



Clips
(July 11, 2010)

From the Los Angeles Times

Angels' Scott Kazmir is beyond relief in 15-0 loss to Athletics

Left-hander gives up the most runs ever by an Angels pitcher (13) in only five innings.

By Ben Bolch

July 10, 2010 / 10:56 p.m.

Mike Scioscia was sticking with Scott Kazmir no matter what in the fifth inning.

The Angels' manager may not be so forgiving with Kazmir after the All-Star break unless the embattled pitcher can revive a season that reached an unfathomable low Saturday at Oakland-Alameda Coliseum.

By the time an Angels reliever started warming up in the fifth inning, Kazmir had given up 10 hits and 12 runs, with eight of the runs scoring during a disastrous third inning.

And it only got worse.

Daric Barton added a solo home run in the fifth to cap the Athletics' onslaught against Kazmir during a 15-1 trouncing that marked the Angels' worst loss of the season and was their fifth defeat in their last six games.

If pitching lines were included in blooper reels, Kazmir's would be placed on an endless loop. He gave up 11 hits, 13 earned runs, three walks and three homers in five innings.

"Today was a tough one to swallow, that's for sure," said an unusually soft-spoken Kazmir, whose earned-run average inflated by nearly a full run, to 6.92 from 5.98, during his fourth consecutive loss.

It was the most runs yielded by an Angels pitcher in franchise history, surpassing the 11 Scott Schoeneweis gave up May 23, 2001, against Baltimore. St. Louis' Jason Marquis was the last major league pitcher to surrender 13 runs, against the Chicago White Sox on June 21, 2006.

It has been a season of struggles for Kazmir (7-9), who has tied a career high for losses before the All-Star break. The left-hander has been especially horrid over his last four starts, averaging less than five innings and compiling a 13.73 ERA.

Scioscia said Kazmir's spot in the rotation remained secure for now but acknowledged he would consider using an off day July 19 to push back Kazmir's first start after the All-Star break.

"His track record and what we can see as his upside is still worth moving forward with," Scioscia said of Kazmir, who was 2-2 with a 1.73 ERA in six second-half starts for the

Angels last season after being acquired from Tampa Bay. "We have a lot of confidence in what our rotation can do, and he's part of that."

The Angels' offense continued its weak ways, collecting four hits against Oakland starter Ben Sheets (4-8) and three relievers. Cory Aldridge's first major league hit, a run-scoring triple in the eighth inning that came 4,873 professional at-bats and nearly nine years after the outfielder made his major league debut with the Atlanta Braves, was the only highlight.

After facing only one batter above the minimum over the first two innings, Kazmir quickly unraveled in the third. Rajai Davis doubled to right field, Cliff Pennington tripled to right-center, and the rout was on during an inning capped by Davis' grand slam to left-center.

Davis added a run-scoring double as part of the Athletics' five-run fifth and finished with a career-high five RBIs.

But even after Coco Crisp crushed a three-run homer to give Oakland a 12-0 lead, Scioscia left Kazmir in the game so that he could complete the inning.

Was Scioscia sending a message to Kazmir?

"Absolutely not," Scioscia said. "We needed those pitches and we needed those innings. It's tough to leave a guy out there when he's struggling a bit, but for where our staff was, we needed him to get through that fifth inning without having to go multiple innings for anybody down there tonight so we're set up tomorrow if we need that length."

Scioscia said Kazmir's struggles were more related to confidence than mechanical problems, but Kazmir said he was confident going into the game. Coming out of it might have been a different matter entirely.

"You don't have too much confidence whenever you have outings like this," Kazmir said. "So I'm just going to try to get better and move on."

As a beautiful place for a ballgame, Angel Stadium has it all over Dodger Stadium

The Angels' ballpark, renovated a little more than a decade ago, has surpassed the Dodgers' aging palace in pretty much every aspect of the fan experience. Baseball recognizes this, which is why this week's All-Star game is being played in Anaheim.

By Bill Plaschke

July 10, 2010 / 7:27 p.m.

This week, the baseball world brings its marquee game to its Southern California shrine.

The best players will gather at a spot that looks like a park fiesta, smells like a beach picnic, feels like a summer night.

The national attention will focus on the only Southland venue that has staged a World Series and an All-Star game in the last 21 years.

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That this place is Angel Stadium is a triumph. That it is not Dodger Stadium is a shame.

Baseball has implied it, longtime baseball fans have felt it, I'm finally going to have to write it.

This week's All-Star game was awarded to Angel Stadium because it is the best ballpark in Southern California by about a 450-foot homer. Angel Stadium is everywhere, Dodger Stadium is nowhere, and for every heart that leaps, there is one that breaks.

For every person who loves the vacation that is a trip to an Angels game, there is someone who mourns the chore that a visit to a Dodgers game has become. This is a great baseball town deserving of two great ballparks, and for all the joy that comes in baseball's recognizing the flashy kid in Anaheim, there is sadness at the decline of the aging lady of Chavez Ravine.

Counting the 1989 game in the pre-renovated Anaheim Stadium, the Angels will have had two All-Star games during a time in which the Dodgers have had none, and one must ask, how is that even possible?

First, it is because the Dodgers, with baseball's third-oldest stadium, realize their limitations and have simply stopped pushing for All-Star games. Second, well, they wouldn't get one if they asked.

Baseball prefers Angel Stadium and, frankly, so do I. This, even though some of the best memories of my adult life have been laced together at Dodger Stadium.

I have seen baseball history change amid a hilly green background that never changes. I have eaten lunch with other neighborhood folks on the upper level in the middle of winter. I have kept in touch with countless friends while passing them on escalators throughout the summer.

I love Dodger Stadium's heartbeat. But as I grow older, I also like to watch a baseball game without worrying about a jammed parking lot or soggy bathroom or 20-minute wait for a Dodger Dog.

If I'm looking for the perfect baseball evening, I go to Angel Stadium, and even my Dodgers diehard friends do not blame me.

Start with this year's Fan Cost Index. The average price for a family of four, including tickets, at an Angels game is \$131.80. The price for a Dodgers game is \$221.64. (The FCI calculations include average-price tickets, refreshments, parking, programs and souvenirs.)

The difference between the places is even greater.

Walking into Angel Stadium, with its wide, clean concourses and comfortably spaced seats, is like opening a sunroof. Walking into Dodger Stadium, with its low ceilings, dark corners and claustrophobic concourses, is like clenching a steering wheel.

Angel Stadium concession stands are so efficient, the other night I fed my children from Panda Express and missed all of three batters. Dodger Stadium concession stands are so overworked, the other night there were 15 people in line for one guy selling pretzels — and this was on the renovated field level.

The Angel Stadium restrooms are of the clean and organized variety that could be found on any floor of an office building. The Dodger Stadium restrooms, with the exception of those on the field level, are the wet and littered sort found in junior high, complete with the occasional graffiti.

I have written before about the increase in fan violence at Dodger Stadium, but security has recently been increased to visible levels, and those taunting fans in the pavilion seem increasingly harmless. But because of the closeness of the crowds, and the literal heat in those tight concourses, there is a palpable buzz that doesn't always feel safe.

Two acts of violence in Angel Stadium last season have been well-documented. But the general stress among fans there is absent. C'mon, it's Orange County. Nobody even frowns.

"The majority of our time is spent on the stadium, because it's all about the fan experience," said Angels Chairman Dennis Kuhl. "It's like having 44,000 people over to your house every night. We want them to have a good time."

Dodgers President Dennis Mannion wants the same. But his stadium didn't have the good fortune of being gutted before the 1998 season as Kuhl's stadium did. That's really the

only thing that will fix Dodger Stadium. It needs to be torn up and put back together, keeping intact only the location and Vin Scully's broadcast booth.

"It's the most beautiful house you can dream to have," Mannion said, and I agree. "But it's about a dynamic and changing economy. We just have to keep chipping away to make things better."

It's obviously about money, and, like everything over there these days, you wonder if that money is tied up in Frank and Jamie McCourt's divorce.

"Passionately, I can tell you, no," Mannion said. "When it comes to ownership issues, we've been lucky to keep them out of this house."

As both bosses noted, these aren't so much stadiums as homes. Our homes. And you know what they say about homes. Although Southern California baseball's soul was born in Chavez Ravine, its heart is in Anaheim.

Angels' Torii Hunter aspires to be a GM

The All-Star center fielder says he would love taking on the challenge of running a major league team after his playing career is over.

By Bill Shaikin

July 10, 2010/6:33 p.m.

For the All-Star with the perpetual smile, this could be the ultimate challenge.

The guy sitting in Section 511 knows he cannot hit a 95-mph fastball, or leap high above the fence to intercept a home run. But the guy sitting in Section 511 absolutely believes he knows which players his team needs to get — and get rid of. The general manager that pays no heed must be an idiot.

Torii Hunter wants to be a general manager.

"I would like to build my own team," he said, "show that I have a little talent for scouting, picking great athletes, putting a team on the field."

That would be the easy part. That job description fails to include the 24/7 calls, e-mails and text messages, negotiations with agents and other general managers, construction of a front office, navigation of ever-tighter budgets, and meetings upon meetings.

And the fans' calling you an idiot.

Hunter will have earned more than \$130 million by the time his Angels contract expires in 2012, and he might have one more contract left in him. He would not need another job.

Many of his peers would cash in and go home.

"I love baseball," he said. "That's all I know. I've been around baseball my whole life. Why would I want to give it up just because I retire?"

"I'm still learning about the game."

Dave Stewart said much the same thing when he retired in 1995, with four 20-win seasons and three World Series championship rings.

He worked as a special assistant to Oakland Athletics General Manager Sandy Alderson in 1996, as a special assistant to San Diego Padres GM Kevin Towers in 1997, as the Padres' pitching coach in 1998.

The Toronto Blue Jays hired him as assistant GM that fall. In four years, he got two GM interviews and no jobs, and he gave up on his dream to become an agent.

"All the things you thought would apply didn't apply," Stewart said. "I thought having played the game and being on the inside would help."

To be a black man, he said, did not help. Tony Reagins of the Angels and Ken Williams of the Chicago White Sox are the only black GMs, although Michael Hill has the title in the Florida Marlins' organizational structure.

Omar Minaya of the New York Mets and Ruben Amaro of the Philadelphia Phillies are the only Latino GMs.

"I don't think it's very helpful if you're a minority," Stewart said, "but that can be overcome."

Find the right mentor, Stewart said, and you'll probably get your chance. Today's game is not as much about an old-boy network as about a get-the-hot-assistant network.

"Flavor of the month," Stewart said.

At the height of the Moneyball era in Oakland, Billy Beane assistants were hired to run the Dodgers (Paul DePodesta) and Toronto (J.P. Ricciardi, who beat out Stewart for the job). John Hart mentored his successor in Cleveland, Mark Shapiro, as well as DePodesta, Dan O'Dowd (Colorado), and Josh Byrnes (Arizona).

Theo Epstein's Boston Red Sox staff has included Byrnes and Jed Hoyer, the Padres' rookie GM.

"I had an opportunity to align myself with Dave Dombrowski," Stewart said of the Detroit Tigers GM. "I didn't. That might have put me on a fast track to be a general manager. At the time, he was the top guy in the business."

The get-the-hot-assistant trend devalues playing experience, to Hunter's astonishment.

Amaro, Beane and Williams — and Jerry Dipoto, the interim GM in Arizona — are the only GMs to play in the majors.

"They're all numbers guys," Hunter said. "There's a lot of guys that didn't even play professional baseball, let alone major league baseball.

"Honestly, the numbers guys have no freaking clue what's going on in the field. That's just like me going to talk to a class about Vietnam. I've never been there. I've never been to war."

The statistical expert would have a place in a Hunter administration.

"That's something I would like to learn," he said. "I would have somebody like that by my side, like Theo Epstein. I've got to have a numbers guy."

The numbers guys say chemistry is a myth.

"When you put together a team, there's athletic ability first, then character and chemistry," Hunter said. "You put all that together in the clubhouse, that's scary.

"How does a guy prepare? What is his style of play? Does he have heart? You can't know that. You have to be there.

"There's no way, as a numbers guy, you can know about chemistry."

Hunter insists this is not a whim. He would like to visit Williams and Terry Ryan, his former GM with the Minnesota Twins, to solicit advice. He already peppers Reagins with questions.

"He's bright," Reagins said. "His knowledge of the game is excellent. His people skills are excellent. It's just going through the learning curve — the arbitration process, negotiations, rules.

"Torii can do anything he puts his mind to."

Ask Hunter how he would put together a championship team, and the chattiest player in baseball suddenly clams up.

"That's a secret," he said. "If I put it out there, people will steal it. I have a little plan."

He smiled. If or when he gets the chance to implement that plan, we'll see if that smile remains perpetual.

From the Orange County Register

Kazmir absorbs beating as Angels routed

By BILL PLUNKETT
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

OAKLAND - The Angels might have finally thrown their hands up in disgust and exasperation with the Scott Kazmir reclamation project.

Kazmir was left in the game long enough to give up a franchise-record 13 runs in a 15-1 loss to the Oakland A's Saturday night.

The A's scored eight times off Kazmir in a third inning that included a grand slam by Rajai Davis. The run total was one short of Kazmir's career high for a single game.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia left him in the game through a scoreless fourth, but then came a fifth inning that saw Kazmir give up five more runs. Scioscia didn't pull Kazmir after he gave up an RBI double to Davis, a three-run home run to Coco Crisp or a solo home run to Daric Barton.

By the time Kazmir retired the side in the fifth and walked off the field with his head down, he had thrown 103 pitches and allowed more runs than any Angels pitcher in franchise history and more than any pitcher in the major leagues since Cardinals right-hander Jason Marquis also gave up 13 to the White Sox on June 21, 2006.

Rockies right-hander Ubaldo Jimenez gave up a total of 13 runs in his first 14 starts and 101 innings this season.

"Absolutely not," Scioscia said when asked if he was trying to make a point with the struggling Kazmir by leaving him in the game. "We're an 11-man (pitching) staff. Even with the (All-Star) break coming up, we needed those pitches. We needed those innings."

"It's tough to leave a guy out there when he's struggling with some things but we needed him to at least get through five innings without having to go to multiple innings from anyone down there (in the bullpen) and set us up for tomorrow."

Kazmir has gone 0-4 with 30 runs allowed in 19 2/3 innings over his past four starts before the break (a 13.73 ERA).

When the Angels return from the All-Star break, they have a four-game series at home against the Mariners before a travel day and a six-game road trip to New York and Texas. They could avoid using a fifth starter until July 24 in Texas. The likelihood of that fifth starter being Kazmir looks increasingly lower – and patently unwise.

Scioscia acknowledged "pushing him back a little bit" coming out of the break is "definitely an option we're going to have." But he said Kazmir retains a spot in the rotation even after Saturday's debacle.

"He's had some rough outings and he's had some outings where he's given us a chance to win. He's won, what, seven games for us?" Scioscia said of Kazmir's 7-9 record. "His track record and what we see as his upside is something worth moving forward with. We

have confidence in our starting rotation and Kaz is part of that. Until, for his own benefit, we feel we have to make a move we will consider it. But we're not there yet."

While Kazmir has talked of working on his arm slot, his slider grip and other tangible aspects of his delivery, Scioscia said, "It's not mechanics with him. It's not a health issue with him. It's purely a confidence issue."

It's hard to see how leaving Kazmir in long enough to absorb a 13-run beating Saturday did anything for Kazmir's confidence.

For his part, Kazmir said he "felt confident, felt like I was making my pitches for the most part" against the A's and would not be drawn into criticizing Scioscia's decision to leave him in the game for the full 13-run humiliation.

"All I can do is go out there and battle," he said. "Today's a tough one to swallow, that's for sure."

"I don't know. You can't really have too much confidence on a night like this. So I'll try to forget about it and move on."

Baseball thriving again thanks to Selig

By MARK WHICKER
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Eight years ago Bud Selig stared into the All-Star night like a man watching his swimming pool overflow.

He was sitting in Miller Park, the spiffy new home of the Milwaukee Brewers he had owned, and the score was 7-7 in the 11th, and managers Joe Torre and Bob Brenly had no more cans of pitchers to open.

Sensing that he and his game were about to become a late-show punch line, the distraught commissioner adjourned the game without an outcome.

That All-Star Game was supposed to be a respite from Selig's summer plagues. A collective bargaining deadline was coming in late August and threatened to cancel postseason play for the second time in eight years. The euphoria of Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa had degenerated into media pharmacology seminars, and a puff adder named Barry Bonds was the single-season home run record holder.

Baseball had a perception problem. It also had a reality problem.

Now the reality has improved spectacularly and the perception is following closely. Major League Baseball has become a web-savvy fountain of money and prestige, with a legitimate, if imperfect, drug testing program and the most peaceful labor situation in the four major sports.

And Selig is still there, in his 18th year, a Harry Truman figure who fielded the commissioner's job in self-defense.

He was named interim commissioner in 1992 and did not get the full-time job until 1998.

"My wife said, 'Buddy, how long will this last?'" Selig said. "I told her, 'Two to four months.' Now, don't think I haven't heard a lot about that since."

Selig, 75, will retire in 2012 after 20 years on the job, by which time he is confident a new labor deal will be done. In those two decades, Selig says MLB revenues will have grown from \$1.2 billion to somewhere beyond this year's anticipated \$7 billion.

"Until the economic downturn baseball was seeing 11 percent revenue growth per year," said Andrew Zimbalist, professor at Smith College who has written extensively on baseball economics. "That would be good for a start-up dot-com, let alone for an industry that's been around as long as this one."

Selig is not as aristocratic as Bowie Kuhn and Peter Ueberroth, nor as smoothly ruthless as David Stern and Pete Rozelle. He is easily the most accessible commissioner, and enjoys trading grievances and stories, partially because that's what baseball is — a talking game, thousands of oral histories.

His rambling, self-mocking manner and virtual lack of style masks a fearlessness when it comes to tough calls. No one could imagine cancelling a World Series, or playing interleague games or incorporating wild cards or basically doing away with league structures.

In many ways Selig has turned out to be a radical, coming down on the side of fan-friendliness. But when it came time to decide on Pete Rose's eligibility for the Hall of Fame or baseball employment, Selig dug in against it, and that was that.

There have been mistakes. While Selig and players' union chief Don Fehr scrimmaged, performance-enhancers crept into the game, and baseball lagged behind the testing programs of other sports.

After 2001 Selig entertained the idea of contraction, or lopping off two teams and perhaps merging others. That was forgotten in the '02 labor agreement, and now Minnesota, an endangered franchise, has a new ballpark, a \$96 million payroll and, next year, a \$23 million a year catcher in Joe Mauer.

Who would have predicted Miami would build a ballpark for the Marlins, or that The Baseball Network would have 55 million subscribers in its second year?

Who would have foreseen Baseball Advanced Media (BAM), which is generating a mint through MLB.com and is also handling several entertainment websites?

"I think a lot of it is due to labor peace," Selig said. "When I became an owner the relationship was terrible. It was like Tony Zale and Rocky Graziano standing in the middle of the ring and whacking each other."

"My first meeting, in 1970, I was sitting next to (Cardinals owner) Gussie Busch and he got so angry he started pounding the floor with his cane."

Selig said he and Fehr jointly agreed, at some point, "that this wasn't doing anybody any good. It wasn't helping the game."

Michael Weiner has succeeded Fehr. The current agreement expires after the 2011 season, and the owners want a global draft and a slotting system for draft picks.

Baseball is the only major sport that works without some sort of salary cap. Since the 1994 lockout, baseball has not missed a game because of labor strife. The NHL has missed a whole season and the NFL and NBA are girding for lockouts.

Selig points to \$450 million of revenue sharing as a boost toward competitive balance. Ten National League teams have made the World Series since the '94 lockout, but not the Dodgers and Cubs, traditional spendthrifts.

If the 2010 season ended today, Cincinnati, San Diego and Tampa Bay would take relatively meager payrolls into the playoffs, as would Texas, which technically is bankrupt.

The makeover continues. Selig still champions interleague play. So what's wrong with having the Angels and Dodgers in the same division?

"If there is realignment it's a long way off," Selig said, "but there are a myriad of reasons why we should consider a well thought out realignment plan."

It was a morning in mid-June, and the commissioner had just watched Stephen Strasburg from his Milwaukee home, and he had just done seminars at Marquette's law school and at the U. of Wisconsin.

Instead of hunkering down against the next storm, he finds himself pushing out, checking new territory.

All the crises stopped at Bud Selig's desk. Now the bucks do.

Reagins: We have to play better baseball

By BILL PLUNKETT
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

OAKLAND – The Texas Rangers fired the first big shot of the trade-deadline season with their acquisition of Cliff Lee on Friday. But don't look for the Angels to immediately return fire.

"I don't have a reaction," Angels GM Tony Reagins said when asked for his reaction to the news of the first-place Rangers' move to add a former Cy Young Award winner to their rotation.

The Lee trade does nothing to change the Angels' sense of urgency about needing to beef up for a second-half run at the Rangers, Reagins said.

"No, I just believe that initially we have to play better baseball," the GM said. "I think there are always opportunities and options to improve the situation. But I think it starts from within first and this team can play better. If we go out and add pieces but we're still not playing up to our capabilities, that's not going to get us to our goals."

The Angels have had scouts watching the Washington Nationals, Florida Marlins and Arizona Diamondbacks recently.

The Angels clearly need an impact hitter, preferably at one of the corner infield positions where they have a short-term need at first base (with Kendry Morales expected back in

2011) and a long-term question mark at third base (where Brandon Wood has been an abject failure this year). Those three teams could offer varying options in Adam Dunn (Nationals), Adam LaRoche (Diamondbacks), Jorge Cantu and Dan Uggla (Marlins) or an outfielder like Josh Willingham (Nationals).

But the fact that the Angels had scouts observing those teams doesn't necessarily signal trade discussions only that the Angels are doing their usual due diligence, keeping their scouting reports up to date for the future.

"I'm not going to get into what players we're scouting and who we're looking at," Reagins said. "I can tell you we're constantly looking at opportunities and options that are out there to improve our ballclub."

Any trade options remain in the fact-finding and evaluation stage, Reagins said, and have not advanced beyond that.

"I don't think anything's changed from what we've talked about since Kendry went down – our lineup needs to get deeper and if there's someone out there who would make our lineup deeper, Tony is going to act on it," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "As of right now, there hasn't been a lot presented that is going to be doable in terms of what other teams are looking for and what we might have."

What the Angels have is a well-known reluctance to trade their young talent and a minor-league system that boasts only one blue-chip prospect (Class-A outfielder Mike Trout). Scioscia disagreed with that assessment of the Angels' minor-league stock but said the team is not looking to give up young talent for a short-term acquisition.

"We've got some really exciting players in our system that are really coveted," Scioscia said. "Are they coveted enough to take for a player who's only going to be here for two months? I don't think that's going to move us forward."

"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 the pool gets smaller as to players you can acquire."

MORE REST FOR BULGER

Reliever Jason Bulger rejoined the team in Oakland this weekend after having his shoulder re-examined by Dr. Lewis Yocum and receiving a cortisone injection earlier this week.

Bulger has been plagued by discomfort in his pitching shoulder since early June and has experienced two setbacks after trying to take his throwing program from playing catch to throwing off a mound. The most recent came during the Angels' series with the Royals at home last weekend when he was scheduled to begin a minor-league injury-rehabilitation assignment on Monday.

Bulger said an MRI showed his rotator cuff "was pretty strong." Yocum recommended additional rest and the cortisone injection. Bulger will try starting up his throwing program again next week. He has been on the DL since June 11.

SUNDAY'S GAME

RHP Jered Weaver (8-4, 2.97) opposes A's RHP Trevor Cahill (8-2, 2.74) at 1:05 p.m. The game will be broadcast by KCOP/13, KLAA/830 and KWKW/1330 (Spanish).

MLB helps overhaul O.C. soup kitchen

BY DAN WOIKE
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

ORANGE – Whether you were an executive with your company or just a woman who has given one day a week to Mary's Kitchen for the last 24 years, you were working Saturday.

As part of Major League Baseball's "Going Beyond" initiative, representatives from MLB, the Angels, Rebuilding Together and Bank of America showed off improvements to Mary's Kitchen.

Mary's Kitchen, located at 517 West Struck Ave. in Orange, provides food, clothing and other services to the homeless and working poor. The site underwent over \$100,000 of improvements – thanks in large part to Bank of America, which donated \$75,000 and 770 volunteer hours to the project. Renovations began June 5.

Tustin resident Sue Siegel serves on the board of directors for Mary's Kitchen and said she has been overwhelmed by the transformation.

"This has been unbelievable," Siegel said. "... The numbers of the homeless people are starting to really grow. ... Now, we're feeding up to 190 people a day, six days a week. This was something we definitely needed."

Some of the improvements include a new walk-in freezer and an expanded kitchen area, allowing Mary's Kitchen volunteers to serve a higher volume of people each day.

Angels chairman Dennis Kuhl said this project has allowed the Angels to reach out to businesses and groups and former charitable partnerships moving forward.

"This is how you do something better," Kuhl said. "You come out here and you see that people enjoy this. Everybody thinks that everything is really good and turns their heads to certain causes. It's happening all over the place.

"They're going to feed a lot of people here everyday. We can say we're a part of it."

Allen Staff, the senior vice president and regional executive for Bank of America, said his company is proud to be sponsoring events like FanFest and the All-Star Game, but he is really excited to be involved with the charitable opportunities having the All-Star Game in town provides.

"Since June 5, our associates have been here doing this," Staff said. "We didn't just show up for the photo op."

And anyone hanging around, from Staff to Kuhl to MLB president and chief operating officer Bob DuPuy, was asked to roll up their sleeves and pitch in, using the vehicle of the All-Star Game to provide for the hosting community.

"It's more important to us because it leaves a lasting impression in the community and makes a lasting contribution," DuPuy said. "Mary's Kitchen will go on feeding 500 people a day long after the All-Star Game is gone. This is about camaraderie, teamwork and all of the things baseball teaches. It's sacrifice, giving yourself up to move the runner to the next base.

"That's what baseball is about, and that's what we think this is about."

From espnlosangeles.com

Kazmir's confidence takes another hit

By Mark Saxon

ESPNIosAngeles.com

OAKLAND -- By the time Daric Barton took a big cut at the first pitch and sent the ball soaring over the right-field fence, you could feel the embarrassment just oozing out of Scott Kazmir's pores.

This wasn't a bad game for Kazmir. It wasn't a beating or a drubbing or getting knocked around, all those silly terms people use when a pitcher has an awful day. Those words failed to describe it. Scot Shields didn't scramble to get warm until after Coco Crisp had hit the three-run home run that gave the Oakland Athletics a 12-0 lead.

After this 15-1 mess was over, Los Angeles Angels manager Mike Scioscia talked about Kazmir's confidence, which appears to have shriveled into a subatomic particle. So, if he's so worried about his highest-paid starter's confidence, why did he leave him to dangle in the wind through five innings, 103 pitches and a franchise record for runs allowed?

Scioscia insists it wasn't a message to Kazmir, who has too often left his starts in the middle innings, forcing the Angels' bullpen into heavy-duty action.

"Absolutely not," Scioscia said. "We needed those pitches. We needed those innings. It's tough to leave a guy out there when he's struggling a bit, but for where our staff was, an 11-man staff, we needed that fifth inning without going into multiple innings with anybody tonight."

Angels pitching coach Mike Butcher echoed Scioscia's thoughts. He seemed a bit peeved that somebody would even ask him if Kazmir were being sent a message.

"There was nothing to learn out there tonight," Butcher said. "He wasn't left out there to dry. He wasn't left out there for anything. We have an 11-man pitching staff right now."

But, still, you have to wonder. The Angels are one game removed from the three-day All-Star break, when their bullpen can recharge. Their bullpen was plenty rested after consecutive strong outings from Joel Pineiro (seven innings), Ervin Santana (complete game), Joe Saunders (5 2/3 innings) and Jered Weaver (6 1/3). The need for innings

Scioscia talked about doesn't quite add up, especially with Weaver, the ace, scheduled to pitch Sunday.

Kazmir didn't have much to say when asked if he was left to dangle in the wind. In fact, he was practically inaudible throughout his postgame comments.

"All I can do is go out there and battle," Kazmir said.

The 13 runs tacked onto Kazmir's already-bloated ERA were the most an Angels pitcher had ever allowed. They were the most any major league pitcher had allowed since Jason Marquis gave up 13 runs for the St. Louis Cardinals in a 2006 start against the Chicago White Sox. Coincidentally, Ubaldo Jimenez gave up 13 runs -- in his first 14 starts.

Kazmir (7-9) is constantly tinkering with his delivery, but all of the searching hasn't found much that's useful. He worked on strengthening his core this winter, sure that it would help his endurance. He has pitched through the sixth inning in just five of his 17 starts. He changed his arm slot, shortened his stride and underwent a battery of biomechanical tests over the past year or so, but he's still a shadow of the pitcher that used to baffle powerhouse lineups from the AL East.

Scioscia insisted Kazmir will remain in the Angels' rotation. He also insists that mechanics has nothing to do with what's going on. Kazmir's ERA is now 6.92. It boils down to confidence, Scioscia said, Kazmir's utter lack of it.

"I think that's an understatement," Butcher said. "Mike and I talk all the time. It's not mechanical. It's confidence. Nobody wants to see a guy go out and not have success. We're all pulling for him. It's hard to get confidence at this level when things aren't going well."

Kazmir is also a walking cautionary tale for trading away pieces of your future for a quick fix. The Angels got Kazmir to shore up their rotation in advance of the playoffs last year, which looked good while he was posting a 1.73 ERA in six regular-season starts for them. But he was sub-par in two playoff starts and he's been awful this year.

Meanwhile, Sean Rodriguez, one player dealt for Kazmir, has played five positions for the Tampa Bay Rays and is batting a solid .270 with six home runs and 30 RBIs. But he's not the player that could make the Angels rue the Kazmir deal. That player's name is Alex Torres. He's a 21-year old left-handed pitcher who is blazing his way through Double-A, going 8-3 with a 2.90 ERA.

Angels fans still will have a chance to watch Torres in person. He was picked to play in Sunday's Futures Game at Angel Stadium. Had the Angels not traded Torres, he probably would be their top pitching prospect. According to Baseball America, he has the best slider in the Rays' minor leagues.

And Kazmir probably came cheaper than a big-name hitter would for the Angels this month. He was traded after the trade deadline, which means he had to clear waivers to be

traded. Demand for his services, in other words, wasn't exactly brisk. Tampa Bay was mostly looking to unload the \$22.5 million it was on the hook to pay him. The Angels will have more competition in the market for an impact bat later this month.

Small silver lining

There weren't many good things for the Angels on Saturday, but there was one. Journeyman outfielder Cory Aldridge, 31, had his first major league hit. Aldridge, who is playing his 14th professional season, sliced a deep drive to left that Rajai Davis couldn't track down in the eighth inning, driving in a run.

Aldridge has appeared in 1,364 minor league games and 12 big league games. He had accumulated 4,873 professional at-bats before that major league hit.

"He's battled a long time and he's a talented guy. He just hasn't forced his way to get an opportunity to get lot of major league playing time," Scioscia said.

Quote of the day

"Today's a tough one to swallow, that's for sure. You're really not going to have too much confidence after starts like this." -- Kazmir.

Looking ahead

The Angels say they still haven't heard from Major League Baseball regarding Weaver's All-Star inclusion, but everything points to him making the roster. Because Weaver (8-4, 2.97 ERA) is pitching Sunday, he'll be ineligible to pitch Tuesday, as will Trevor Cahill (8-2, 2.74), Oakland's lone All-Star and opposing Weaver and the Angels on Sunday.

Time for Angels to become sellers

*By Mark Saxon
ESPNLosAngeles.com*

OAKLAND -- Los Angeles Angels general manager Tony Reagins said Friday's blockbuster trade that moved Cliff Lee up three places in the AL West standings to the first-place Texas Rangers "really has no effect on what we need to do as a club."

But if Reagins is smart, it will have a big effect on what he and the Angels do. If they're savvy, they'll follow the Rangers' example. They'll trade away some of their expensive major-league veterans for young players who can help them rebuild their depleted farm system.

The Angels need to swallow hard and become sellers.

When I suggested to Reagins that he should concentrate his efforts on the future, he was righteously indignant, which is probably what most Angels fans would want him to be with 73 games left.

"No," Reagins said. "We're not even to the All-Star break. There's a ton of baseball to be played and still a lot of possibilities for this season."

It may sound a bit extreme, but it might also be the Angels' best path for long-term success. Selling high for many seasons was how Texas was able to swing a trade for a pitcher as dominant as Lee. Years of unloading players in their primes, including sluggers like Mark Teixeira and Adrian Gonzalez and pitchers like Chris Young loaded Texas up with chips that could be turned into a Cy Young-caliber pitcher when they matured.

Seattle didn't exactly get pick-pocketed. The Mariners landed high-end prospects they can rebuild with, including switch-hitting first baseman Justin Smoak and hard-throwing pitcher Blake Beavan. The Rangers didn't tap themselves out either. Their farm system is deep enough to absorb losing four useful pieces.

"We have more guys coming behind them," Rangers general manager Jon Daniels said.

Texas traded exactly the kind of players the Angels don't have: high-ceiling prospects, close to major-league ready. The Angels' farm system is weak at Double-A and above. Their top pitching prospect, Trevor Reckling, got demoted from Triple-A after struggling for two months at Salt Lake. The Triple-A rotation is padded with retreads like ex-Oriole Daniel Cabrera.

Forget about the Angels trading their top prospect, outfielder Mike Trout. That isn't going to happen. But even moving a second-tier guy like pitcher Jordan Walden or outfielder Peter Bourjos would leave a hole where there's already plenty.

The Angels drastically need an infusion of young talent, not an expensive two-month rental. Nothing this team has done in 2010 suggests it is good enough to catch Texas. Now, the Rangers are the best team in the American League that has never won anything. They have the best-fielding shortstop, the hardest-throwing closer and, now, arguably the best starting pitcher in the league.

"Their team is very good," Angels pitcher Ervin Santana admitted, then added. "It's very, very, very good."

That's three "verys." That's pretty good.

Not surprisingly, Angels players would love to see Reagins add a veteran bat, somebody like Adam Dunn, Derrek Lee or Prince Fielder. That's why good players aren't necessarily good general managers. When you're wired for heat-of-the-moment competition, the last thing you're going to do is see the big picture.

"I don't think it's a necessity, but if we wanted to, we could," Angels center fielder Torii Hunter said coyly.

If you listen closely, you can hear suggestions that the Angels won't make a major deadline splash, which would mortgage the future for the present. They're not going to come right out and say that and risk alienating their impatient fans. When Reagins traded for Teixeira and Scott Kazmir in each of the past two seasons, the Angels were in better shape both at the major-league and minor-league levels.

"Our philosophy has not been to bring someone in for 2-3 months and empty the cupboard in the minor leagues to do it," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "So, the pool gets smaller as to the players you can acquire."

Reagins would help the organization more by concentrating on 2011 and beyond. The Angels are better situated to make a run after this season, when Kendry Morales' broken left ankle heals and the team could clear the books of some bad contracts. The Angels have tradable commodities that could land them decent prospects. In the process, they could save a little money to apply to the 2010 free-agent class, an attractive group headlined by a player the Angels have long coveted, Carl Crawford.

The Angels should go about aggressively shopping closer Brian Fuentes (\$9 million), who picked up his 16th save Friday, Juan Rivera (\$9.5 over the next two years) and Mike Napoli (\$3.6 million). They should think about moving Brandon Wood for a different reason. His game might flourish in a lower-pressure atmosphere and a team might take a chance on his talent, offering a prospect in return. Wood is not getting any better sitting on the Angels' bench.

Even if you move one or more of those players, the season is far from a sham. The Angels wouldn't become the Baltimore Orioles. Strange things happen. Maybe Lee won't perform in the heat of Arlington, Texas. Maybe the Rangers will mentally wilt, as they've been known to do in the past. Maybe the Angels will make a run at it anyway. They still have the will and a pedigree of success.

"You don't give in. if I hear somebody say that, we're going to fight," Hunter said.

Instead of trading for a first baseman, let Napoli do it for a while. If he thrives, you have a tradable piece this offseason, depending on how Morales' rehabilitation is going. At least one Angels player agrees.

"I think Napoli's filled in well for Morales," Kazmir said. "To be honest with you, I think that position is filled."

The next three weeks won't just help determine the Angels' course in 2010. If they're not careful, it will be a July they'll never forget.

Offense clicks

The Angels snapped out of their offensive funk by hitting three home runs in a 6-5 win over the Oakland A's in 10 innings Friday night. Erick Aybar hit the game winner, Torii Hunter hit the 250th of his career and Bobby Abreu snapped out of his two-week funk by going deep.

The Angels scored more runs in the one game -- and had more extra-base hits -- than they did in the four-game series the Chicago White Sox swept from them before this.

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

Quote of the day

Aybar is typically a slap hitter. He hit his home run off Andrew Bailey, one of the better closers in the league. It was Aybar's third home run and it went pretty deep into the left-field stands, stunning a lot of people. "He's a strong little kid," Scioscia said.

Looking ahead

Kazmir said he worked on shortening his stride in his between-starts bullpen session in an effort to get a better feel for throwing his slider. Kazmir's concern is that a shorter stride will cost him some velocity.

"You want to be able to really get after it and extend," Kazmir said.

Kazmir (7-8, 5.98 ERA) opposes Oakland right-hander Ben Sheets (3-8, 4.89), another player who could be on the move before the trade deadline of Saturday night at 6:07 p.m.

From angelsbaseball.com

Aldridge gets long-awaited first hit

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

07/11/10 2:10 AM ET

OAKLAND -- For the Angels, Saturday's 15-1 loss to Oakland was perhaps their worst game of the season. But for outfielder Cory Aldridge, it was the greatest day of his professional life.

The Angels, already trailing, 13-0, in the sixth, Aldridge and three of his teammates were inserted into the game by manager Mike Scioscia. Two innings later, Aldridge drilled a 1-2 pitch from A's reliever Ross Wolf down the left-field line.

Oakland outfielder Matt Watson nearly caught the ball -- it glanced off his glove and his throwing hand -- but it landed safely near the warning track and Aldridge coasted into third base. For a man who was called up to the big leagues this season for the first time since making his Major League debut with the Braves in 2001, it was the crowning moment of his life.

"I've been waiting 13 years for that, man," Aldridge said. "It's something I've been praying about for years and to finally get the opportunity is great. We got our butts beat a little bit -- well, a lot -- so it's bittersweet. But I'm glad to get that out of the way and I look forward to better days and more wins."

By the time he got back to the clubhouse, Aldridge's phone was chocked-full of congratulatory texts and phone calls. Aldridge, 31, was selected by the Braves in the fourth round of the 1997 First-Year Player Draft.

"It was tough go out in the outfield," Aldridge said. "All I could think about was that I finally accomplished something that I've been waiting my whole life for."

For Aldridge, it was great to share the moment with hitting coach Mickey Hatcher.

"I remember getting to third and seeing Mickey jump out and say, 'Get the ball! Get the ball! Get the ball!'," Aldridge said. "Mickey's been a good support system. He's a good guy and he's been real positive with me since spring. Just him being always positive every day, I just thank him for that."

Among the greatest obstacles during Aldridge's journey has been his own body. He had plenty of shoulder problems during his first few years as a pro and also had to overcome two surgeries to his Achilles' heels.

If it weren't for independent baseball, Aldridge may very well be watching baseball at home like most everyone else.

Back in 2001, Aldridge was a 22-year-old outfielder who got called up in September to help out the Braves. He went hitless in five at-bats and was sent back to the Minor Leagues.

After his brief big league appearance, Aldridge looked like he would be a lifetime Minor Leaguer, spending time with organizations such as the Braves, Royals, Mets and White Sox. Following the 2007 season with Chicago's Double-A affiliate, Aldridge walked away from the game.

But after a friend convinced him to play with the Newark Bears of the independent Atlantic League, he rediscovered his passion for the game.

"It revamped my love for baseball," Aldridge said. "I enjoyed it -- I didn't have to worry about front-office stuff. I didn't have to worry about anything."

Before his independent league stint, Aldridge said it was hard to progress with so many coaches telling him to change his approach. But thanks to positive people like his former manager Frank White, Aldridge persevered.

After Aldridge batted .309 with 10 home runs and 53 RBIs in 67 games for Triple-A Salt Lake this season, the Angels gave him another shot.

"It's great being here," Aldridge said. "I can't complain one bit. I just need to relax and contribute when I have a chance -- whether it's playing small ball, bunting or getting the guy over."

Kazmir gets roughed up by A's

Angels lefty allows career-high 13 runs in loss

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

07/11/10 1:50 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Things were already bad enough for Scott Kazmir, but on Saturday they got ugly.

In his previous three starts, Kazmir went a combined 0-3 with a 10.43 ERA. After Saturday's 15-1 loss to Oakland, when Kazmir gave up 13 earned runs, those previous three outings don't look half-bad.

"All I can do is go out there and battle," Kazmir said. "I just got to keep working on what I'm doing. For the most part, I was hitting my spots."

The game could have been much different, though, if it wasn't for a fateful decision by plate umpire Ted Barrett in the third inning.

The frame got off to an inauspicious start for the Angels, as Rajai Davis blooped a ball into shallow right field in front of Bobby Abreu and legged out a double. Later, Kazmir threw a wild pitch to allow Davis to score from third before giving up a triple and a single, making the score 2-0.

In mere minutes, it would be 8-0 Oakland.

It all started when A's second baseman Adam Rosales hit a solid single to center fielder Torii Hunter, who nearly nabbed Daric Barton at home. Barton successfully avoided Mike Napoli's tag at the plate -- at least in Barrett's eyes -- and the inning continued. Television replays showed Napoli touching Barton in the back with his ball and glove and Angels manager Mike Scioscia argued the call to no avail.

After that, Kazmir intentionally walked the bases loaded then walked Ryan Sweeney to make it 4-0. That set the stage for Davis, who drilled an outside 2-1 pitch over the out-of-town scoreboard in left field for his second career grand slam.

"That pitch right there, that was a pitch I wanted running in," Kazmir said. "By that time it was bases loaded already and it was a 2-1 count and I just couldn't throw a strike."

Asked if he knew the ball was destined to be a grand slam off his bat, Davis said, "Absolutely."

Kazmir said he wasn't affected by the call at home plate and Scioscia didn't seem to think it would have changed the outcome of the game anyway.

"Mike thought he tagged him," Scioscia said. "I know that inning kind of blew up after that, but, still, when it's 15-1, I don't think you're going to pick anything out there -- other than the other team just pounded you."

Things got even worse for Kazmir in the fifth, as the A's tacked on five more runs to extend their lead to 13-0. Davis, who went 4-for-5, added an RBI double to start off the frame's scoring. Kazmir eventually surrendered back-to-back home runs, a three-run homer by Coco Crisp and a solo shot to Daric Barton the next pitch, before retiring Kevin Kouzmanoff to end his evening.

The 13 earned runs surrendered by Kazmir were a career-high, an Angels record and the most by a big league starter since Jason Marquis (Cardinals) gave up 13 earned runs on June 21, 2006. For comparison's sake, Rockies starter Ubaldo Jimenez gave up a total of 13 earned runs in his initial 14 starts this season, a span of 101 1/3 innings.

"It's not a mechanical issue with him, it's not a health issue -- it's purely a confidence issue," Scioscia said. "We'll keep him going."

Kazmir said he felt fine after the game, but that the ball simply found the holes on Saturday.

"I did feel confident -- I did," Kazmir said. "I feel like I was making my pitches, I just have nothing to show for it."

Kazmir said he wasn't surprised that Scioscia let him keep pitching despite the crooked numbers on the scoreboard. Asked if he kept Kazmir in the game to prove a point, Scioscia said, "Absolutely not."

"We need those pitches, we needed those innings," Scioscia said. "It's tough to leave a guy out there when he's struggling a bit, but we're an 11-man staff. We need him to at least get through that fifth inning without having to go multiple innings for anybody down there [in the bullpen]."

Scioscia said Kazmir will remain a starter after the All-Star break, though he indicated Kazmir may be skipped the first time through the rotation, as the Angels have an off-day four days into the second half.

"This guy is still going to be very important to us as we get into the second half," Scioscia said. "He pitched terrific baseball for us down the stretch last year and we expect the same from him."

Kazmir went 6-4 with a 3.27 ERA in 14 starts after the All-Star break last season, as the Angels went 9-5 in the games he pitched. After Saturday's outing, Kazmir is now 7-9 with a 6.92 ERA, the highest ERA for any starter in the Majors.

Angels outfielder Cory Aldridge, who is back in the Major Leagues after a nine-year hiatus, recorded the first hit of his big league career in the eighth, an RBI triple to left field.

Oakland trip has Griffin reminiscing

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

07/10/10 10:30 PM ET

OAKLAND -- For Angels first-base coach Alfredo Griffin, this weekend's trip to the Oakland Coliseum brought him back to familiar ground.

Griffin, who was Major League shortstop for 18 years, played for the A's from 1985-87. For Griffin, no accomplishment stands out more than the Gold Glove he won with Oakland in '85.

"When I got here, they told me I was the best shortstop to play here since Bert Campaneris," Griffin said. "I really had good years here, and I loved it."

It was Griffin's only Gold Glove and it was made more special by the fact that Oakland had a poor playing surface.

"This field was the worst field in the league," Griffin said. "It's tough to play on a field like that and play good. I take pride in my defense because I knew I wasn't a good hitter. I needed to play good defense every time out."

Griffin said his time in Oakland was also marked with good relationships with his teammates, players like Carney Lansford, Dave Stewart and Mickey Tettleton.

"These were the closest teams that I played with," Griffin said. "Everybody got along well. Every time you went out, you went out with a group of guys together. You don't see that as much in this age."

Now, Griffin said he takes pride in teaching his players the value of defense. His positive attitude and knowledge of the game has also been noticed by his players.

"He just acts like a player," Torii Hunter said. "It's cool to have him around -- he's played the game, he was Rookie of the Year [in 1979] and he knows everything about the game."

"That's the guy you can go talk to when you're down and out and you need a question answered about life. He's got it. He's that man with wisdom."

Frandsen, Rivera look to shake slump

OAKLAND -- After getting off to a white-hot start with the Angels this season, Kevin Frandsen is in the midst of his first slump.

In four games during the team's current road trip, Frandsen is hitless in 14 at-bats, his longest such stretch this year. Still, manager Mike Scioscia doesn't sound like he's worrying about his third baseman, who was replaced by Brandon Wood in Saturday's starting lineup.

"He's hit some balls with nothing to show for it," Scioscia said. "Just like any player, he's had a little bit of a downturn lately."

Scioscia said he's also hoping outfielder Juan Rivera, who was batting .200 (3-for-15) during the current road trip entering play on Saturday, will emerge from his recent lull.

"He's still searching for some things that maybe he was searching for earlier," Scioscia said. "He had a couple hits last night, so hopefully he'll start to have a little more consistent approach at the plate."

Rivera went 2-for-4 on Friday, recording his first multihit game since June 12. Rivera missed six games before the road trip due to eye problems.

Injured Bulger making progress

OAKLAND -- Angels manager Mike Scioscia said reliever Jason Bulger visited with team orthopedist Lewis Yocum in Anaheim and didn't report any setbacks.

"He's got some things in his shoulder that are a little banged up," Scioscia said. "But hopefully he'll be able to keep his strength where he needs to and be able to pitch soon."

Bulger, who was sent to the 15-day disabled list on June 12, will now resume playing catch. Bulger visited Yocum after he experienced discomfort during two bullpen sessions and experienced a bit of shoulder soreness in Spring Training.

Halos host All-Star Week, not just game

Futures Game kicks off festivities Sunday at Angel Stadium

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com

07/11/10 1:19 AM ET

ANAHEIM -- Angels owner Arte Moreno, whose club will host the 81st Major League Baseball All-Star Game on Tuesday at Angel Stadium, has said he has to pinch himself to make sure he's not dreaming about the Midsummer Classic coming to sunny Southern California.

But now Moreno can stop pinching himself, because the All-Star festivities at Angel Stadium are finally here, beginning with Taco Bell All-Star Sunday featuring the XM All-Star Futures Game and the Taco Bell All-Star Legends and Celebrity Softball Game.

And it leads up to Gatorade All-Star Workout Day and the State Farm Home Run Derby on Monday, before the MLB All-Star Game begins Tuesday at 8 p.m. ET.

"It means a lot for us, because it means we get to showcase our fans and our stadium: what we call our baseball experience," Moreno said. "We like our fans wearing our colors and we promote that a lot, and we like to see the stadium as a sea of red."

It all starts Sunday with the 12th annual XM Futures Game, which features baseball's top Minor League prospects on 25-man rosters for the U.S. Team and the World Team.

The game can be seen live at 6 p.m. ET on MLB.TV, ESPN2 and ESPN2 HD and followed live on MLB.com's Gameday. In addition, XM Radio will broadcast play-by-play coverage of the event live on XM 175.

It also will have plenty of Angels' flair, with former Angels slugger Don Baylor serving as the U.S. Team manager and former Angels manager Cookie Rojas serving as the World Team manager.

Baylor, who spent six seasons with the Angels and won the 1979 American League MVP Award with the club, is certainly excited about returning to Angel Stadium for the Futures Game.

"Heck, yeah, it's exciting, having USA on my shirt," Baylor said. "They didn't have to ask twice, just put it that way."

Rojas, who worked in the Angels' front office and scouted for the club before serving as manager in '88, was similarly excited for Futures Game to kick off Sunday.

"I think it's a great honor that I was asked by Major League Baseball to manage the team," Rojas said. "Having been with the Angels and with the All-Star Game there, it made for a perfect combination. I think it's very nice that I was asked to go back to where I stayed a lot of years."

The game has seen its fair share of its players become solid big leaguers, including Ryan Howard, CC Sabathia, David Wright and most recently Jason Heyward, who participated in last year's event.

This year's version will again feature many of baseball's top prospects, including three from the host Angels, with catcher Hank Conger and outfielder Mike Trout on the U.S. Team and infielder Luis Jimenez on the World Team.

"I'm definitely excited about the Futures Game," Trout said. "It's going to be sick. I wanted to have a good year so I could do this at Angel Stadium, so it gave me the chills when I found out."

And immediately after the Futures Game, the Taco Bell All-Star Legends and Celebrity Softball Game will be played and later televised immediately following the State Farm Home Run Derby on Monday on ESPN and ESPN HD.

Hall of Famers Ernie Banks, Gary Carter, Rollie Fingers, Goose Gossage, Rickey Henderson, Paul Molitor, Ozzie Smith and Dave Winfield are expected to play, while celebrities scheduled to participate include Jon Hamm (Mad Men), Tracy Morgan (30 Rock), Billy Bob Thornton (actor), James Denton (Desperate Housewives), Jennie Finch (USA gold medal softball player), Mario Lopez (Extra host) and Maria Menounos (Access Hollywood host).

"The celebrity softball game is always a lot of fun," Angels chairman Dennis Kuhl said. "There's always plenty of talking back and forth so it should be exciting."

And then on Monday, it's time for the Major Leaguers to get involved with Gatorade All-Star Workout Day, followed by the State Farm Home Run Derby, which will be broadcast live on ESPN, ESPN HD, ESPN Deportes, ESPN 3D and ESPN Radio in the United States beginning at 8 p.m. ET.

Marlins shortstop Hanley Ramirez, Brewers outfielder Corey Hart, Cardinals outfielder Matt Holliday, D-backs outfielder Chris Young, Tigers first baseman Miguel Cabrera, Red Sox designated hitter David Ortiz, Blue Jays outfielder Vernon Wells and Yankees outfielder Nick Swisher are scheduled to participate in the event.

Young and Swisher were the last two added to the event on Thursday and now the field is set for the always entertaining Home Run Derby.

"It could be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be in a Home Run Derby," Young said Thursday, when he first got the invitation to participate. "So I would love to go out there and enjoy the experience. It's an honor."

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 2:30 p.m. ET and will be televised live by MLB Network, 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 8 p.m. ET 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.

The Midsummer Classic is certainly the crown jewel of All-Star Week in Anaheim, but as Kuhl noted, it's much more than just the All-Star Game at Angel Stadium.

"Not every fan get tickets to the All-Star Game and the Home Run Derby, but everyone has an opportunity to see something happening whether it's FanFest, the Futures Game or the Celebrity Softball Game," Kuhl said. "There's something for everybody. That's why I really have to praise MLB for putting on an event, not just a game."