



Clips
(July 10, 2010)

From the Los Angeles Times
Angels' bats come back to life in Oakland
Team hits three home runs, including game-winner by Erick Aybar in 10th inning, during 6-5 victory.
By Ben Bolch

Reporting from Oakland

The Angels' offensive drought had reached such epic proportions this week that hitters repeatedly brought their irritation back to the bench, a habit that Manager Mike Scioscia addressed Thursday in Chicago during a postgame meeting.

There were nothing but high-fives and smiles in the dugout in the 10th inning Friday at Oakland-Alameda Coliseum after light-hitting Erick Aybar smoked a leadoff homer to lift the Angels to a 6-5 victory over the Oakland Athletics.

Aybar's homer, which cleared the right-field wall on a 2-and-0 pitch from reliever Andrew Bailey, ended the Angels' four-game losing streak and momentarily softened the blow of division rival Texas' acquisition of Seattle ace Cliff Lee earlier in the day.

"He has some pop in that little body of his," Angels center fielder Torii Hunter said of Aybar, whose homer was his third of the season.

Aybar's winning hit also capped an outburst in which the Angels scored more runs and collected more homers (three) than they had extra-base hits (two) during the four-game sweep by the Chicago White Sox preceding their arrival here.

"It was good to break out," Scioscia said.

Hunter's two-out, two-run homer off reliever Craig Breslow in the eighth inning had given the Angels a seemingly comfortable 5-3 lead.

But Angels setup man Fernando Rodney couldn't hold it. Ryan Sweeney hit a leadoff double to left-center in the bottom of the eighth and scored on Kurt Suzuki's single to right. Suzuki scored the tying run when Angels left fielder Juan Rivera couldn't cleanly field Kevin Kouzmanoff's double to left.

There was far less drama in the bottom of the 10th, when Angels closer Brian Fuentes pitched a perfect inning for his 16th save. Kevin Jepsen got the victory after pitching a 1-2-3 ninth.

Joel Pineiro continued to bolster the Angels' rotation by pitching seven strong innings, but the Athletics' rally denied his bid to win a seventh consecutive start. Pineiro, who gave up eight hits and three runs, has pitched at least seven innings in seven of his last 11 starts.

Angels hitting coach Mickey Hatcher said the offensive downturn he observed this week

was "probably the worst four games I've seen our team have offensively in a row in a long time."

The Angels scored five runs and hit .138 with runners in scoring position against the White Sox, prompting players to bring their frustration back to the dugout.

"That's one of the things that Mike talked about," Hatcher said. "You can't bring your at-bats back to the bench. It's one of those things that we've gone through."

So it must have felt like a huge relief when the Angels splurged for two first-inning runs Friday, matching their total from the previous 23 innings.

Aybar sparked the outburst with a bunt single and stole second base with one out before Bobby Abreu crushed a two-run homer over the left-field wall. It was the Angels' first extra-base hit in 30 innings and Abreu's first homer since June 22, a span of 50 at-bats.

Abreu, who went three for four with a walk, said being out of the lineup the previous day "helped freshen me up and calm me down. I was forcing too much, and today I just played my game."

ANGELS FYI

Rangers' deal for Cliff Lee is 'an exclamation point'

However, Mike Scioscia says the trade doesn't put more pressure on the Angels to make a move.

By Ben Bolch

Reporting from Oakland

Torii Hunter gets it.

The Texas Rangers significantly strengthened themselves Friday by acquiring Cliff Lee from the Seattle Mariners, adding a Cy Young Award winner who could help the American League West leaders pull away from the Angels.

"Me being one of those guys who wants to be a [general manager] one day, you put your foot down when you can and that's what they did, with an exclamation point," said Hunter, the Angels' center fielder.

But Hunter doesn't get this.

The Mariners violated one of the unwritten rules of baseball by trading within their division, fortifying a rival with a player who could hurt them this year and beyond.

"Nobody trades within their division for that pitcher to come back and whip your butt," Hunter said. "I wouldn't do that."

But that's exactly what last-place Seattle did, sending Lee and reliever Mark Lowe to the Rangers for rookie first baseman Justin Smoak and three minor leaguers. The cash-strapped Rangers also received money in the deal for Lee, who can become a free agent after this season.

Angels Manager Mike Scioscia said the Rangers' acquisition of Lee, the 2008 Cy Young winner who was 8-3 with a 2.34 earned-run average in 13 starts for Seattle, did not increase the pressure on General Manager Tony Reagins to make a counter move to address his team's offensive shortcomings.

"As of right now, there hasn't been a lot presented that is going to be doable for what other teams are looking for and we might have, but there's still a couple of weeks to go" before the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline, Scioscia said. "If there's stuff out there to make us better, he's going to consider it."

Reagins has been active around the trading deadline the last two years, acquiring Mark Teixeira from Atlanta in July 2008 and Scott Kazmir from Tampa Bay last August in a waiver deal.

The Angels would like to add a power-hitting corner infielder to compensate for a season-ending injury to first baseman Kendry Morales, but Scioscia said the organization preferred to avoid trading for a player it was unlikely to re-sign after the season unless "the cost is something you can absorb and if [the player] leaves, he leaves."

"Our philosophy is not to bring someone in here for two or three months and empty your cupboard in the minor leagues to do it. So therefore the pool gets smaller and smaller as to players you can acquire."

Catcher Mike Napoli said the Angels have five starting pitchers who can match the Rangers' retooled rotation.

"We still believe we have five solid guys at the top and a good, strong bullpen," Napoli said. "We just have to go out and play better baseball. I believe the guys we have in here can get it done."

Said Hunter: "What can you do? Because you don't want to just make a trade and it doesn't work out and then you hurt yourself for the future. Do you counter it? I don't know. As a player, I'm a company man. I have my ideas, but my job is to keep my ideas to myself sometimes."

Swinging it

Maicer Izturis has started hitting off a tee in his recovery from a strained left forearm but remains several days away from taking batting practice, Scioscia said.

ben.bolch@latimes.com

Lights, camera ... All-Stars!

The game isn't enough by itself anymore to carry the event. Baseball now adds a home run derby, FanFest and a little bit of Hollywood for glamour

By David Wharton

Six thousand yards of red carpet has arrived in Anaheim, ready for the big night.

Fashion consultants and makeup artists will be on hand as the celebrity guest list fills out, publicists calling to secure tickets for their A-list clients.

If it sounds as if baseball's annual All-Star game — which comes to Angel Stadium on Tuesday evening — has gone Hollywood, that's no mistake.

Over the last decade or so, Major League Baseball has expanded its "Midsummer Classic" from nine innings to five days that include rock concerts and a high-tech carnival, the popular home run derby and a softball game pitting former players against actors and musicians.

This convergence of athletics and entertainment equates to survival for a traditional if occasionally sleepy pastime battling to stay relevant in a hyper-environment of extreme sports, video games and downloadable music.

To ensure that Anaheim is camera-ready, the league has flown in a team of designers.

"It's definitely like a production," said Eric Rodriguez, a senior graphic designer for the league. "It really is theater-esque."

All of this makes historical sense for an event that started out as a sideshow.

When Chicago hosted a World's Fair in 1933, newspaperman Arch Ward proposed inviting top ballplayers. Team owners weren't thrilled; they warmed to the idea after Babe Ruth homered and the game generated national buzz.

Baseball had stumbled upon a winning formula, a highlight amid the summer doldrums when most sports lay dormant.

The All-Star game continued largely unchanged for decades until the mid-1980s, when television ratings began to slip. That's when the makeover began.

The Monday home run derby was added in 1985 and quickly became a hit with fans. Six years later, the Toronto Blue Jays hosted the game and hired a local designer, Reg Bronskill, to help them make use of a convention center next door.

The "All-Star FanFest," which opened Friday and runs through Tuesday at the Anaheim

Convention Center, now travels from one All-Star city to the next by way of 100 tractor-trailers bringing memorabilia displays, merchandise booths and interactive exhibits at which fans can test their skills at hitting, pitching and fielding.

"My background was in theater, years and years ago," Bronskill said. "You imagine you've got these entertainment layers that are a part of this, the lighting layer, the physical components ... all those layers weave a really interesting theatrical environment."

Football soon followed suit with the "NFL Experience" and the NBA bolstered its All-Star weekend with slam dunk and three-point shooting contests.

League executives were fighting a perception that All-Star games don't really matter. Baseball responded by giving the victorious team home-field advantage in the World Series, but marketing experts say that wins and losses are only part of the equation.

"These All-Star games, these Super Bowls and NBA Finals, cannot simply be sporting events and hope to attract younger audiences," said David Carter, a USC sports business professor whose upcoming book, "Money Games," addresses this issue. "They have to be multifaceted entertainment events."

Baseball has continued to add more elements, including various charity events and separate Sunday games for top minor league prospects and celebrities. The World Series isn't a viable site because the league doesn't know which cities will be involved until a few days beforehand, so everything gets lumped in with the All-Stars.

Preparations for this season's game began more than a year ago. Officials drew up their usual target list of celebrities they hoped to attract, but this time was different.

"We knew we were in a celebrity capital," said Marla Miller, senior vice president of special events. "The target list was much, much greater."

Getting stars to play softball in front of a crowd isn't always easy.

"Celebrities are concerned about perceptions," Miller said. "Can they actually hit the ball? Can they catch?"

Sunday's roster includes actor Michael Clarke Duncan and late-night sidekick Andy Richter.

Recruiting singers for the national anthem can also be tricky because the roller-coaster melody intimidates some performers, said Frederic Traube, an industry executive who consults with league executives.

Traube said he once approached Billy Corgan, lead singer of Smashing Pumpkins and an avid Chicago Cubs fan, about performing before a game.

"His quote was, 'No way,' " recalled Traube, who runs Pro Sports Music Marketing in

Connecticut. "No matter how good he does it, he's not going to get a pat on the back. If he does a poor version, it could hurt his career."

Sheryl Crow sang the All-Star anthem the past two years. This year, league executives were still finalizing details and planned to announce their choice Sunday. Pop star Colbie Caillat will sing "God Bless America," and the rock group Train, whose "Calling All Angels" has become a theme song for the local team, will perform at several events.

The league also has enlisted actors such as Harrison Ford, Julia Roberts and Matthew McConaughey to appear in a video before Tuesday's game.

Officials declined to say who will attend that night, but the broadcasters involved with this weekend's events, Fox and ESPN — the latter affiliated with Disney and ABC — are expected to focus on talent from their movies and television shows in the crowd.

"Mixing celebrities and sports in L.A., of all markets, it's a good opportunity," said Ben Sturner, president of Leverage Agency, a sports sponsorship firm in New York City. "So you're probably going to see more stars than ever before."

The players will get the star treatment too.

Five years ago, baseball added yet another tradition to its annual game. Instead of riding to the game in buses with darkened windows, the players and their families now parade in open cars along city streets.

That's where the red carpet comes in, marking a path that on Tuesday will carry All-Stars such as St. Louis Cardinals first baseman Albert Pujols and New York Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter through Anaheim and into Disneyland, where they will finish their route along Main Street U.S.A.

The league will provide fashion and makeup experts to help the wives prepare for their moment in the spotlight.

Consider it another attempt to make this game — known for dirt-streaked uniforms and chewing tobacco — more glamorous.

"It does come from the premise of the Academy Awards and the Emmys and all the great red-carpet movie premieres," Miller said. "It's a lot more like Hollywood."

**All-Star FanFest blends reality with baseball fantasy
The five-day event for fans includes interactive skills challenges,
autograph sessions with high-profile current and former players, and
clinics and seminars conducted by legends of the sport.**

By Sam Farmer

It was quite a Friday morning for Ryan Bora, a baseball-crazy second-grader from Mission Viejo.

He threw fastballs to Alex Rodriguez, stole home twice, and sat in as color analyst as his dad, Dave, delivered play-by-play for one of the greatest moments in Los Angeles Dodgers history.

"Dad, did that play really happen?" he asked, moments after watching the Dodgers' Kirk Gibson smash his unforgettable home run in Game 1 of the 1988 World Series.

Yes, Ryan, that play really happened — although the confusion is understandable. After all, father and son were spending the day at the 20th annual MLB All-Star FanFest at the Anaheim Convention Center, a five-day event that for thousands of fans blends baseball fantasies with a dash of reality.

Ryan was throwing baseballs at a video image of A-Rod, for instance, and "stealing home" meant sprinting across the carpet and sliding across a soft pad covered with a slick cloth sheet. The Gibson replay was part of an exhibit that let fans feel what it's like to work in a broadcast booth.

"We want the fans to have the All-Star game experience," said Jacqueline Secaira-Cotto, director of special events for Major League Baseball. "Not everyone can get to the All-Star game, but everyone can taste the All-Star flavor."

There are more than 40 baseball-themed attractions at FanFest, all of which are included in the price of admission (\$30 for adults, \$25 for kids). That includes interactive skills challenges, autograph sessions with high-profile current and former players, and clinics and seminars conducted by legends of the sport. Rod Carew conducted a hitting clinic Friday, for instance, and Cal Ripken Jr. is doing the same today.

"It's nice to have a face-to-face connection with the fans, and that's what baseball is always trying to do," said Shawn Green, a former major league outfielder who attracted a long line of autograph seekers.

Across the convention center, a far longer line formed for another former Dodgers star, Steve Garvey. That one snaked out of the autograph area and around the corner, growing so long that organizers eventually had to turn people away.

Most of the people in Garvey's line were wearing the colors other than Dodgers blue — lots of Angels T-shirts and hats, in fact — and many of the fans clutching baseballs weren't even born when he retired in 1987.

Then again, if age were an issue at FanFest, Kent Soper wouldn't have been walking around with a giant foam taco on his head. He was one of hundreds at the event who got there early enough to grab one of the coveted Taco Bell giveaways, an absurd headpiece that people wore like Napoleon-style hats.

Soper, a Little League coach from Anaheim who has an otherwise normal life as a branch manager for Fujifilm, was holding a bag full of freebies that included a toy Bigfoot truck and a collection of squishy baseballs. He had tried most of the interactive displays with varying degrees of success. (His pitch was clocked at 59 mph, failing to impress his 13-year-old son who topped that by 10 mph.)

"The people working here and the vendors are really friendly and enthusiastic," Soper said. "Nobody's getting mad at anybody."

Added his neighbor and Little League co-coach Chris Fogelson: "It's probably the first time I've seen a beer line with nobody standing in it.... This place is about families."

It's also about the history of America's Pastime and features, among other things, one of the largest collections of artifacts on loan from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y. On display at FanFest are items such as Nolan Ryan's shoes, the bat Ted Williams used to collect his 2,000th hit, and the hat Jim Palmer wore when he no-hit the Oakland A's in 1969.

Across the convention center from that display is an artifact that's less historic but more eye-catching. It was a waxy, life-sized replica of Tommy Lasorda, sporting a flattering beltline and a vacant stare that's more creepy than lifelike. The mannequin was the centerpiece attraction at a memorabilia booth, and, the vendor said, at least 200 people stopped by Friday to pose for pictures with it.

Evidently, the legendary Dodgers manager felt good enough about it to autograph it with: "Good luck! Tommy Lasorda."

In another example of FanFest blending reality with baseball fantasy, Lasorda stopped by Friday and briefly checked out the event.

"This game doesn't belong to the owners and it doesn't belong to the players," Lasorda said. "It belongs to the people."

sam.farmer@latimes.com
latimes.com

All-Star events schedule

From the FanFest on Saturday, to the game on Tuesday.

July 10, 2010

ALL-STAR EVENTS

SATURDAY

8 a.m.: Second of four days of the Jr. RBI Classic, a tournament featuring eight baseball and four softball teams of 11- and 12-year-olds from the United States and Caribbean. Saturday's games run through midafternoon at Columbus Tustin Park and Sierra Intermediate School in Santa Ana. The tournament runs through Monday. No admission charge.

9 a.m.-8 p.m.: Baseball FanFest at the Anaheim Convention Center (runs through 6 p.m. Tuesday). Interactive baseball theme park features exhibits and attractions, memorabilia, Major League clinics and seminars, and free autograph sessions with Angels legends and Hall of Famers. Tickets: \$30 for adults; \$25 for senior citizens, military personnel and children 12 and younger; children 2 and younger are free. Family packs are available. Tickets are sold on a timed-entry basis and can be purchased online through MLB's website, the Angels' official website, at Angel Stadium or by calling (888) FanFest (326-3378).

SUNDAY

7:30 a.m.: All-Star Game Charity 5K & Fun Run at Angel Stadium. Entry fee for the 5K race is \$35 for adults; \$30 for children 12 and younger. The Fun Run starts about 30 minutes later. Entry fee is \$30 for adults; \$25 for children 12 and younger.

3 p.m.: Taco Bell All-Star Sunday at Angel Stadium begins with XM All-Star Futures Game, featuring some of the game's best young prospects in United States vs. World Team format. It continues at 6:30 p.m. with the All-Star Legends & Celebrity Softball Game, featuring a team of former baseball stars against celebrities from the television, film, modeling and music industries. Tickets range from \$50-\$110 and are available at <http://www.AllStarGame.com>, <http://www.angelsbaseball.com>, the Angel Stadium box office behind home plate at the stadium, or by calling 1-888-FanFest (326-3378).

MONDAY

5 p.m.: Home run derby at Angel Stadium. Gates open at 2 p.m. American League batting practice from 2:20 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. National League batting practice from 3:20 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. Home run derby batting practice at 4:20 p.m. Tickets range from \$120-\$360 and are available at <http://www.AllStarGame.com>, <http://www.angelsbaseball.com>, the Angel Stadium box office behind home plate at the stadium, or by calling 1-888-FanFest (326-3378).

TUESDAY

11:30 a.m.: All-Star Red Carpet Show at corner of Harbor Boulevard and Convention Way/Disney Way in Anaheim. Free admission, except to portion of show inside Disneyland.

5 p.m.: All-Star game at Angel Stadium. Gates open at 2 p.m. American League batting practice from 2 p.m. to 2:55 p.m. National League batting practice from 3:20 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. Tickets range from \$120-\$360 and are available at <http://www.AllStarGame.com>, <http://www.angelsbaseball.com>, the Angel Stadium box office behind home plate at the stadium, or by calling 1-888-FanFest (326-3378).

Copyright © 2010,

Rangers get Lee; get a lot better

·posted by **DAN WOIKE, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER**

ANAHEIM — If things weren't going badly enough for the Angels after being swept in four games in Chicago, they got a little worse Friday.

The AL-West leading Texas Rangers have acquired one of baseball's best pitchers, Cliff Lee, in a blockbuster deal Friday, [sources have told ESPN](#). The Rangers will send first baseman Justin Smoak and a handful of prospects to the Mariners for the 8-3 Lee.

The trade was rumored to be close to completion Wednesday, but when Seattle asked for Smoak, the Rangers backed off. However, after Lee was almost dealt to the Yankees Friday, Texas moved back into the picture. The Rangers will also receive \$2.5 million from Seattle to help offset Lee's salary.

The Angels currently trail Texas by 5.5 games in the division. With the trade, the Rangers add needed pitching depth to balance a red-hot offense. Texas' 445 runs is the third most in the major leagues behind the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox.

Angels' power comes back on in win over A's

By **BILL PLUNKETT**

OAKLAND – Maybe it was the humidity.

An Angels' lineup that went limp for four days in Chicago's uber-muggy weather this week came back to life Friday with three home runs including Erick Aybar's game-winner leading off the 10th inning of a 6-5 victory over the Oakland Athletics.

"He has some pop in that little body of his," Angels outfielder Torii Hunter said of Aybar's solo home run off A's closer Andrew Bailey. Hunter also had one of the home runs Friday, the 250th of his career.

The six runs Friday were more than the Angels managed in four games (all losses) to the White Sox. They went 30 innings without an extra-base hit before Bobby Abreu's two-run home run in the first inning, 37 innings since their last home run (the second of Torii Hunter's two on Sunday in Anaheim).

The Angels' offense was still very top-heavy – six of their eight hits in the win came from the top four batters in their lineup. That group (Aybar, Howie Kendrick, Abreu and Hunter) also drove in five of the six runs and scored all six. The bottom five hitters in the lineup went 2 for 19 with both hits (singles) by Juan Rivera.

And the Angels' 1-for-5 mark with runners in scoring position was another disappointment to Angels manager Mike Scioscia who has watched his team go 5 for 34 (.147) in those run-producing opportunities over the past five games.

"There are still some things in our game we need to tighten up," Scioscia said. "But, all in all, the runs are big considering the way we've struggled to score lately."

Mired in a 1-for-24 slide (part of a larger 5-for-55 slump), Abreu was given "a mental day off" by Angels manager Mike Scioscia on Thursday. He returned with a bang, ending a personal 50-at-bat homerless string with his first inning shot. Abreu was on base three more times in the game, going 3 for 4 with a walk.

"It really was a little relief, to tell you the truth," Abreu said of the day on the bench Thursday. "I think it helped me out, freshened me up, calmed me down. I was trying to do too much, forcing my game. You saw me today, I was just playing my game."

"Sometimes, you don't realize you're trying to do too much."

That early lead evaporated but another two-run home run by Hunter in the eighth inning put the Angels back on top 5-3 and put starter Joel Pineiro in line to win his seventh consecutive start.

That didn't make it through the bottom of the eighth, however. Angels reliever Fernando Rodney gave up a double to Ryan Sweeney and a single to Kurt Suzuki leading off the inning. After Rodney struck out Jack Cust, Kevin Kouzmanoff doubled into the left-field corner, the tying run scoring when Rivera misplayed the ball on the warning track – only the latest in a lengthening list of fielding misadventures for Rivera.

The score stayed tied until Aybar led off the 10th inning against A's closer Andrew Bailey and sent a 2-and-0 fastball over the scoreboard in right field. Aybar has been one of the Angels' few consistent bright spots on offense with hits in 11 of the past 12 games and a .351 batting average since June 1.

Brian Fuentes closed out the win, just the second in the past eight games for the Angels.

Angels on Lee trade: 'Team ahead of us just got better'

By BILL PLUNKETT

OAKLAND -- As soon as Angels outfielder Torii Hunter heard about the Texas Rangers' trade for Cliff Lee Friday, he had a thought.

"Great move for them. Great move for the future of the Seattle organization," Hunter said of the deal that sent the former Cy Young Award winner from the Mariners to Texas in exchange for four young players. "It's very rare to see that – a trade within the division like that. I can't remember that happening in my time."

"Hey – they're in cahoots. They're tired of seeing the Angels win."

Continuing their reign in the A.L. West was already a tall task for the Angels even before the Rangers' big move. The Angels went into Friday trailing the Rangers by 5 ½ games (the largest division lead in baseball).

While Angels manager Mike Scioscia acknowledged the boost Lee gives the Rangers, he denied that it changed the landscape of the second half for his team.

"Regardless of what they do, we know we have to play at a higher level," Scioscia said.

"Whether a team in our division does or it doesn't make a move doesn't change what we have to do in the second half. We know the challenge in front of us. The team ahead of us just got better. But it doesn't change our challenge."

Some Angels privately questioned how the Rangers could take on Lee's salary in the midst of bankruptcy. (Major League Baseball has loaned the Rangers money to meet payroll and other obligations until a sale can be finalized.) But their public statements mirrored Scioscia's stance.

"They got a good player," Angels catcher Mike Napoli said. "I mean, if they feel like they needed to do something — a player like that, yeah, he makes them better. But I feel if we play like we did about a week or so ago before we hit this little slump, we'll be fine."

The Angels took two out of three from the Rangers at Angel Stadium — then lost six of their next seven games before heading to Oakland this weekend. The Angels and Rangers will play 14 more times in the second half of the season (including seven times in the season's final two weeks) — a fact not lost on the Angels.

"As a player, of course I do (believe the Angels have enough to catch the Rangers)," Angels left-hander Joe Saunders said. "We still play them, what, 14 times? We just need to start playing with our 'A' game instead of our 'C' game. That's what it's going to take. Whether Texas did something or not, that's what it's going to take."

The fact that Texas did do something earned Hunter's respect.

"The guy's good. They made a good move," Hunter said of Lee. "(Rangers team president) Nolan Ryan is a Hall of Famer. He knows what he's doing. He's doing what I would do if I was GM and my team was in first place and there was a team in my rear-view mirror — you put your foot down (on the gas pedal). They put their foot to the floor with that move."

NOTES

Bobby Abreu's two-run home run in the first inning Friday was the Angels' first extra-base hit since Monday (30 innings ago) and first home run since the second of Hunter's two home runs on Sunday (27 innings). ... Maicer Izturis has begun swinging at soft-toss in the batting cage but has not been cleared to take batting practice with the team. Izturis has been out since June 15 with a strained muscle in his left forearm. He could begin a minor-league injury-rehabilitation assignment some time next week.

SATURDAY

Angels left-hander Scott Kazmir (7-8, 5.98) is scheduled to start against A's right-hander Ben Sheets (3-8, 4.89). Game time is 6:05 p.m. and it will be broadcast on Fox Sports West, KLAA/830 AM and KWKU/1220 (in Spanish).

Challenger game scores big

By JANIS CARR

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Lacey Hunt adjusted her batting helmet and stepped to the plate. She swung at the soft yellow ball and missed.

The 17-year-old baseball player from Moreno Valley then swung again, and again she missed.

The count was 0 and 2, but Hunt didn't argue with the ump. She didn't kick dirt on the plate and didn't throw her arms up in disgust. What Hunt did was smile, bearing a grin that spread from one dimpled cheek to the other as she took aim at the next pitch.

For Hunt, like the nearly three dozen other ballplayers that gathered in left field at Angel Stadium on Friday, the score didn't matter. Fun was the name of this game.

"Runs don't count here, only fun counts," said Rex Hudler, color commentator for the Angels who served as the afternoon's play-by-play announcer.

For more than an hour, kids from East Anaheim Challenger Little League and the Moreno Valley Challenger PONY League engaged in a one-inning baseball game as part of this weekend's Major League Baseball All-Star game festivities. Cheered on by family and friends, the mentally challenged and disabled-bodied players hit, ran the bases and crossed home plate until all batters got an at-bat and were recognized with cheers and whistles.

"These kids with disabilities, they are no different than you and I, they like to be applauded," Hudler said. "They like to be cheered, and when they score a run and they hear the cheers, they say, 'Was that for me?' You can see how happy they are that they are being cheered for."

Hudler would know. His 13-year-old son, Cade, has autism and down syndrome but has competed in Tustin's Challenger Little League for the past five years.

"The confidence playing baseball gives these kids is night and day," Hudler said. "Not to mention the rehabilitation value because it helps their coordination. It works everything – their emotional value and their self-esteem. They're playing ball and they love it."

East Anaheim's Lucas Walden, 11, said playing on the Angel Stadium field "was the best day I've ever had ... This is pretty big. It's cool."

Even if the bats didn't always connect, or the bases seemed a bit far off, the kids managed to score with the help of approximately two dozen "buddies," volunteers from Bank of America who donate their time to help out at Challenger baseball games.

"Bank of America stepped up big," Hudler said, "not only to write the check but to promote volunteering. And they volunteer their time."

But it isn't just the big corporations that donate their time. There's folks such as Julie Gerhardt, an unemployed restaurant manager, has worked as a volunteer coach for the East Anaheim team for the past four seasons and Mike Testi, who has coached the Moreno Valley team for the past 11 years.

Why do they coach these kids, most of whom can't run a base path or field a grounder? It's because of the kids.

"I have been out of work for eight months and I got a job offer to run a restaurant," Gerhardt said. "But when they said I had to work Saturdays, I turned the job down. I told them I can't work Saturdays because I have to coach. That's how much I love what I do."

Bo Jackson's All-Star 'sound' remembered

By **MARK WHICKER**

COLUMNIST

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

The 1989 game, in the old football-damaged configuration of Anaheim Stadium, will be remembered by its players for a sound that still reverberates.

The leadoff man for the American League was Bo Jackson. The pitcher for the National League was Rick Reuschel. Neither man seemed groomed for his sport. Reuschel was a heavy-set, hulking fellow who was deceptively athletic. Jackson was a breathing Greek statue with a speedboat engine inside.

Mark Gubicza, now the Angels' TV analyst, sat in the A.L. bullpen. Jackson was his Kansas City teammate.

"This is a good matchup for Bo," Gubicza told Nolan Ryan. "He likes that low pitch."

Bo particularly liked this 0-and-2 pitch. He took a mighty swat and people came to attention, as if they'd heard gunshots.

"I still remember that sound," said Mike Scioscia, a Dodger All-Star then.

There was a canopy in center-field then. Jackson's home run landed in the center of it. It was announced to have traveled at 448 feet.

"I think they needed some new batteries in whatever machine they used to measure that one," Scioscia said. "It was a lot longer than that."

"There aren't many dents in that tarp," said Doug Rader, the Angels manager at the time and the third base coach that night. "I call him Boris. Bo? That just doesn't sound right."

Wade Boggs followed Jackson and hit another home run, or maybe it was an echo, and the American League went on to win, 5-3.

In that '89 season Jackson's 32 home runs ranked third in the league and his 105 RBI's ranked fourth. But numbers didn't explain Bo. He smudged out the sacred geometric lines, the ones that had held every other ballplayer.

Today's players have their own songs, blaring through the loudspeakers. Bo had his own *sounds*.

"First game he ever played he hit a grounder to the left side, not a chopper or a slow-hit ball or anything like that, and he beat it out," Gubicza said. "The things he could do were just different."

The real difference was that Jackson learned the singular skills of baseball and still incorporated the brute force of football. Not everybody can. He was the first man to make an All-Star Game and an NFL Pro Bowl.

The difference was that Jackson played devastating baseball at Auburn and had no problem rejecting the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' request that he forget baseball and stick to the NFL.

He twice led the A.L. in outfield assists and, against Baltimore, attempted to call time in the batter's box, was refused, turned to face pitcher Jeff Ballard in mid-delivery and hit a home run.

Had Jackson ignored the Raiders when they offered to pay him fulltime for half an NFL season, he might have become the Steve Jobs of baseball, inventing new "apps" every week.

"I just remember how his head came right down to his shoulders, with no neck," said Don Mattingly, the former Yankees first baseman who is now the Dodgers' batting coach. "I'd be at first base and he'd just round it harder than anybody else, kicking up these big chunks. It was an amazing sound."

Jackson's football ended in 1991 when his hip popped out, against the Bengals. Necrosis followed, and a hip replacement. Somehow Jackson hit 16 home runs for the White Sox two years later, and 13 for the Angels the year after that.

Bo was explosive in person, too.

"If he liked you he was your best friend, but if he didn't, he didn't really have any time for you," Gubicza said.

"You didn't mess with him. When he first came into the clubhouse we threw a football at him and then tackled him. Suddenly he's got me in one hand and Bret Saberhagen in the other and he's lifting us up in the air. We're thinking, maybe that's the last time we do that.

"He also liked to hunt with a bow and arrow and he brought them in the clubhouse one day. I'm coming out of the shower looking for the toothpaste and suddenly there's an arrow sailing in there and sticking against the wall. That would get your attention, too. But he became great friends with Bret and I."

He returns this weekend, for a softball game a first pitch in the Home Run Derby, out of sight but easily recalled, still identifiable by nickname only. The sound of July 11, 1989 has not visited these premises since. But, in those 21 years, there have been no Next Bo Jacksons.

Contact the writer: mwhicker@ocregister.com

Angels' phenom Trout plays in Big A

By SAM MILLER

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

In Spring Training each year, every Angels prospect in camp meets with the team to set a statistical goal for the season. Those goals are kept private, so we don't know what outfielder Mike Trout aspired to. It's safe to say he's surpassed it:

Playing for Cedar Rapids in the Single-A Midwest League, Trout -- a first-round draft pick by the Angels in 2009 -- leads the league in batting average, at .364 through Tuesday. He leads the league in on-base percentage, in stolen bases (42), in runs scored, in total bases, in hits. The stats are impressive enough, but his age -- 18 years old, three or four years younger than most of his opponents -- is staggering.

"He's the best position player I've seen in this league, and I don't even know who's number two," said Kevin Goldstein, a prospect hound for the online magazine Baseball Prospectus.

Now, the Angels' best prospect will debut in Anaheim. Not in a big league game -- that debut is a couple years away. On Sunday, he and fellow minor leaguers Hank Conger and Luis Jimenez will represent the Angels in the All-Star Futures Game at Angels Stadium.

Trout was drafted 25th in the 2009 amateur draft, but his stock has quickly risen since then. ESPN's Keith Law, a former Major League scout, last week called him the third-

best prospect in baseball. Goldstein said Trout is the second-best, behind the Phillies' Domonic Brown. .

A move up the Angels' system to Rancho Cucamonga is likely the next step, perhaps this season.

"There is no timeline," said Angels director of player development Abe Flores. "There has been some dialogue about promotion in this year, but that's internal. When we feel it's right we'll move him. For now it's a matter of him continuing to hone his skills."

That means working on his throwing -- the one part of his game that scouts don't rave about -- and controlling the strike zone more consistently, two areas where Flores says Trout has already improved since Spring Training.

"The thing that stands out about him is he's receptive to learning," Flores said. "He accepts criticism, you can coach him hard, he's not going to fold."

Tearing up the Midwest League is nothing new for the Trouts. His dad, Jeff, was a second-base prospect for the Twins, and in 1983 he hit .341 for the Twins' Single-A affiliate. Jeff Trout stalled out in Double-A, then spent two decades teaching history in New Jersey. With each game Mike Trout plays in Cedar Rapids, it looks more likely he'll spend 20 years playing in Major League stadiums. Exhibition or not, that starts Sunday.

Contact the writer: sammiller@ocregister.com

FanFest live: Baseball playground

BY DAN WOIKE and DOUGLAS TIFFT
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Story Highlights

All-Star festivities kick off Friday in Anaheim, culminating with the All-Star Game on July 13.

Live reports from the FanFest at Anaheim Convention Center.

3:19 p.m.: Royals prospect and Chatsworth native Mike Moustakas spoke briefly at the MLB.com booth after finishing up a tour of Disneyland across the street.

Moustakas, a third baseman selected second overall in the 2007 amateur draft, is in town to compete in Sunday's Futures Game, and is likely to be promoted from Class AA Northwest Arkansas to Class AAA Omaha before the end of July. Still, he was happiest to be back in Southern California.

"I'm excited for my friends to get to see me play," Moustakas said, also mentioning that main perk of being in the region: IN-N-OUT Burger.

3 p.m.: Before I head home from the "office," I decided to take one last walk around FanFest in the hopes of soaking up the atmosphere one final time.

The sheer size of FanFest is overwhelming. If I was going to try and talk to everybody and see everything, I'd be here forever. So instead, I watched and observed.

I saw children with giant smiles getting high fives from mascots. I saw parents hanging on the every word of Chuck Finley, Wally Joyner, Clyde Wright and Rollie Fingers.

And in that, I think I found FanFest's greatest success. If you're a kid, you get chance after chance to act like one. You can field ground balls and pop ups and try to hit home runs. You can dust off your fastball and you can try and lay down the perfect bunt.

And if you're an adult, you can do all the same stuff. And here's the best part -- no one will judge.

I imagine FanFest is like the Olympics in some way, with representatives from all of baseball's teams. They wear jerseys and hats, telling everyone else, "This is my team."

But my favorite site of the day happened just before I headed upstairs to write this. I saw a family, mom and dad, two children. Both of the sons wore jerseys, one Angels, one Dodgers. One of the boys had on a Yankees hat; the other wore an Orioles cap.

Who knows who their favorite team or favorite player is? But you do know, those kids love baseball.

And if you come to FanFest, you'll see things like that all day.

-- Dan Woike

1 p.m.: Tickets to the All-Star Game are tough to get unless you're willing to open up the checkbook. Same goes for the Home Run Derby.

But that doesn't mean the average fan can't get a taste of the All-Star Game.

FanFest is geared for families and children, according to the events spokespeople, and at \$30 for adults and \$25 for children 12 and under, it's not going to break you.

Tickets can be purchased [online](#) or at the Anaheim Convention Center Box Office.

While it'll still run a family of four at least \$110 to come to the Anaheim Convention Center, the cost includes all attractions inside FanFest. For instance, in the MLB Network booth, you can call a famous play. FanFest gives you the DVD of you calling the play. Free.

It's like that everywhere you turn, with little giveaways at virtually every booth.

But if you want to drop some coin. MLB will gladly take your money.

The MLB Clubhouse Store is perfect if you're a uniform and hat geek like myself. The thought of a personalized Mookie Wilson Mets jersey sends chills down my spine. (Notice, I said I'm a geek). [They've got tons of stuff over there that I wouldn't dare make fun of either.](#)

Also, there's tons of cool memorabilia for sale by vendors and by auction.

12:35 p.m.:

The largest contingent of Dodgers fans inside the Convention Center were flocked around the Fox Sports West booth, where former MLB outfielder Shawn Green was signing autographs.

Green of Tustin mostly signed baseballs and hats, but one young fan had to pull some contortions to get his sneaker up high enough for Green to sign.

The 14-year veteran, who retired in 2007, is working on a new book, scheduled out next year.

-- Doug Tiff

11:48 a.m.: More than 300 people are crowding into the corner of the Convention Center with baseball cards, baseballs and hats for former Angel ave Chuck Finley to sign.

One fan, Trevor Florio from Newport Beach, had the gumption to call Finley "the best pitcher of (Florio's) lifetime," but most of the other Angels fans shuffled through in silent awe.

Brian Harmon of Anaheim did touch on some old memories when he unfurled a 1986 AL West Championship pennant.

"I was kind of the black sheep on that team," laughed Finley. "It was a sad ending, but we all got something out of it."

-Doug Tiff

11:40 a.m.: Arte Moreno is still in the house, and he's still posing for pictures and signing autographs for fans.

His location, though, might not be a coincidence.

One of the 40 exhibits at All-Star FanFest is a comprehensive collection of trophies and awards handed out by the league.

Fans can wait in line to have their picture taken with the 2010 World Series Trophy while the other awards are all in glass cases.

I can't help but wonder if that's the closest Moreno is going to be to the 2010 Trophy unless he and Angels' GM Tony Reagins pony up and get some offense.

UPDATE: Just heard Moreno has finally left after signing autographs and posing for pictures over the last three hours.

-- Dan Woike

11:07 a.m.: Tony Lopez' Angels jersey has over 30 names on it. Friday morning, the 30-year-old from Costa Mesa added two more.

"It's so awesome," he said. "Already, I got Rod Carew and Wally Joyner to sign it."

Lopez is one of the many fans taking advantage of the autograph opportunities at FanFest.

After getting anything signed, MLB has authenticators on hand to add a hologram to the autographed item. The authenticator then writes down the serial number.

10:54 a.m.: Former Yankee and Mariners reliever Jeff Nelson answered a series of questions from fans at the MLB.com booth.

After letting a few fans try on his World Series ring, Nelson, now an analyst for MLB.com, began by answering a question from an Angels fan in a Mike Scioscia jersey about who the toughest batter to face was.

"David Eckstein was tough guy because he only 5-foot-4 and his strike zone was so small. And he fouled off a ton of pitches," Nelson said. "Albert Belle was tough, too, when he was in Cleveland. I still remember when he hit two homers off me in '92."

Nelson also fielded a question about the Alex Rodriguez-Dallas Braden feud from an Oakland A's fan wearing a "Get Off My Mound" Braden shirt.

"Well it's normal for Alex because well...," Nelson began. "But I guess I've never seen it before."

The rest of the session was filled with Nelson voicing his displeasure with Bud Selig about suspension policy and--much to the dismay of the assembled crowd--the rally monkey.

-- Douglas Tifft

10:20 a.m.: Pete Adame's smile isn't doing the best job at hiding his excitement.

Hall of Famer Rod Carew is about to teach his children Pedro, Gina and Jonathan the best way to hit a baseball.

"I can't believe it," Adame said from the stands surrounding The Diamond at FanFest. "I'm sitting here telling my wife how awesome this is. The kids, I mean, they don't even know what they're getting."

Adame, of La Verne, Calif., sat on the edge of his seat, wearing an Angels shirt and cap as Carew spoke to a group of 20 children. In the late '80's, Adama attended Angels games with his father.

FanFest is giving him a chance to pass on his love of baseball to his children, too.

"Now, I get to share that with them," he said.

-- Dan Woike

9:45 a.m.: There were certainly some anxious moments this morning for Angels owner Arte Moreno.

"We've been working on this for five years," he said. "It's sort of like building a house; when you finally open the doors, you just hope everything works."

Moreno and other business and baseball dignitaries officially opened the doors to a baseball fan's dream house Friday. MLB All-Star FanFest features more than 40 different exhibits over 450,000 square feet.

Rod Carew, FanFest spokesperson, told the waiting crowd that he wants them to feel free to come up to any of the ball players at the event and ask questions or ask for autographs.

"This is a time for us to share with you," Carew said. "This is an exciting time for the city of Anaheim."

-- Dan Woike

How does the Lee trade affect the Angels? ESPNLA.com

July, 9, 2010

The Angels were floundering on this trip anyway, coming off a four-game sweep at Chicago, then came the news that may have sunk their playoff hopes: ace lefty **Cliff Lee** is headed to the first-place Texas Rangers as part of a six-player trade.

"The guy's good. Texas did the right move," Angels center fielder **Torii Hunter** said. "If I'm a GM and I'm in first place and there's a team behind me in the rear-view mirror, five or six games out, I'm putting the foot down. That's what they did, they put the foot down."

The initial impulse is that this forces Angels general manager **Tony Reagins** to make a move. But life is rarely that simple.

Reagins hasn't found a fit yet, so how does this make the pieces line up any better? If anything, it could get teams that were sitting on the sidelines moving, accelerating the trade market with three weeks to go before the deadline. Reagins said Friday the Lee trade has no impact on his urgency level.

"We're going to look for opportunities to get better, but it starts from within. We have to play better baseball," Reagins said. "If we add pieces and we're still not playing the type of baseball we're capable of playing, it will have a limited effect."

The Angels have to think about the long-term. Even before this trade, they weren't looking like a team that would make a serious run at Texas this year. This might not be the Angels year. The last thing they want to do is set themselves back for five years because of a rash July move in 2010.

Next year, they get better automatically just by getting **Kendry Morales** back. One key free-agent signing could set them up well for a legitimate run in 2011. The Angels don't lose any major pieces this off-season. They'll have money to spend, since **Justin Speier's** contract expires and **Scot Shields** and **Hideki Matsui** will be free agents.

The other problem: Other teams aren't exactly tripping all over themselves to get at the Angels' minor-league talent. The farm system is at a low point, particularly at the Double-A and Triple-A levels. The Angels aren't going to part with their top prospect, outfielder **Mike Trout**, especially for a two-month rental. Certainly not this year.

It looks like the Angels' new motto might be: 2011 (and beyond) here we come! But here's a sobering thought: The Rangers are the younger team.

'Little fella' offers big lift with 10th-inning jack

Aybar's homer sends Angels over A's in seesaw battle

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- They call him "little fella," but he played the hero.

Facing A's closer Andrew Bailey in the 10th inning of a tied game Friday, Erick Aybar wasn't the top candidate to win the game with a home run. But he did just that, sending a 2-0 pitch over the right-field wall to lift the A's to a 6-5 victory.

"Guy's a good athlete," said center fielder Torii Hunter, who delivered a two-run shot of his own. "He has some pop in that little body of his."

Listed at 5-foot-10, 170 pounds, Aybar doesn't have the prototypical body for power, as his 12 career home runs in 1,401 at-bats would attest. Still, Aybar maintained his status as a bright spot for a team that had dropped six of its previous seven.

"I'm never thinking about hitting a home run," Aybar said. "I always just try to get on base and hit line drives. That just happened."

Aybar said it also boosted his confidence to get a game-winning hit off a quality reliever like Bailey, who entered the game with 17 saves and a 1.59 ERA. After going 2-for-5 on Friday, Aybar is now batting .346 (16-for-47) in his past 12 games.

"It was a fastball," Bailey said. "I fell behind 2-0 and tried to get back in the count. I left the ball in the middle of the plate. I thought he was going to try to work his way on rather than swing for the fences in that situation, but you can't fall behind 2-0 like that."

Hunter kept up his recent hot streak, too. The All-Star outfielder's homer in the eighth gave the Angels a 5-3 lead -- before it was undone by reliever Fernando Rodney in the bottom of the frame. Over his past six games, Hunter is hitting .476 (10-for-21) with three home runs and nine RBIs.

If it weren't for Rodney's miscues -- he gave up three hits and two runs -- starter Joel Pineiro would have likely earned his seventh win in as many starts.

"Once you're out of the game, you just know you did your job when you went out there and gave the team a chance to win," Pineiro said. "The W's and the L's are going to come no matter what."

Pineiro certainly gave his team a shot at victory Friday, allowing three earned runs on eight hits over seven innings. In his previous six starts, Pineiro was 6-0 with a 2.08 ERA.

"He was terrific," said Angels manager Mike Scioscia. "He had good command of his sinker, and as the game went on I think his secondary pitches really became part of it. He minimized some damage and got some big outs."

The Angels also got a big evening out of Bobby Abreu, who entered the contest mired in a 1-for-25 slump. Abreu hit a two-run homer in the first -- an opposite-field shot off A's starter Vin Mazzaro -- to snap his skid in style.

But his infield single in the eighth inning -- when he barely beat out a throw from A's shortstop Cliff Pennington -- was just as crucial for the Angels. Two pitches after Abreu reached base, Hunter delivered his home run that inevitably enabled the game to go to extra innings.

"He was a totally different being today," Hunter said. "He's been scuffling for Bobby Abreu. He's a good player and everybody looks up to him. Today, when the offense really needed someone to step up and get it done, Bobby took the lead."

Abreu also said it was beneficial to get a day off Thursday, as he said he was pressing too much in the batter's box during the Angels' recent skid.

"It was really a relief," Abreu said. "I think it helped me out just to freshen me up and to calm me down, because I guess I was trying to do too much. I was forcing my game, but today I just played my game."

The contest was a topsy-turvy one from the first pitch, as the A's tied the game at 2 in the third inning. The Angels took a brief 3-2 lead in the sixth, when Hideki Matsui hit a sacrifice to center field that scored Howie Kendrick, but Oakland tied it with Jack Cust's solo shot off Pineiro in the bottom of the frame.

After Rodney, the Los Angeles bullpen settled down and got two scoreless innings -- one from Kevin Jepsen in the ninth and one from Brian Fuentes, who pitched a perfect 10th to earn his 16th save of the year.

"Brian's really been pitching well his last handful of outings," Scioscia said. "I think his command is much sharper than it was at times earlier in the year and he's definitely getting the job done for us."

Alex Espinoza is an associate reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

Kazmir, Sheets looking to better solid outings

By Dan Mennella / MLB.com

The results have been less than ideal for the starters in Saturday's Angels-A's matchup in Oakland, but both took solace in minor victories earned last time out.

The Halos' Scott Kazmir has struggled to regain the form that made him one of baseball's rising stars a few years back, but he's been flashing his nasty slider more frequently of late, and it's integral to working deeper into his starts with more effective results.

Though his final line wasn't pretty in his most recent outing against the White Sox on Monday -- 6 1/3 innings, seven earns runs, five walks and three homers -- Kazmir pitched well early in the game, something that was attributed largely to the reclaimed slider.

"I really don't think the linescore shows some of the positives we saw from Kaz," said Angels manager Mike Scioscia. "That's unfortunate that he got hit a little bit at the end. He had a good slider. I think he pitched better than his linescore showed."

For the A's Ben Sheets, this season has been a struggle at times to rebuild his stamina after missing all of 2009 due to right elbow surgery. Sheets, however, went a season-high 7 1/3 innings in his previous start, a loss against the Yankees, and he said afterward that he's finally back to his pre-surgery stamina.

"I knew getting deep would be a process," Sheets said. "But I didn't realize it would be this difficult. I'm starting to feel better toward the end of games, which is good. I think my stuff is starting to get better, as opposed to earlier in the year, when it was decreasing a lot."

Sheets will be charged with halting Oakland's four-game slide, while Kazmir hopes to make it two Halos victories in a row after they snapped a four-game skid of their own in Friday's triumph.

This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

Lengthy starts paying dividends for bullpen

Angels starters lead Majors in innings, AL in complete games

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Though he didn't get the win, Ervin Santana's eight-inning performance in a 1-0 loss to the White Sox on Thursday was the latest example of an Angels starter going deep.

Entering play Friday, the Los Angeles starters led the Majors with 548 innings pitched, and were tops in the American League with eight complete games. Though his starters struggled to begin the season, manager Mike Scioscia said he's been pleased with the overall season the rotation has put together so far.

"It's not just the innings pitched, it's the quality of innings -- good innings, getting deep into games with a chance to win," Scioscia said. "With some of the issues we've faced, we've been able to hold our heads above water primarily because these guys -- every time out, for the most part -- have pitched to a certain point of the game and given us a chance to win."

The rotation's consistency has also helped out the bullpen, allowing Scioscia to use his best relievers in more ideal situations.

"We haven't had too many overuse problems with [Fernando] Rodney, [Kevin] Jepsen or [Brian] Fuentes," Scioscia said. "Some things we've had in the past, like last year at times, was overuse of those guys."

Scioscia isn't the only one to notice. Reliever Scot Shields said the rotation's ability to pitch deep has benefitted the bullpen greatly.

"You can tell, from a reliever's standpoint," Shields said. "You feel healthy, you feel fresh and ready to go, and that's a big plus for us down there."

With Lee in Texas, Angels find road tougher

OAKLAND -- With Seattle trading ace starting pitcher Cliff Lee to Texas on Friday, the Angels' road to the top of the American League West appears to have gotten a bit tougher.

As Lee moved from the cellar to the first-place Rangers, a few Angels players thought it was peculiar to see such a high-profile player stay within the division.

"It's pretty odd," said first baseman Mike Napoli. "You never want a good player like that to come back and face you and shove it up your behind a little bit. He's a good player; it's going to make it tougher for us to get to our goal."

There has never been a doubt about the ability of Texas' robust batting order this season. But adding a front-line starter to a rotation that already features Colby Lewis (8-5, 3.33 ERA), C.J. Wilson (7-4, 3.24) and Tommy Hunter (5-0, 2.34 in seven starts) certainly makes the Rangers more dangerous.

Still, Napoli said the trade won't directly affect the way Los Angeles will approach the rest of its season. Angels starter Scott Kazmir said one player won't impact the entire AL West.

"I wouldn't say the entire division changed," Kazmir said. "It's just they got one guy they can count on -- day in, day out -- to go up there and throw up zeroes. I think we'll be just fine. Hopefully the heat will get to Cliff Lee in time and we'll have a nice run going after this All-Star break, and everything won't matter."

Torii Hunter said he's hoping history can repeat itself.

"You never see a trade within the same division," Hunter said. "At least not since Babe Ruth got traded to the Yankees, and that brought a curse to Boston until 2004."

The Angels -- who sat 5 1/2 games back of the Rangers entering play Friday -- have only faced Lee once this season. In that outing on May 28 in Anaheim, Lee lasted eight innings, allowing two earned runs on four hits and two walks while striking out 10.

Los Angeles will likely face Lee in the coming weeks, as it plays a four-game set in Arlington from July 22-25 and then hosts the Rangers for a three-game series from July 30-Aug. 1.

"You do get to see him more," Napoli said. "But he's still good. He still gets outs and locates and doesn't walk people, he throws strikes. He's still tough, but the more you get to see him, you'd like to think you have a better chance."

Despite pulling off the biggest trade in baseball so far this season, the Rangers don't sound like they are comfortable with their current first-place standing.

"We have a lot of respect for the Angels and the other clubs in the division," said Texas general manager Jon Daniels. "We're not taking anything for granted. They are the team to beat, and we have a lot of games left with them. Every start and every win we're able to get will help. Every acquisition we make, we want to do it sooner than later so it will have more of an impact."

T.R. Sullivan contributed to this report.

Angels exploring trade options for depth

OAKLAND -- Angels starter Jered Weaver said he doesn't think the team needs to react to the Cliff Lee swap with a trade of its own, saying Los Angeles is fine as is.

Manager Mike Scioscia said something along the same lines, but reiterated that general manager Tony Reagins has been open to trade discussions since Kendry Morales went down with his season-ending injury on May 29.

"Our lineup needs to get deeper," Scioscia said. "If there's someone out there who is going to make us deeper, Tony is going to act on it. As of right now, there hasn't been a lot presented that is going to be doable for what other teams are looking for and what we might have."

Scioscia said if the team was to trade for another bat before the July 31 Trade Deadline, he would prefer it was a player who was signed past the 2010 season, even with the Lee trade finalized.

"Our philosophy is not to bring someone in here for two or three months and empty your cupboard in the Minor Leagues to do it," Scioscia said.

Izturis takes swings, but still 'days away'

OAKLAND -- Maicer Izturis, on the 15-day disabled list since June 16 with a strained left forearm, took swings off a tee and in soft toss on Friday.

"He's not really swinging full-out yet," said Angels manager Mike Scioscia. "But there have been no problems with his progression. You definitely need to give his tissue time to heal and get back stretched out."

Scioscia said Izturis, one of the team's most versatile infield options, is still "days away" from being full strength.

"We'll keep working him out after the break and see where he is," Scioscia said.

Alex Espinoza is an associate reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

All-Star FanFest kicks off in Anaheim

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com

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

2010 All-Stars

AL starters |

C: J. Mauer, MIN

1B: J. Morneau, MIN

2B: R. Cano, NYY

SS: D. Jeter, NYY

3B: E. Longoria, TB

OF: J. Hamilton, TEX

OF: I. Suzuki, SEA

OF: C. Crawford, TB

DH: V. Guerrero, TEX

NL starters |

C: Y. Molina, STL

1B: A. Pujols, STL

2B: C. Utley, PHI

SS: H. Ramirez, FLA

3B: D. Wright, NYM

OF: R. Braun, MIL

OF: A. Ethier, LA

OF: J. Heyward, ATL

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.

"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.