completed a four-game sweep in Chicago. The Angels have lost six of their past seven and 10 of their past 17, slipping further behind the first-place Rangers in the AL West. After his team was two-hit by White Sox lefty John Danks on Thursday, Angels manager Mike Scioscia addressed the club behind closed doors.

"The gist of it was (that) eight days ago we were playing great baseball," Scioscia said. "We were swinging the bats much better, playing at a high level. The level we've played at over the last six, seven, eight, nine games — whatever it is — we're just not doing things on the field we're capable of doing."

The offense has been largely responsible for the slump. The Angels were held to five runs on 23 hits in the four games at U.S. Cellular Field. Hunter and Howie Kendrick had 13 of those hits while the rest of the Angels roster went 9-for-98 (.092).

"Some guys are pressing. Some guys maybe are not pushing themselves at the plate to do what they need to do — whether it's not working the count or running the bases," Scioscia said. "There's a variety of elements that play into a slump."

**WHITE SOX 1, ANGELS 0:** For the second time in the past six games, the Angels were held hitless through six innings by an opposing pitcher — and Angels RHP Ervin Santana was on the wrong side each time. Royals LHP Bruce Chen was perfect through six innings Saturday in Anaheim, beating Santana that day. White Sox LHP John Danks took a no-hitter into the seventh inning on Thursday before back-to-back singles by Reggie Willits and Howie Kendrick broke it up. That was all the Angels could muster, though, as they lost for the sixth time in their past seven games and were swept in a four-game series for the second time this season (Boston, May 3-6).

### NOTES, QUOTES

—Angels manager Mike Scioscia gave veterans OF Bobby Abreu and DH Hideki Matsui "a mental day off" Thursday. Both benched veterans have been struggling. Abreu has one

hit in his past 24 at-bats, five in his past 55 (dropping his average for the season from .272 to .250). Matsui is two for his past 15, eight for his past 46.

—OF Cory Aldridge made his second start since being promoted from Class AAA on Sunday — his third major league start. He started once for Atlanta in 2001. But Aldridge is still looking for his first major league hit. The 31-year-old was 0-for-3 Thursday and is now hitless in 14 big-league at-bats.

—RHP Ervin Santana held the White Sox to one run on three hits but lost Thursday afternoon. It was the second consecutive start that the opposing starter held the Angels hitless through six innings with Santana on the mound. "I know we're doing our best to score runs," Santana said. "It's just not happening right now."

—2B Howie Kendrick had one of the Angels' two hits in Thursday's loss and went 7-for-14 in the four-game series at Chicago. Kendrick has hit safely in the past 10 consecutive road games, going .452 (19-for-42) with three home runs and 11 RBI in those games.

—RHP Joel Pineiro is scheduled to start the opener of a three-game series at Oakland this weekend. Pineiro has won his past six starts with an ERA of 2.08 (10 earned runs, 43 1/3 innings) in those games.

BY THE NUMBERS: 7 — RBI in the July 4 game for Torii Hunter (tying a career high), the same day he was named to the AL All-Star team.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "It's the dumbest thing I've ever heard. You can quote me on that."  
— LHP Joe Saunders, on teammate Jered Weaver not being named to the AL All-Star team.

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## MINNESOTA TWINS

### INSIDE PITCH

The Twins face their biggest series of the season while playing their worst baseball.

An 8-1 loss at Toronto on Thursday left the Twins reeling into a three-game series at Detroit that will take them into the All-Star break, and if they can't turn the tide against the Tigers, it could be a long break.

The Twins have dropped two straight and 11 of 16 overall, losing 3 1/2 games in the standings to fall into third place behind the Tigers and the surging White Sox, radically changing the complexion of a division that once looked to be theirs to lose.

On May 31, the Twins were 11 games over .500 and led the Central by 4 1/2 games. Since then, they're 14-20. The White Sox, meanwhile, swept Anaheim on Thursday to

improve to 22-5 since June 9 and take over second place, and the Tigers have moved into first in the Central on the strength of a 4-1 July.

Detroit, which lost two of three to the Twins from June 28-30, is no doubt licking its chops at the chance to push the Twins back even further.

"We'll see what we're made of over the weekend," manager Ron Gardenhire said.

The Twins gave up three one-run leads in a 6-5 loss to the Blue Jays on Wednesday, and they were dead on arrival on Thursday, falling behind 5-0 after two innings, giving up five home runs. In the three-game series, the Jays — the major leagues' best homer-hitting team with 130 — went deep 10 times.

Gardenhire said morale is not an issue with his team. At least, it had better not be.

"If you can't get up for (Detroit) right now, you probably shouldn't be here — and probably won't be here after the fact," he said. "I think we'll be just fine. It's just disappointing. We're not playing great baseball, but (Wednesday's) ballgame was one we gave away. We won the first one, (Wednesday) we gave it away, (Thursday) we got hammered. You've just got to do better than that."

**BLUE JAYS 8, TWINS 1:** The Blue Jays hit five solo home runs, four of them to open innings, and hammered the Twins in the rubber match of a three-game series.

Scott Baker (7-8) gave up five runs on seven hits in six innings, and Michael Cuddyer homered for the Twins, who have lost 11 of their past 16 games. Brett Cecil (8-5) scattered four hits over seven innings for the victory.

Fred Lewis, Adam Lind, Lyle Overbay, Jose Molina and Jose Bautista homered for the Jays.

## NOTES, QUOTES

—RHP Scott Baker has been pitching with a tender right elbow and will have a cortisone shot this weekend in an attempt to subdue inflammation. "I know everything is structurally OK, it's just sometimes you have to fight through it a little bit. That's just the way it is," said Baker, who gave up five runs in six innings of an 8-1 loss Thursday at Toronto.

An MRI revealed no structural damage, and the official verdict is tendinitis. Manager Ron Gardenhire said the All-Star break should allow Baker to make his next start.

"I think a couple days of rest should take care of it," Baker said. "If there's a time for this to happen, it would be right now."

—1B Justin Morneau sat out Thursday's 8-1 loss at Toronto with a mild concussion suffered while breaking up a double play Wednesday. Morneau said his symptoms are

much milder than the ones that put him on the disabled list with a concussion in April 2005, and that he holds out hope he can play in this weekend's series at Detroit. But, he added, he won't take any chances.

"I'm pretty aware of what can happen if you don't take care of it," he said. "You can play through a sore knee or a banged up wrist, but the head's something you don't want to mess with. Having had a concussion before, and knowing the long-term effects, I just want to make sure it's better so we're good for the rest of the year, instead of something that lingers for months."

—LF Delmon Young's All-Star Game campaign ended unsuccessfully Thursday when Major League Baseball officially closed its Internet runoff for the final AL spot. He placed fifth in a five-player race with New York RF Nick Swisher, the winner; Boston 1B Kevin Youkilis, Chicago 1B Paul Konerko and Texas 3B Michael Young.

—INF Alexi Casilla is 1-for-8 through his first three games on a rehab assignment with the Twins' affiliate in the rookie-level Gulf Coast League. Casilla had arthroscopic surgery June 4 to remove bone chips from his right elbow.

—C Joe Mauer went 0-for-4 with a strikeout to drop his average to .297, only the second time it's been under .300 since April 7. In his past 10 games, Mauer is hitting .231 (9-for-39) with one homer and two RBI.

—CF Denard Span got his second day off this season Thursday when manager Ron Gardenhire replaced him with Jason Repko. Span had played 83 of the team's 84 games.

"He could use a blow every once in a while, and Repko needs to play, too," Gardenhire said. "(Repko) came up here (from Class AAA Rochester) for a reason." Repko went 1-for-3 with a single in an 8-1 loss to Toronto.

—RHP Scott Baker fell to 1-6 with a 6.66 ERA on the road this season after taking the loss in an 8-1 setback at Toronto on Thursday.

—LF Delmon Young was is in the lineup Thursday after taking treatment on his left wrist, which he strained in a collision with CF Denard Span on Wednesday. He went 1-for-3 with a single.

"He came in here and did his little treatment that they were doing and then went out and swung and said he's fine," manager Ron Gardenhire said.

**BY THE NUMBERS: 574** — Career homers Jim Thome had after his two-homer game against the Rays on July 3. Thome's first homer tied Twins great Harmon Killebrew for 10th on the all-time list, and his second moved Thome into sole possession of 10th.

**QUOTE TO NOTE:** "Anytime a baseball game stops and somebody like that speaks it's very, I've said it, it's humbling. It's an honor to have a man like that do that." — DH Jim Thome, on a congratulatory video message from Twins great Harmon Killebrew that was

played on the video board at Target Field after Thome hit career home run No. 574 to surpass Killebrew on the all-time list.

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## NEW YORK YANKEES

### INSIDE PITCH

Nick Swisher became the eighth Yankee chosen to represent the American League at the All-Star Game, winning the fan vote for the final spot on the squad. Then he went out and celebrated with one of his best games of the season.

Swisher went 4-for-4 Thursday, reaching base five times while making a sliding catch to help the Yankees beat the Mariners 3-1. In four games on the road trip, Swisher is hitting .563 (9-for-16).

Swisher beat out Kevin Youkilis, receiving 9.8 million votes. The right fielder joins Derek Jeter, Robinson Cano, Alex Rodriguez, CC Sabathia, Andy Pettitte, Phil Hughes and Mariano Rivera on the AL roster, the most since 2004, when Joe Torre took eight of his players with him to Houston.

"For me to finally get my first one and be able to join my teammates, that's an awesome feeling," Swisher said. "It's bananas, man."

Swisher is hitting .307 with 14 home runs and 48 RBI, and Joe Girardi — who will manage the AL team next week in Anaheim — pointed out that he can use him in the outfield or at first base, adding another versatile player to the roster.

"I'm very happy for him," Girardi said. "Swish deserves it."

Swisher is now a second-generation All-Star. His father, Steve, represented the National League as a catcher in the 1976 All-Star Game. The Swishers are the 13th father-son combination to make All-Star teams.

"The first person I called was my dad," Swisher said. "We were just really excited; to have a father-son combination like that is pretty cool. For me to finally get my first one and be able to join my teammates, that's an awesome feeling."

**YANKEES 3, MARINERS 1:** The Yankees won their sixth in a row, matching their season-best streak. LHP Andy Pettitte improved to 11-2 by throwing eight innings of one-run ball, giving up five hits and four walks while striking out nine.

**3B Alex Rodriguez** drove in the game-winner with a two-run single in the ninth against RHP David Aardsma, snapping a 1-1 tie. RF Nick Swisher went 4-for-4, including the one-out double that set up Rodriguez's big hit.



## NOTES, QUOTES

—DH Nick Johnson suffered a setback during his rehab from wrist surgery, cutting short a session in which he was taking light swings with a fungo bat. Johnson had been rehabbing in Tampa, but he returned to New York on Thursday to visit the Yankees' team doctor. There is no timetable for his return.

—2B Robinson Cano returned to the lineup after missing his first game of the year with lower back tightness on Wednesday. Cano went 2-for-4, raising his average to .339.

—1B Mark Teixeira went 1-for-5 on Thursday, but he reached base safely for the 29th consecutive game, the longest such streak by a Yankee this season. Teixeira has hits in 24 of his last 28 games, batting .302 during that stretch.

—CF Curtis Granderson had his third three-hit game of the season, with two of those hits coming against LHP Jason Vargas. Granderson entered the game hitting .198 against lefties, but the two hits raised that average to .217 (18-for-83).

—RHP Sergio Mitre (left oblique) could rejoin the Yankees after the All-Star break. He is slated to pitch at least one more minor league rehab game. Manager Joe Girardi said Mitre might throw a second time after that, but it's likely he'll be activated from the disabled list when the Yankees resume play on July 16.

BY THE NUMBERS: 11 — Times SS Derek Jeter and RHP Mariano Rivera have been selected to the American League All-Star team, including this season. They are the only players to be named with their current teams that many times. Both players tied Bill Dickey for the fifth-most All-Star appearances in franchise history, behind Mickey Mantle (20), Yogi Berra (18), Joe DiMaggio (13) and Elston Howard (12).

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I'm very thankful to Joe for picking me to go. I had double plans. I had a little vacation spot (in the Bahamas), but I was hoping to get the nod." — 3B Alex Rodriguez, on manager Joe Girardi selecting him for his 13th All-Star Game appearance.

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## OAKLAND ATHLETICS

### INSIDE PITCH

The A's main strength last year was the bullpen, and the team's relievers were counted upon this season to be just as good, if not better.

But relief work has been inconsistent for Oakland, with the exception of closer Andrew Bailey and now-setup man Craig Breslow. Two men, in particular, are having rougher seasons than expected.

Michael Wuertz was among the top relievers in the game in 2009, but after some nagging injuries in the spring, Wuertz had a tough time getting back into his usual form. He's only started to look like his old self in the past couple of weeks. Until allowing a solo homer to Nick Swisher on Wednesday night, Wuertz was unscored upon in his previous six appearances.

Wuertz told the San Francisco Chronicle that it was a matter of confidence. He said that after allowing a go-ahead homer to the Reds' Ramon Hernandez last year, he told himself, "This is a new season."

Brad Ziegler, used a lot in the first month and a half because of Wuertz's injuries, showed the effects of that in June. In April, his ERA was 2.53, in May 1.93, but in June, it slipped to 6.40. He also was struck by a virus, he told the San Francisco Chronicle, and he's only recently recovered fully.

#### NOTES, QUOTES

—DH Eric Chavez told the San Francisco Chronicle that he might not return until September. Chavez, who is out with two bulging disks in his neck, was transferred from the 15-day disabled list to the 60-day DL on Wednesday, but he is eligible to be activated July 20.

—OF Ryan Sweeney has a 51-game homerless streak, which ties his career high (Aug. 28, 2009-May 3 2010). Though he has only one home run this season, Sweeney is batting .297, tops among A's regulars, and he has 35 RBI, tied with Kurt Suzuki for second most on the team.

—LHP Jerry Blevins has not allowed a run in 16 of his past 20 outings and has a 1.76 ERA in that span. He has an ERA of 2.19 on two days or more of rest, and a 5.09 ERA on one day of rest or less.

—LHP Craig Breslow has held opponents to a .111 average over his past 17 appearances. Breslow could be a potential All-Star replacement for teammate Trevor Cahill, who must come off the AL roster once he throws a pitch on Sunday. A's closer Andrew Bailey is also a potential replacement, but AL manager Joe Girardi does not have to take an A's pitcher to replace Cahill, which would leave Oakland without an active All-Star.

—SS Cliff Pennington has hit two triples in the past five games and has five overall, tied for third in the AL. Since 1988, the only other A's player with five triples before the break was Eric Byrnes, who had six in 2003.

BY THE NUMBERS: 10 — Sacrifice bunts by A's 1B Daric Barton through July 4, the most by a major league first baseman since Wally Joyner had 10, over the course of a full season, with the Angels in 1986.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Crazy play. Something you do in Little League." — RF Ryan Sweeney after throwing out Indians C Mike Redmond at first on a ball that dropped in front of Sweeney with the bases loaded and two outs.

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## SEATTLE MARINERS

### INSIDE PITCH

The whole Cliff Lee drama could have played out differently if the Mariners had moved to sign Lee to a contract extension this spring.

At least that was what Lee, currently the most sought-after player in the run-up to the July 31 trade deadline, was saying before Thursday's 3-1 loss to the Yankees.

"We told them in spring training that if they wanted to do something (in terms of extending the contract) to do it before the season started," Lee said. "Even up until I came back (he missed almost four weeks with an abdominal strain), we said, 'If you want to do something, do it before I start pitching.'"

"They decided not to, and that's that. There really is nothing to it other than that."

General manager Jack Zduriencik, asked to react to Lee's view of the proceedings, opted not to comment.

Lee, who leads the AL with a 2.34 ERA, is one of the few players who might be available in trade who is almost universally seen as a difference-maker. He was traded last year from Cleveland to Philadelphia, and he almost pitched the Phillies to the World Series title, going 4-0 with a 1.56 ERA in five postseason starts.

Zduriencik has not said he wants to trade Lee, but he has said he would listen to offers.

**YANKEES 3, MARINERS 1:** Yankee 3B Alex Rodriguez, booed heavily by the Seattle crowd for whom he was once a hero, delivered a two-out, two-run single in the top of the ninth inning to send the Mariners to their fourth consecutive loss in what has been a terrible start to July.

The Mariners, now 1-7 for the month, got a strong performance from LHP Jason Vargas. He left the game in the eighth inning with a 1-0 lead, only to have a wild pitch by RHP Brian Sweeney set up the tying run.

RHP David Aardsma, asked to hold the game at 1-1 in the ninth, got one out, then allowed a walk to SS Derek Jeter and a double to RF Nick Swisher. It was Swisher's fourth hit of the night, and it set up Rodriguez.

The Mariners got their only run off LHP Andy Pettitte in the sixth inning on a Pettitte throwing error following a bunt single by RF Ichiro Suzuki. That left the Mariners with a 1-0 lead and runners on second and third with no outs, but they couldn't capitalize.

#### NOTES, QUOTES

—DH Milton Bradley was not in the lineup for a fifth consecutive day Thursday, but that streak could end Friday. Manager Don Wakamatsu said there was a reasonable chance Bradley, hampered by a sore right knee, could play the second game of the Yankees series.

—LHP Jason Vargas would have gotten Thursday off if it were up to manager Don Wakamatsu, who wants to rein in Vargas' innings. But the lefty got the start when LHP Erik Bedard was unable to go, and he threw seven innings against New York, allowing one run. It was his 13th quality start.

—RHP Shawn Kelley, who was supposed to start his throwing rehab program Wednesday, was held back by the medical crew. He's now due to start throwing on the side Friday.

—RH Brian Sweeney threw wild pitches in back-to-back appearances Wednesday and Thursday. Both came with the Mariners leading in close games, both cost a run, and Seattle lost both games. Mariners relievers have thrown 17 wild pitches, the second-highest total in the American League this year.

—DH Russell Branyan and 3B Jose Lopez struck out with the bases loaded in the sixth inning against Yankees LHP Andy Pettitte. The Mariners have just six hits in their last 50 at-bats with the bases loaded (.120).

—2B Chone Figgins got two more walks Thursday. It was his ninth multiple-walk game of the season, but seven of those came in the first 47 games of the season and only two have come in the last 38.

—LHP Erik Bedard will play catch Saturday. If his surgically repaired shoulder comes through OK, he should throw a full bullpen session Sunday. There is a chance he will return to the rotation in the first week after the All-Star break.

—RF Ichiro Suzuki stretched his hitting streak to 10 games with a single in the first inning and added an infield hit later in the game. He's 12-for-44 (.272) during the streak.

**BY THE NUMBERS:** 20 — Times the Mariners have scored one run or fewer this year through July 8. They are 2-18 in those games.

**QUOTE TO NOTE:** "I had 55 innings before the break once in the minor leagues. Tonight I didn't make them put the ball in play. Then I got a pitch up that (3B Alberto Callaspo) hit out. I've got to make some adjustments." — RHP Brandon League, after a

July 7 loss to Kansas City. League had thrown 43 1/3 innings, which manager Don Wakamatsu said was too much for a short reliever at this point in the season.

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## TAMPA BAY RAYS

### INSIDE PITCH

If Carl Crawford is indeed leaving the Rays as a free agent after the season, it appears he's going out with a bang.

Crawford added to his stellar first half Thursday with the fifth two-homer game of his career, leading the Rays to their sixth straight win.

Crawford shares the AL lead with 66 runs, and he leads Tampa Bay with a team-best .321 average, .378 on-base percentage and .516 slugging percentage, all of which would be career highs.

Plus he's on pace for career bests in homers (19), RBI (91), doubles (38), walks (55), runs (126) and hits (194, tying his mark). And he's set to make his first All-Star start, and team-best fourth appearance overall, on Tuesday.

Crawford said his only focus is helping the Rays win, and that no decision about his future has been made. But if nothing else, he's assembling an impressive update to his resume just in time for free agency.

"I'm happy for him in all those respects, but mostly because he's doing well and he's a Ray," manager Joe Maddon said. "And I want him to remain a Ray."

RAYS 5, INDIANS 2: Carl Crawford hit two home runs, Carlos Pena added another and rookie Wade Davis snapped a five-game losing streak as the Rays extended their winning streak to six games.

### NOTES, QUOTES

—LHP David Price is "an extremely strong candidate" to be named the starter for Tuesday's All-Star Game, according to Yankees manager Joe Girardi, who will lead the AL team. Price is 12-4 with a 2.42 ERA.

—RHP Wade Davis won for the first since May 29 by making more use of his off-speed pitches and relying less on his fastball. "There was more pitch-ability," manager Joe Maddon said. "Not just going out there and trying to challenge guys on all counts. That's what had kind of gotten him in trouble."

—1B Carlos Pena snapped a 12-game, 41-at-bat drought with his team-high 17th homer. His 23 homers off Cleveland pitching are his most against any team. He has 22 vs. Boston.

—RHP Dan Wheeler recorded his first save of the season, the third different Ray in the last three games to get one, following closer Rafael Soriano, who had the last two nights off, and starter Matt Garza, who filled in Wednesday.

—RHP James Shields starts Friday against Cleveland seeking his first win at home since April 28, a span of six starts and more than two months.

BY THE NUMBERS: 2 — Rays voted to start in the 2010 All-Star Game. They'd had only two others elected in their first 12 seasons, and neither was able to play because of injury — Jose Canseco in 1999 and Evan Longoria in 2009.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I'm really happy about that. I'm really at a loss for words, because that's something that always (seemed) so far-fetched." — LF Carl Crawford, on being elected by the fans to start in the All-Star Game.

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## TEXAS RANGERS

### INSIDE PITCH

For the first time since signing an agreement in January to be part of a group trying to purchase the Rangers, club president Nolan Ryan acknowledged his group's bid may be in trouble.

"I don't have a good feeling about things," Ryan said before Thursday's game against Baltimore. "I don't know where things are. I'm just taking it day-by-day."

Ryan was reacting to news that court-appointed chief restructuring officer William K. Snyder said the proposed one-day auction to resolve the Rangers' sale had been scrapped. Mediation, according to Snyder, failed to resolve major issues.

According to the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, new bidding procedures for the club's sale will be worked out in the next few weeks. That pushes back previously set deadlines by the court for completing the bankruptcy plan and sale.

It also means there is no way the sale will close before July 31, which will probably prohibit the team from taking on any significant payroll additions at the trade deadline.

Under the new procedures, Ryan and partner Chuck Greenberg also might not receive "stalking horse" status as the initial bidder. That would seem to seriously cripple their chances.

"It could be Greenberg or it could be someone else," Snyder told the Star-Telegram. "We're looking for a fair process to maximize the potential that could be yielded out of an auction."

Snyder said Major League Baseball would have a say before the auction about who could bid. Others still interested in acquiring the team reportedly include Houston businessman Jim Crane and Dallas investor Jeff Beck, apparently in concert with Los Angeles sports agent Dennis Gilbert.

ORIOLES 6, RANGERS 4: On the way to blowing a four-run lead, the Rangers failed in every aspect of the game. They didn't score in the fifth despite loading the bases. In the eighth, with Texas clinging to a one-run lead, SS Elvis Andrus made an error to start the inning. And RHP Frank Francisco, pitching for the third consecutive day and the seventh time in the last 10, created a jam that he and LHP Darren Oliver could not escape. In addition to Andrus' error, the Orioles' rally included consecutive hit batters (one with the bases loaded) and a bases-loaded walk. It cost the Rangers a chance to go up by 6 1/2 games in the AL West over the Angels.

#### NOTES, QUOTES

—RHP Tommy Hunter did not get a decision, but he did qualify for a quality start. It was his sixth quality start in seven outings this year. The only time he didn't qualify was a game he left after 2 1/3 hitless innings because of a tweaked hip flexor muscle. Since being called up last year, Hunter is 14-6 with a 3.62 ERA in 26 starts totaling 154 1/3 innings.

—2B Ian Kinsler (2-for-4) had his third consecutive multi-hit game and also walked. He has walked in nine of the last 10 games and is hitting .424 (26-for-59) over the last 16 games to push his average to .310.

—RHP Alexi Ogando allowed one of the two runners he inherited to score. Ogando has now allowed four of five inherited runners to score since supplanting traded Chris Ray as the Rangers' top middle relief option. He did not inherit any runners in his first two weeks in the majors.

—RHP Rich Harden (strained gluteal muscle) was scheduled to throw a bullpen session Thursday, but it was canceled due to pregame rain that soaked Rangers Ballpark. Harden is likely to try it again Friday. If it goes well, he could pitch on a rehab assignment Sunday and then again July 16. That would put him in position to return to the roster July 21 at Detroit.

—OF Josh Hamilton extended his home hitting streak to 28 games, which is two shy of the club record set by Al Oliver in 1981. Hamilton has reached base in 31 consecutive games. He also homered and has now homered in six of RHP Tommy Hunter's seven starts.

BY THE NUMBERS: 490 — Estimated distance in feet of a home run hit by Josh Hamilton on June 27 against Houston, making it the longest home run in Rangers

Ballpark history. It was hit so well, the distance was still growing a week later. A University of Texas-Arlington professor announced his findings on the distance, originally measured at 468 feet. Unsatisfied with the measure based on 15-year-old dimensions of the stadium, the Rangers had the professor re-measure it. It now surpasses the 480-foot homer Jose Canseco hit in 1994.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "We're a better team — 100 percent. When we play up to our capabilities, it might not be that close. We have a better balance to our team. They have good pitching, but their offense is like, I don't know. We have more wins. It's pretty simple. I'd rather take our offense. I'd rather take our defense. I'd much rather have our bullpen." — LHP C.J. Wilson, comparing the Rangers to the Angels after Los Angeles took two of three from Texas last week.

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## TORONTO BLUE JAYS

### INSIDE PITCH

It was another game of bombs away for the Blue Jays.

After a 2-8 road trip in which they had trouble scratching out runs, the Jays are back in the swing of things on home turf.

Against the Twins on Thursday, they banged out five solo home runs in an 8-1 victory to up their homer total on the season to 130.

It was also the third time this season they have hit five or more home runs.

Even backup catcher Jose Molina joined the club. In the seventh inning, he hit his first homer of the season in his 28th game.

"It was good for him," manager Cito Gaston said. "Jose's done a good job for us here. I was happy to see him get on the board. That's his first one. Guys were not so much getting on him but happy for him."

Adam Lind hit the Jays' second bomb of the game and his 11th of the season leading off the second.

"I'll be experimenting for a while, but hopefully I'm locking it in and starting to feel better at the plate," said Lind, who is batting only .207.

When it was mentioned that his experiment looked solid in his first at-bat (the homer), Lind added: "Then it went awry for the rest (three strikeouts). I guess the test tube exploded in the other three at-bats."



It's a good sign that Lind can still keep it in perspective and joke about his batting problems.

Gaston said he no longer is surprised by what his team does at the plate.

"It is one of those things that if it goes from here to the end of September (like it has), then we're going to have a lot of fun," Gaston said.

BLUE JAYS 8, TWINS 1: The Jays hit five solo home runs — by LF Fred Lewis, DH Adam Lind, 1B Lyle Overbay, C Jose Molina and RF Jose Bautista — as they won their second in a row to take the series from the Twins. It was their first series victory since taking two of three from the Giants from June 18-20. LHP Brett Cecil won for the first time since June 10 to move to 8-5. Since his prior win, Cecil had three losses and a no-decision.

#### NOTES, QUOTES

—2B Aaron Hill returned after missing the previous three games due to a severe case of food poisoning. He batted sixth in the lineup. He was 1-for-4 in his return.

—The Blue Jays lead the major leagues with 130 home runs, but their once-big lead over the team ranked second, the Red Sox, has shrunk. The Jays are the only team in the big leagues to have eight players with 10 or more home runs. RF/3B Jose Bautista has 23, CF Vernon Wells has 19, SS Alex Gonzalez has 16, C John Buck has 13, 2B Aaron Hill and DH Adam Lind have 11 while 1B Lyle Overbay and 3B Edwin Encarnacion have 10. Overbay joined the club Thursday with a solo shot in the seventh.

—RHP Rob Ray, who was 1-2 in four starts last year with the Jays and did not pitch after May 22 due to a strained right shoulder, has come back from a similar problem this season. On Wednesday, Ray made his first start since May 14. He went 5 2/3 innings for Class AAA Las Vegas, allowing two runs on four hits and one walk. He struck out two.

—CF Vernon Wells doubled home the winning run in the seventh inning of Wednesday's victory over the Twins. It marked his 17th go-ahead RBI of the season, which leads the club and ranks fourth in the American League.

—SS Alex Gonzalez has hit 16 home runs to lead all shortstops in the big leagues in home runs. It's the most he has hit in the majors since he clubbed 16 in 2007 with the Reds. His career high is 23, set in 2004 with the Marlins.

BY THE NUMBERS: 11 — Runs the Jays allowed in the third inning of their July 3 game against the Yankees, which tied their club record for most runs allowed in one inning.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "There's no question that as we continue to build this team, there are things we're going to want to address. In the long run, absolutely, you want to have it all.

You want to have the batting average, the on-base percentage, the slugging." — GM Alex Anthopoulos, on the team's offense and its overreliance on home runs.