



*Clips*

**(September 22, 2014)**

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*FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES*

## **Angels let it get away in the ninth to Rangers, 2-1**

By Everett Cook

In the Angels' 2-1 loss to the Texas Rangers on Sunday, closer Huston Street took the mound in the ninth inning with the score tied. He threw 12 pitches and said that all but one were executed properly.

That one bad pitch, though, was costly. Rookie outfielder Ryan Rua hit the inside fastball over the left-field fence, which proved to be the difference.

"That's probably the best I've felt on the mound in about a month, truthfully," Street said. "Execution of all my stuff ... but that was a good swing by Rua right there. He took a good swing, give him credit."

The home run ruined another good outing from Cory Rasmus, the Angels' usual long-relief man. In his fifth career start, the right-hander gave up two hits in four-plus innings and set a career high with 59 pitches. In 16 innings as a starter, Rasmus has given up eight hits and three runs.

He gave up a double and a walk to start the fifth inning and was removed by Manager Mike Scioscia.

"I think Cory has really settled into some consistency," Scioscia said. "You can't ask for more than what Cory has done as just a guy kicking off a game for us and going as far as he can. It seems like every start he gets a little better, a little stronger."

If the Angels didn't have a massive injury problem in their rotation, Rasmus wouldn't be starting.

But behind Jered Weaver and C.J. Wilson, the options in the rotation are thin heading into the playoffs. Garret Richards and Tyler Skaggs are out for the season. Hector Santiago has retired nine batters in his last two starts and has a 9.69 earned-run average in September. Wade LeBlanc pitched well in his last outing, but has a 5.29 ERA this season.

Matt Shoemaker would certainly fit into the playoff rotation, but has been dealing with a strained oblique. Scioscia said that Shoemaker is feeling much better, but that the team won't have an indication on his availability for the playoffs for the next three or four days.

Weaver could pitch on short rest in an American League division series, but the Angels are still going to need a fourth starter if they advance. Though Rasmus won't be able to go more than four or five innings, which would tax the bullpen in a longer series, the Angels might not have a better option.

Rasmus could theoretically go longer, but the Angels don't want to put him at risk for long-term damage. He hasn't started more than seven games in a season since 2010, while in the minor leagues.

"I don't think he needs to go past 50 pitches," Scioscia said. "I think in spring training, if we had gotten him stretched out and thought we had a fighting chance to get him to where he has length and be able to evaluate him, but right now, I don't think we're going to risk setting him back. He really doesn't need it. If he's going out there and giving us the 50-pitch look and getting us into the fourth inning, I think that's about all you can hope for with Cory, and he's doing a terrific job with it."

On Sunday, the Angels trotted out six relievers after Rasmus. None threw more than 29 pitches.

Maybe not ideal for the regular season, but in a shortened playoff series, it could work.

"If Cory was going to be an option for us in the playoffs, I think it would probably be under the same umbrella that we're looking at now," Scioscia said. "You would have to have a lot of [bullpen] coverage early in the game, not that we can't be successful that way, we could do it, but I don't think we're going to get Cory into a spot where you see him pitching into the sixth or seventh inning."

The Angels should have their playoff rotation set by the end of the week.

Rasmus said that he didn't feel sore or tired.

"They're watching from the outside and they see," Rasmus said. "Me, obviously, I want to be in there and pitch as long as I can. But if they see I'm getting a little fatigued, I'm showing a little wear and tear, they'll take me out. I'd like to go as long as I can and as hard as I can. That's my goal."

## Angels fall to Texas Rangers, 2-1

By Everett Cook

**KEY MOMENT:** Rookie Ryan Rua hit his first career home run in the ninth inning against closer Huston Street, launching a 1-and-2 fastball into the Angels bullpen to give the Rangers a 2-1 lead. Street then gave up a single, a double and an intentional walk before being replaced by Yoslan Herrera, who got an inning-ending double play.

**AT THE PLATE:** The Angels didn't get a hit until the fourth inning, when Mike Trout singled. Trout got on base in all four of his plate appearances. He was hit by a pitch and walked twice, once intentionally. The Angels scored in the sixth inning on a single by Albert Pujols. The teams left 15 runners on base.

**ON THE MOUND:** In his fifth career start, Cory Rasmus set a career high with 59 pitches in his fifth career start. The right-hander pitched four-plus innings. The Angels' usual long-relief man, Rasmus gave up two hits, no runs, and struck out three batters. Fernando Salas gave up the Rangers' sixth-inning run. The Rangers' Nick Tepesch gave up one run and four hits in seven innings.

**KENDRICK LEAVES IN THE EIGHTH:** Second baseman Howie Kendrick left in the eighth inning because of a tight hamstring, Angels Manager Mike Scioscia said. Scioscia said Kendrick would get Monday off if needed.

**HAMILTON UPDATE:** A day after Josh Hamilton said he received seven injections for pain and spasms in his rib cage, Manager Mike Scioscia said that the timeline for the outfielder remains the same. Hamilton is working on basic movements and trying to let the spasms calm down before resuming baseball activities. Scioscia said the Angels want to get Hamilton some at-bats before the playoffs, and might bat him lower in the lineup to take some pressure off if he returns before then.

**UP NEXT:** Left-hander C.J. Wilson (13-9, 4.42 ERA) will face Oakland right-hander Jeff Samardzija (4-5, 3.13) on Monday at 7 p.m. at the O.co Coliseum. On the air: TV: FS West. Radio: 830, 1330.

*FROM THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER*

## **Angels can't elevate games to Trout's level in loss**

By Pedro Moura

ANAHEIM – Mike Trout reached base four times Sunday in Angel Stadium's regular-season finale against the Texas Rangers.

The rest of his teammates did too, though – in total. And a languid Angels offense produced a solitary run in a 2-1 loss before a season-low crowd of 27,166 fans.

Just as he did 11 days before, Rangers right-hander Nick Tepesch hit Trout with a fastball in the first inning. The Angels' star promptly stole second, then singled in the fourth inning. Tepesch then intentionally walked him with a runner on second and one out in the sixth. Albert Pujols lined a single to left to score the Angels' run two pitches later.

Trout, the likely AL MVP, capped his day by walking in the eighth and advancing to third on a Pujols groundout.

He also made a splendid play leading off the game, when Leonys Martin lifted a deep drive to the wall and Trout leaped and snagged it, taking away at least a double.

On the mound, right-hander Cory Rasmus again performed solidly, throwing four-plus scoreless innings, and the Angels' bullpen mostly backed him up. Closer Huston Street permitted a run in the ninth, as did right-hander Fernando Salas in the sixth, but four other relievers had scoreless outings.

It was Rasmus' second straight start of four innings with no runs permitted.

"I think Cory has really settled into some consistency," Scioscia said. "You can't ask for more than what Cory's done as just a guy kicking off a game for us, going as far as he can. It seems like every start, he gets a little better, finishes a little stronger."

The Angels (96-60) still have a chance to finish strong this week in Oakland and Seattle. They remain 2 1/2 games ahead of Baltimore in the race for the American League's best record.

Sunday's announced crowd was the smallest at Angel Stadium since April 30, 2012. The Angels have nearly sold out Games 1 and 2 of the Division Series, to be played Oct. 2 and 3.

## **One bad pitch spoils good day for Angels closer Street**

By Pedro Moura

ANAHEIM – On Saturday night, when he retired three Rangers in order to record his 39th save of 2014, Angels closer Huston Street felt he executed his pitch as intended just three times in 12 total offerings.

On Sunday afternoon, when he allowed the go-ahead homer and retired only one of the five Rangers he faced in earning his second loss as an Angels, Street said he executed 18 of the 19 pitches he threw.

The lone exception was the homer he served up, a misguided inside fastball, he said, on which Rangers rookie Ryan Rua turned and smacked for his first career home run. But Street was happier afterward than he'd normally be following a losing outing.

"That's probably the best I've felt on the mound in about a month, truthfully," Street said. "I threw the ball way better today than yesterday, but baseball sometimes happens."

Baseball happening Sunday meant that the 31-year-old right-hander tried to work on something he doesn't normally do. He tried to throw a fastball on the plate's inner half, maybe even a bit inside, and he caught more of the plate than he intended.

"I really just wanted to work on it," Street said. "I don't normally throw fastballs in. I know it's a tie game, but I felt like I had him set up. I just didn't make my pitch."

Rua barely stayed alive on the previous pitch, a sweeping slider he tapped foul. So Street went in, with disastrous results. The next two batters singled and doubled, and Street was removed after issuing an intentional walk.

It was the third time he allowed a run in 25 Angels appearances. He said he's generally been feeling better since he sat out a week while bothered by a tight hamstring earlier this month.

Street used that week, he said, to throw more in the afternoons, focusing on mechanics while knowing he wouldn't be needed in game situations.

"You just have to be honest with yourself," Street said. "Today, the box score looks bad, but the way the ball was coming out of my hand ... I know when I execute my pitches the way I want the results are going to take care of themselves over the long haul."

## **RASMUS IN OCTOBER**

Could Cory Rasmus start a playoff game for the Angels next month?

It's hard to argue he doesn't deserve a chance compared to the other candidates if Matt Shoemaker remains out because of a strained oblique.

Since he was moved to the rotation on a spot-start basis five starts ago, Rasmus has allowed three runs in 16 innings, striking out 16 while walking just four. He hasn't yet recorded an out in the fifth inning and would probably be limited to 60-70 pitches, but the Angels can count on those being good pitches.

Since Rasmus was moved to the rotation, left-hander Hector Santiago has thrown 13 innings in four starts and allowed 15 runs, with nine strikeouts and nine walks. He's also averaged just 70.5 pitches per outing in that span.

He's the likely alternative to Rasmus in Game 3 of the American League Division Series – if Shoemaker can't return.

Rasmus, 26, is now viewed as a potential starter next season, given time to build up stamina in the offseason. He wouldn't be a perfect fit this year, but the Angels have little else that's even a bad fit.

He has taken the same approach in each of his starts, to go as hard as he can for as long as he can. And he retained his 94 mile-per-hour fastball velocity into his final inning Sunday.

## NOTES

Second baseman Howie Kendrick left Sunday's game after seven innings because of a tight hamstring, aggravated stretching to catch a throw at first on a sixth-inning sacrifice bunt. He said his removal was strictly precautionary. Scioscia said Kendrick is day-to-day and could start Monday in Oakland. ... The Angels made their rookies dress up in an annual baseball tradition, typically carried out on the final trip of the season. Among the costumes was a walking middle finger, sported by left-hander Michael Roth.

## On deck: Angels at A's, Monday, 7 p.m., FSW

By Pedro Moura

**Where:** O.co Coliseum

**Did you know:** Angels starting pitchers have limited opponents to three or fewer earned runs in 36 of the team's past 40 games.

**A's report:** Oakland has collapsed in the last month. There's no way around that. But the Athletics can still quite easily find their way into the wild-card game with a good final week of the season, and they've got three great starting pitchers lined up against the Angels. Dealing away Yoenis Cespedes is cited as the reason Oakland's offense went downhill, but the truth is he wasn't close to their biggest producer before his trade. The rest of the hitters have just slumped terribly.

## THE PITCHERS

### LHP C.J. WILSON (13-9, 4.42)

Wilson produced his second-best start of 2014 in an important setting last time out, throwing seven scoreless innings in the game that clinched the American League West for the Angels. His season-long win total looks fine, but it belies the struggles he's had almost all year long. If he can end the season with two solid starts, though, that'd give the Angels a lot more confidence heading into his playoff start(s).

**Vs. Athletics:** 11-7, 3.30

**At O.co Coliseum:** 6-3, 2.77

**Loves to face:** Josh Reddick, 3 for 21 (.143), 3 BB, 5 SO

**Hates to face:** Jonny Gomes, 7 for 22 (.318), 1 HR, 6 BB

### **RHP JEFF SAMARDZIJA (6-12, 2.98)**

Somehow, Samardzija has been credited with six wins in his 31 starts this season, a terrible rate of success. But don't let that distract you: He's been a great pitcher all year, about as good with Oakland as he was with the Cubs pre-trade. Samardzija has faced the Angels only once as an Athletic, and he predictably missed out on a win despite an eight-inning effort. Current Angels have hit seven homers in 80 at-bats against him.

**Vs. Angels:** 0-2, 7.11

**At Angel Stadium:** 3-2, 3.52

**Loves to face:** Kole Calhoun, 0 for 4, 1 SO

**Hates to face:** Albert Pujols, 7 for 16 (.438), 3 HR, 9 RBI

### **UPCOMING MATCHUPS**

**Tuesday:** Angels LHP Wade LeBlanc (0-1, 5.24) vs. Athletics RHP Sonny Gray (13-9, 3.28), 7 p.m.

**Wednesday:** Angels LHP Hector Santiago (5-9, 3.98) vs. Athletics LHP Jon Lester (16-10, 2.41), 12:30 p.m.

## **Final: Rangers 2, Angels 1**

By Pedro Moura

ANAHEIM -- Cory Rasmus did his job again, and this time the Angels' bullpen largely did its, too.

But the Angels' offense could do little against Rangers right-hander Nick Tepesch and a rag-tag bunch of Texas relievers, succumbing 2-1 in the final regular-season tilt at Angel Stadium on Sunday.

The Angels (96-60) produced just four hits, all singles. They drew two walks and one hit-by-pitch. It was certainly not a prolific offensive day.

When the Rangers scored their first run in the sixth off Fernando Salas, the Angels followed by tying it in the bottom half of the inning. Chris Iannetta singled, Mike Trout walked intentionally, and Albert Pujols lined a single to left.

But that was it, and Huston Street served up the go-ahead slam to left to Rangers left fielder Ryan Rua -- Rua's first career homer, in fact. That was in the ninth, an inning Street wasn't allowed to finish after giving up two more singles.



He has taken two losses this season, both against the Rangers.

The Angels remain 2 1/2 games ahead of Baltimore in the race for the American League's best record. They travel to Oakland tonight to begin a three-game series against the A's tomorrow.

It should be rookie dress-up day today, in an annual baseball tradition for the season's final road trip.

*FROM ANGELS.COM*

## **Late homer by Rangers sinks Angels in home finale**

By Matthew DeFranks

ANAHEIM -- Results matter for Huston Street and the Angels -- just not as much this time of the season.

Street gave up Ryan Rua's one-out solo home run in the top of the ninth on Sunday, handing the Angels a 2-1 loss at Angel Stadium. It was Rua's first career home run.

Despite the loss -- one that kept the Angels 2 1/2 games ahead of Baltimore for the American League's best record -- Street said Sunday was the best he'd felt on the mound in about a month, and that he executed all of his pitches on Sunday except for the 1-2, 90-mph inside fastball to Rua.

"I know when I execute my pitches the way I want to, the results are going to take care of themselves over the long haul," Street said. "Rua's pitch was not an executed pitch, and that's the big leagues. That's sometimes what happens."

Street has allowed runs in two of his last six outings after beginning his Angels career with two runs in his first 20 games. Both of his losses this season have been to Texas.

But Street and the Angels, who clinched the AL West on Wednesday and are already guaranteed home-field advantage in the AL Division Series, have the next 11 days to work out the kinks before the ALDS begins.

"You have to get it done more times than not, 95 percent of the time," Street said. "Results matter, they absolutely do matter, but I feel like, on an individual day-to-day basis, I try to [judge it on], 'How was I feeling today?'

"You can build off of outings like today because you felt good. You felt like, 'If I could do that, more times than not, I'm going to get outs.'"

During his nearly week-long absence with an injured hamstring, Street said he worked on his throwing motion, knowing he wouldn't be needed in the game. In the first three games after returning, Street needed to face just 10 batters to record nine outs as he picked up two more saves.

"I took that week to lock in all my mechanics, all my everything," Street said. "Today was the best I've felt in a while. I threw the ball way better today than I did [Saturday], just baseball sometimes happens."

For the first time in his career, Angels starter Cory Rasmus -- who's mostly been used as a reliever -- dipped into the fifth inning and gave up a double and a walk before exiting after throwing a career-high 59 pitches.

Since replacing Garrett Richards in the rotation on Aug. 30, Rasmus has a 1.69 ERA and 0.75 WHIP in five starts. The Angels have gone 3-2 in Rasmus' starts, but he hasn't been eligible for a win.

"I think Cory has really settled into some consistency," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "You can't ask for more than what Cory's done as just a guy kicking off a game for us and going as far as he can. It seems like every start, he gets a little better, finishes a little stronger."

Rasmus said he left Sunday's game without feeling sore or tired, which was "a step in the right direction."

Howie Kendrick, though, left the game with a tight hamstring before the top of the eighth. Scioscia said Kendrick would sit out Monday if necessary.

"It's better to come out now than to mess something up," Kendrick said.

In the sixth, Fernando Salas loaded the bases with two outs before Tomas Telis lined a hot shot to Erick Aybar, who couldn't handle the ball at short and allowed Leonys Martin to race home, breaking the scoreless tie.

In the bottom of the inning, the Angels answered with a run of their own with Albert Pujols driving in his 101st run of the season with a single to left. The Angels left the bases loaded, however, when David Freese lined out to right to end the inning.

Nick Tepesch stifled the Angels for most of the afternoon, throwing seven innings of one-run ball and giving up four hits. He has allowed three earned runs or fewer in all five of his starts against the Angels.

## **Angels' postseason roster far from set**

By Matthew DeFranks

ANAHEIM -- The Angels don't have any high-stress games remaining this season, but that doesn't mean some of the players don't have something to prove.

With the end of the regular season a week away and the start of the American League Division Series on Oct. 2, the Angels' postseason roster is far from set, with several spots on the roster up for grabs.

"There are a lot of variables that are not defined yet," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "We're [11] days away and certainly you have different rosters that you're ready to look at and how all the pieces are going to fit, but you can't really get the answers until you have the questions."

Here's what to watch for in the last week as the Angels try to fill out their roster:

### **The rotation**

With Matt Shoemaker's status unknown (left oblique strain) and Hector Santiago struggling in his last two starts, the Angels have floated the idea of using a three-man rotation in the playoffs.

Santiago will get one more regular-season start -- Wednesday in Oakland -- to try to earn a playoff rotation spot after he recorded just nine outs in his last two starts. He has been effective for much of the second half but has stumbled recently (10 runs, 12 hits and five walks in his last two starts) and could end up in the bullpen for the playoffs.

Shoemaker, meanwhile, has reported feeling better nearly every day since he got hurt on Monday, but he hasn't thrown off a mound yet. The Angels will try to give him a start in one of the season's final two games.

### **The lineup**

Even with a healthy Josh Hamilton (rib soreness), the Angels are still searching for a bat to rotate into the lineup, either as the DH or in the field. Without Hamilton, they need a left fielder as well.

While Collin Cowgill figures to make the roster, C.J. Cron and lefty-swingers Efrén Navarro and Brennan Boesch are battling to make the cut. Since the beginning of September, at least one of that trio has started all but three games.

"All those guys bring a little different look, but I think we're going to be OK," Scioscia said. "It might not be one guy, you might have to mix and match a little bit, but I think we're going to have a pretty good look as we finish this week."

Navarro is a contact hitter who hits to all fields, while Cron and Boesch provide power in the bottom third of the order.

### **The lefty reliever**

Since coming over from Arizona in early July, Joe Thatcher has struggled against left-handed hitters, allowing them to hit .467 against him in 13 games. On the upcoming road trip through Oakland and Seattle, Thatcher will get an opportunity to prove himself against Oakland's array of lefties, plus Seattle's Robinson Cano and Kyle Seager.

"It's nice to have that presence there, but some of our lefties haven't looked really good against lefties recently, so you have to weigh a lot of things," Scioscia said. "It's not just that they're a left-handed pitcher, it's the function of, 'Are guys going to go in there and make pitches and get outs?'"

At times this season, the Angels have gone without a left-hander in the bullpen, instead using righties Fernando Salas (.168 average against), Kevin Jepsen (.209) and Joe Smith (.211) to neutralize lefties.

### **The utility man**

For most of the year, Scioscia has used John McDonald as a late-game defensive replacement for David Freese at third base. But McDonald's defense may not be enough to get him to the playoffs as he sports a .162 average on the season and has three hits since July.

Gordon Beckham has spelled Freese at third in the last month and has received the lion's share of at-bats as the utility infielder since coming over from the White Sox in a late August trade. He has hit .250 in his first 20 games with the Angels.

Both McDonald and Beckham can play second, third and shortstop.

## Pujols out at first base as call is overturned

By T.R. Sullivan

ANAHEIM -- The Rangers won a big challenge in the bottom of the eighth inning of their 2-1 win against the Angels on Sunday.

The score was tied at 1 when Mike Trout drew a one-out walk off Rangers reliever Shawn Tolleson. Albert Pujols followed with a smash at third baseman Adrian Beltre, who juggled the ball as he tried to gain control.

Beltre threw to first, but Pujols was called safe by first-base umpire Jim Wolf. First baseman Adam Rosales went to argue and Trout raced to third. The Rangers challenged the call at first and it was overturned after replay review. With two outs and a runner at third, Gordon Beckham flew out to right to end the inning.

The Rangers went ahead in the top of the ninth on a home run by Ryan Rua.

## Building Wild Card lead is A's goal vs. Angels

*Samardzija looks to outduel Wilson during series opener in Oakland*

By Ryan Hood

Well, this series hasn't shaped up the way it looked like it would at the non-waiver Trade Deadline.

The Angels, not the A's, have run away with the American League West and have the Majors' best record, and they're now playing for homefield advantage in the AL Championship Series. It's the A's with much more on the line, as they are clinging to a Wild Card berth.

With seven games remaining, the A's lead the Royals by a half-game for the top AL Wild Card spot and lead the Mariners by two games. They'll send July acquisition Jeff Samardzija to the mound against the Angels at O.co Coliseum.

Samardzija has been one of the few bright spots for Oakland lately. He pitched a gem in his last start against Texas: eight scoreless innings, 10 strikeouts and no walks. But Sean Doolittle blew the save in the ninth. In his last two starts, Samardzija has pitched 15 scoreless innings, but he received a no-decision each time. His last win came on Aug. 25. Just like with the Cubs, he can't seem to find much run support in Oakland.

Samardzija faced the Angels in Anaheim on Aug. 30 and took a hard-luck loss, going eight innings and giving up two runs (one earned) with nine strikeouts and no walks. Over his last five starts, he's posted a 1.66 ERA -- but the A's are 1-4 in those games.

The Angels -- 2 1/2 games up on Baltimore for the best record in the AL -- will counter with C.J. Wilson, who had his best start of the second half on Wednesday: one hit allowed in seven shutout innings. It was Wilson's first scoreless appearance since a shutout against Tampa Bay in May. He last started against the A's on Aug. 28, and was tagged for three earned runs on seven hits in 5 2/3 innings.

**A's: Gentry and Jaso potentially done for season**

The A's will again be shorthanded on Monday night.

Craig Gentry continues to slowly recover from a concussion, and it is becoming increasingly unlikely that the A's outfielder will play again this season.

On Sunday, A's manager Bob Melvin acknowledged that Gentry -- as well as catcher John Jaso -- could be done for the year due to concussions.

"With eight games left," Melvin said Sunday, "there's always that possibility."

Gentry sustained his concussion on Sept. 9 in a collision at first base and remains barred from baseball activity. Sinus issues have impeded his progress, and a doctor examined him on Saturday. He previously sustained a concussion in 2011 as a member of the Rangers.

Jaso, who has been out since Aug. 23, appeared to be nearing a return until a Sept. 10 visit to sports concussion specialist Dr. Micky Collins, who told Jaso he needed to take more time off. His 2013 season was cut short by a concussion in late July.

**Angels: Spots open on postseason roster**

Even with a healthy Josh Hamilton (rib soreness), the Angels are still searching for a bat to rotate into the bottom of the lineup, either as the DH or in the field. Without him, they need a left fielder as well.

While Collin Cowgill figures to make the playoff roster, C.J. Cron and left-handed hitters Efrén Navarro and Brennan Boesch are battling to make the cut. Since the beginning of September, at least one of that trio has started every game but three.

"All those guys bring a little different look, but I think we're going to be OK," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "It might not be one guy, you might have to mix and match a little bit, but I think we're going to have a pretty good look as we finish this week."

Navarro is a contact hitter who hits to all fields, while Cron and Boesch provide power in the bottom third of the order. Navarro and Boesch figure to get the at-bats against the right-hander Samardzija.

**Worth noting**

- Prior to Sunday's game, the A's had scored 19 runs in their last 10 games. That marked the third time in the last 35 years they had scored fewer than 20 runs over a 10-game stretch.
- Wilson against Oakland this season: two starts, 3.00 ERA, 1.50 WHIP in 12 innings.

*FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS*

**Angels-Athletics Preview**

By Nicolino DiBenedetto

Already assured of a postseason berth, the Los Angeles Angels will play a major role in determining whether the Oakland Athletics join them.

Jeff Samardzija is certainly doing his part to get the A's into the playoffs.

Samardzija and the A's attempt to take another step toward securing a wild-card spot as they open a three-game set with the visiting Angels on Monday night.

Oakland (85-70) has seven games left to clinch a playoff spot and earn home-field advantage for the wild-card game on Sept. 30. However, those races may not be decided until this weekend since the A's hold the first wild-card spot by just a half-game over Kansas City and two over Seattle.

The winner of the wild-card game could end up facing the Angels (96-60) in the division series, and Los Angeles will have a say in which teams meet in that one-game playoff. After visiting Oakland, the Angels conclude the regular season with a three-game series in Seattle.

They've held the A's to eight runs and a .188 average while winning five straight matchups, but they're 1-5 at Oakland this season.

Samardzija (4-5, 3.13 ERA) has been victimized by poor run support over his last four starts. The right-hander has a 1.50 ERA during that stretch, but is 0-2 since he's been backed by five total runs and one or none in three of those games, including a 2-0 road defeat to the Angels on Aug. 30.

Samardzija held the hosts to one earned run and four hits with nine strikeouts in eight innings, while the A's could only muster three singles off eight Los Angeles pitchers.

Things haven't been much better over the last two starts, as Samardzija has struck out 16 in 15 scoreless innings while getting two total runs of support and watching a pair of save opportunities blown.

"No time to pout. No time to feel sorry for yourself," Samardzija said. "That's just the way it goes."

Oakland scoring nine runs during a 1-4 stretch, and nearly matched it after Josh Donaldson's third hit resulted in a two-run, walkoff homer in Sunday's 8-6, 10-inning win over Philadelphia.

"Those are the moments I always want to be in," Donaldson said after tying Matt Stairs (1999), Dave Kingman (1986) and Reggie Jackson (1971) for the franchise record of three walkoff homers in a season.

Scoring may be at a premium for Oakland since the Angels are turning to C.J. Wilson (13-9, 4.42), who is 5-0 with a 2.79 ERA over his last eight starts against the A's - 4-0 with a 2.56 ERA in five visits to Oakland.

The left-hander yielded one run in 6 1-3 innings there Aug. 23.

He enters this meeting with a 2.45 ERA while winning three straight starts, and his latest effort helped clinch the AL West for the Angels. Wilson allowed one hit with seven strikeouts in seven innings of Wednesday's 5-0 win over the Mariners.

This time, he can move the Angels closer to home-field advantage throughout the postseason, a chase the Angels lead by 2 1/2 game over Baltimore.

Manager Mike Scioscia, however, isn't ready to risk injury for that cause. He pulled second baseman Howie Kendrick late in Sunday's 2-1 loss to Texas due to hamstring tightness.

"We're trying to win ballgames," Scioscia said. "We definitely want to try to get that best overall record ... but we're going to have to be sensitive to the needs of every individual player, and that's going to take a precedent over trying to push them too hard to where some of these guys break."

## Angels prep for playoffs in 2-1 loss to Texas

By Greg Beacham

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) -- Although Huston Street is never pleased about giving up a ninth-inning homer, the veteran closer thinks he learned something he can use next month in games that matter a bit more.

The Los Angeles Angels all plan to take a cautious, learning approach to their final games of the regular season as they prepare for what they hope will be a memorable postseason run.

Ryan Rua hit his first major league homer, and the Texas Rangers beat the playoff-bound Angels 2-1 Sunday for their eighth win in nine games.

Although the AL West champion Angels (96-60) wrapped up their home schedule with a quiet loss, they still finished with a league-best 52 home victories. They have lost five of eight overall, but still lead Baltimore by 2 1/2 games for home-field advantage throughout the postseason after the Orioles' 3-2 loss to Boston.

The Angels are still trying to win, but they're also trying to stay healthy and happy. When Howie Kendrick felt minor tightness in his hamstring late in the game, Angels manager Mike Scioscia immediately yanked him.

"There's a lot to play for, a lot to look at," Scioscia said. "We're trying to win ballgames. We definitely want to try to get that best overall record ... but we're going to have to be sensitive to the needs of every individual player, and that's going to take a precedent over trying to push them too hard to where some of these guys break."

Albert Pujols drove in the Angels' only run in the finale of a 10-game homestand during which they clinched their first playoff berth and division title since 2009.

Rua broke a tie with his one-out shot to left off Street (1-2), the Angels' normally reliable closer. It was the first homer in 83 at-bats for Rua, who made his Texas debut late last month.

"I normally don't throw a fastball in ... but I just wanted to work on something," Street said. "I know it's a tie game, but it was a pitch I felt like I had set up. You can build off of outings like today."

Tomas Telis had a bases-loaded infield single for the big league-worst Rangers, who took two of three in majors-leading Los Angeles' final home series of the regular season.

"I like their lineup," Texas interim manager Tim Bogar said of the Angels. "It's strong all the way through. Their starting pitching has had a couple of injuries that might slow them down just a little bit, but they're a strong team. Their bullpen has been really strong the past month, so I think they have the momentum they need to go into the playoffs and do what they need to do."

Shawn Tolleson (3-1) got two outs in the eighth for Texas. Neftali Feliz struck out the side for his 11th save.

Texas' Nick Tepesch was sharp in his first start after earning his only victory since June, pitching seven innings of four-hit ball against the majors' most productive offense.

Cory Rasmus pitched into the fifth inning for the first time since the Angels decided to fill injured Garrett Richards' rotation spot with bullpen starts led off by the right-hander. Rasmus has been impressive in his five starts under that strategy, yielding three runs and eight hits in 16 innings.

#### HIT BY PITCH

Tepesch hit Mike Trout in the upper arm in the first inning, plunking the favorite for AL MVP for the second time this month. Texas RHP Nick Martinez also has hit Trout twice in the clubs' last two series.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Rangers: OF Alex Rios will sit out the final week of the season to rest his badly bruised thumb. He hasn't played since Sept. 4.

Angels: OF Josh Hamilton sat out for the 16th time in 17 games with upper-body pain.

#### UP NEXT

Rangers: Derek Holland (1-0, 0.99 ERA) makes his fifth start of the season against Houston's Nick Tropeano at home Monday night.

Angels: C.J. Wilson (13-9, 4.42 ERA) returns from a dominant start to face Oakland's Jeff Samardzija on Monday night.

#### *FROM YAHOO SPORTS*

### **10 Degrees: It's awards time, so that means it's time to talk about Mike Trout**

By Jeff Passan

After two years and thousands of words spent arguing on behalf of Mike Trout's MVP candidacy, it's nice to know that there's really no argument this year, that Miguel Cabrera deigned to have a down season (by his lofty standards) and cede the honor to the best player in the game.

The Trout-vs.-Cabrera fight – and considering the vitriol that still pervades discussion over the last two American League MVP awards, fight is the kindest way to put it – spoke to the chasm that exists not just in pegging value but in what the award means.

Value remains a nebulous word, one that divides even those who appreciate what advanced statistics explain. Most of the rift involves defensive metrics and just how accurately they peg true value, and in putting together awards this season, there is more of an emphasis on offensive performance and positional value than the defensive component in Wins Above Replacement. This isn't to penalize the game's elite fielders – some merit consideration – so much as to admit questions about how to divide the fielding-value pie. Questions that, when answered, may well prompt changes in results.

Until then, it's best to vote with conviction, and the strongest among them is simple: The MVP is the best player, period. Doesn't matter what team he's on. Doesn't make a difference if he's going to the playoffs or not. Value exists on bad teams, too, and it's one of the reasons



1. **Mike Trout** received such strong support in this space each of the past two years. It wasn't his fault the Los Angeles Angels underachieved in 2012 and 2013. He was the best player in baseball each of those seasons, and even if his 2014 season pales, he's still the best player this year, too. The American League MVP race isn't close, something with which my Yahoo colleague Tim Brown agrees. Below are our ballots for AL MVP, and we'll do the same for the other remaining awards, minus mine on AL Rookie of the Year and his on AL Cy Young, for which we have actual votes this season.

**PASSAN**

1. Mike Trout
2. Jose Abreu
3. Michael Brantley
4. Victor Martinez
5. Robinson Cano
6. Felix Hernandez
7. Adam Jones
8. Jose Bautista
9. Jose Altuve
10. Adrian Beltre

**BROWN**

1. Mike Trout
2. Jose Abreu
3. Victor Martinez
4. Josh Donaldson
5. Alex Gordon
6. Michael Brantley
7. Jose Bautista
8. Robinson Cano
9. Felix Hernandez
10. Jose Altuve

Trout plays a vital position (center field), runs well and has turned into the sort of hitter all the Cabrera-philosophers would love: a home run hitter who leads the league in RBIs and runs. Abreu's bat has been incredible, and that gives him the edge over Martinez, his equal. Brantley is a wildly underrated hitter who runs the bases as well as anybody and more than holds his own in left and occasionally spells center.

Down ballot we're similar, with my list missing Donaldson and Alex Gordon, two above-average hitters buttressed by excellent gloves. I'd have Donaldson ahead of Gordon because of third base's greater value, and in fact, I'd put Kyle Seager ahead of both. The strongest late push to get on the back of the ballot comes from Cabrera, who has been brilliant in September despite injuries that would render most worthless.

Voters tend to like that sort of thing, and those in the Baseball Writers Association of America who determine the annual awards tend to take longer than most to evolve, which might make the candidacy of ...

**2. Clayton Kershaw** for National League MVP a bit problematic. From here, it's a fairly simple calculus: Pitchers be eligible to win the MVP award because a ton of value can indeed exist in a player who goes only every fifth day.

This season, Kershaw has faced 718 batters. Ian Kinsler leads all of baseball with 692 plate appearances. Meaning Kershaw has had every bit the opportunity to affect a game with his arm as every hitter in baseball has with his bat. The question, then, is whether holding batters to a .195/.232/.292 line over those 718 plate appearances translates into greater value than the combined plate appearances and fielding efforts of all his position-playing peers. That is more or less the equivalent of 718 straight plate appearances from Stefan Romero.

Turning lineups into *that* while Pac-manning innings is intriguing enough, and having no surefire challenger makes it all a little easier.

## **PASSAN**

1. Clayton Kershaw
2. Andrew McCutchen
3. Giancarlo Stanton
4. Jonathan Lucroy
5. Buster Posey
6. Anthony Rizzo
7. Johnny Cueto
8. Josh Harrison
9. Justin Upton

10. Carlos Gomez

## **BROWN**

1. Clayton Kershaw

2. Giancarlo Stanton

3. Andrew McCutchen

4. Jonathan Lucroy

5. Buster Posey

6. Anthony Rizzo

7. Anthony Rendon

8. Josh Harrison

9. Carlos Gomez

10. Hunter Pence

Aside from McCutchen and Stanton being flipped, our top six are the same. I loved Cueto's sneaky-great season on the miserable Reds as did Tim, who avoided the odd feeling I have not putting one player from the best team in the NL on the ballot. That shows just how deep the Nationals really are, and how they may be all that stands between ...

**3. Clayton Kershaw** and a World Series. Kershaw won his 20th ga ... hey. Wait a minute. Kershaw was just the second degree. What gives?

That's how good Kershaw has been this season. Two middle-of-10-Degrees-degrees is indeed a rare treat, like cracking a peanut and finding three nuts inside. So why him? Well ...

- He leads all of baseball in ERA, ERA+, FIP, WHIP, strikeouts per nine, hits per nine, complete games, Win Probability Added and a whole slew of other advanced metrics that exist mainly as an homage to his awesomeness.

- He's throwing 69.1 percent first-pitch strikes – the league average is 60.7 percent – and when he's ahead 0-1, hitters are batting .164/.183/.241 against him.

- Hitters swing and miss at 14.2 percent of his pitches, 1.5 percent better than the next-best starter (Chris Sale) and better than all but 15 relief pitchers.

- He's working on his fourth consecutive major league ERA title. The last player to do that is no one.

So, yeah, Kershaw wins the NL Cy Young, and anyone who wants to argue otherwise should start a subreddit called I Don't Know Baseball.

**PASSAN**

1. Clayton Kershaw
2. Johnny Cueto
3. Adam Wainwright
4. Madison Bumgarner
5. Cole Hamels

**BROWN**

1. Clayton Kershaw
2. Johnny Cueto
3. Adam Wainwright
4. Julio Teheran
5. Madison Bumgarner

Apologies to Zack Greinke, Jordan Zimmermann, Tyson Ross, Lance Lynn and a plethora of NL pitchers penalized by the short ballot. The back of the AL ballot is similarly crowded, though at the top ...

**4. Felix Hernandez** stands alone for the second time. Four seasons ago, his triumph was a bellwether for sabermetrics infiltrating the BBWAA's electorate. Hernandez won the award convincingly despite a 13-12 win-loss record. His other numbers – the league-leading 2.27 ERA spread over the league-leading 249 2/3 innings pitched – more than supported his case, though the specter of the meaningless record cast his candidacy in doubt. He took 21 of 28 first-place votes in a blowout, and his gaudy ERA and innings totals put him in strong position for a second Cy Young before his 29th birthday.

**PASSAN**

1. Felix Hernandez
2. Corey Kluber
3. Chris Sale
4. Jon Lester
5. Dallas Keuchel

The best case for ousting Hernandez comes from Kluber, though he doesn't come with the name recognition and may not even place among the top three. He's got to fight the brilliant Sale, Lester putting together the most incredible walk year in ages, other big names like Max Scherzer and David

Price and James Shields, and Keuchel, who has induced groundballs on an absolutely bonkers 63 percent of outs. That's nearly 20 percent higher than ...

**5. Jacob deGrom**, which is no insult toward the New York Mets' right-handed rookie. He does his finest work via the strikeout, with nearly one per inning, and by keeping the baseball inside the park, with a home run rate lower than a half per nine innings.

The NL Rookie of the Year award isn't so much an actual race as it is a stumble toward the finish. The prohibitive favorite, Billy Hamilton, can't keep his on-base percentage over .300. The most dominant pitcher, Ken Giles, is a reliever. The one with the gaudiest ERA, Kyle Hendricks, can't strike anyone out. The best compromise is deGrom, who has thrown the most innings of NL rookie starters by more than 20 and sports an ERA second only to Hendricks'.

#### **PASSAN**

1. Jacob deGrom
2. Billy Hamilton
3. Travis d'Arnaud

#### **BROWN**

1. Jacob deGrom
2. Billy Hamilton
3. Ender Inciarte

It's nothing like the American League, where ...

**6. Jose Abreu** would seem to have a stranglehold on the Rookie of the Year, even if he isn't the typical rookie. Abreu played 10 seasons in Cuba, starting as a 16-year-old, before defecting to the United States and debuting as a 27-year-old. He has been better than anyone expected, even the Chicago White Sox, and the incredible contest between him and Masahiro Tanaka for Rookie of the Year never materialized after Tanaka's elbow injury.

#### **BROWN**

1. Jose Abreu
2. Matt Shoemaker
3. Dellin Betances

Others worth mentioning in this loaded AL class include Collin McHugh, Yordano Ventura, Marcus Stroman, Jake Odorizzi and Danny Santana, on whom ...

**7. Phil Hughes** has relied to Hoover the scant few groundballs he generates. Hughes is and always will be a flyball pitcher, though this year he has added to his resume the sobriquet of ridiculous control artist. In

his second season, Hughes walked 15 batters in 34 innings. This season, he has walked 16 in 201 2/3 innings. Considering what a mess he was last season – his 16th walk arrived in his 63rd inning, and he finished the year with a 5.19 ERA – Hughes and his potentially record-setting 11.31-to-1 strikeout-to-walk ratio this year merit the Comeback Player of the Year Award in the AL.

My pick in the NL is Justin Morneau, who last season looked nothing like his former MVP self after returning from concussion problems only to be a couple points shy right now of winning the batting title. It's an incredible story, though a little less literal than Tim's pick, Marlins third baseman Casey McGehee, who literally came back from Japan to prove a productive major league hitter. His AL choice, Seattle pitcher Chris Young, did something few considered possible: stay healthy a whole season. The 35-year-old Young didn't pitch in 2013 and barely did so from 2008-11. Half a decade of next to no performance usually portends the end, though the warm bosom of Safeco Field and the splendor of his high fastball did for Young's career what ...

**8. Bruce Bochy** seems to do every year for the San Francisco Giants. They're not the most talented. They lost the two linchpins of their World Series rotation, Matt Cain and Tim Lincecum, to injury and ineffectiveness. And still, they're all over the quarter-billion-dollar Dodgers, threatening to steal the NL West. No, the Giants aren't the Little Sister of the Poor, by any means, but they are the team with the least to complain about in the NL.

#### **PASSAN**

1. Bruce Bochy
2. Mike Matheny
3. Matt Williams

#### **BROWN**

1. Bruce Bochy
2. Mike Redmond
3. Don Mattingly

Now, Cardinals fans love to bellyache about Matheny, and much of it is warranted. One of the considerations I use for Manager of the Year, though, is just how much a team is outplaying its run differential. And considering the Cardinals are more games over .500 than they are runs scored over runs allowed, that qualifies, as does Matheny helping keep his team from going tilt after the shocking (and, inside the clubhouse, disconcerting) trade deadline flip of Joe Kelly and Allen Craig for John Lackey.

Williams, too, gets credit for keeping players happy amid Bryce Harper's lineup comments that bugged more than a few as well as managing expectations for a Nationals team that has played better down the stretch than any in the NL. Strategically, Williams can be a mess, but his ability to keep distractions from festering is a talent worth a lot in the difficult-to-measure managerial criticism business. Even so, the best job of the season necessitates a 38-mile jaunt up north to see ...

**9. Buck Showalter** and the Baltimore Orioles. Matt Wieters? Out for the season. Manny Machado? Out for the season. Chris Davis? Out for the season. And here Baltimore is, close to locking up home field in

the division series, perhaps threatening the Angels for it throughout the playoffs. It's a masterful job by a masterful manager, one of those who would be a joy to watch manage in the World Series.

### PASSAN

1. Buck Showalter
2. Mike Scioscia
3. Joe Girardi

### BROWN

1. Buck Showalter
2. Lloyd McClendon
3. Mike Scioscia

The other shared name on the ballots is Scioscia, the Angels' manager who last season found his future in question, which is funny to think about now, what with his team threatening to win 100 games and fulfilling their promise even with Garrett Richards done for the season and Josh Hamilton in need of a dozen cortisone shots over the last two weeks. The main criticism of Scioscia was that he had wasted the first two years of ...

**10. Mike Trout's career.** Which isn't totally true. Scioscia could've wasted them by burying a young player on the bench. He instead unleashed Trout, and the game hasn't looked the same since.

Criticism still comes this way all the time for preferring Trout over Cabrera each of the last two seasons, and it's easy to stomach knowing you're on the right side of history. Trout's performance this year stands alone, something the most ardent Cabrera fans would admit. Or maybe not. Their allegiances could well shift to Martinez and his gaudy numbers.

Whatever the case, marveling at Trout is no crime. Here are how his numbers stack up against another young star through his age-22 season

	Hits	HR	RBI	BB	2B	3B	OPS+
Trout	566	96	303	265	111	25	166
Mystery star	563	91	378	350	120	28	182

The mystery man is Ted Williams, the greatest hitter who ever lived. And while the slash line shows Williams' superiority – .356/.475/.640 to Trout's .306/.395/.548 – their OPS+ says the two aren't nearly as far apart as those numbers make it seem.

It is worth repeating, because the most stubborn holdouts still refuse to acknowledge a very cool reality: We have the privilege of watching one of the most talented players ever to take a baseball field. Trout could flame out next year and never be the same. He could blow a knee out. He could hurt his shoulder or back. Baseball is a cruel game, and sometimes it doesn't even spare its best.

For now, though, it's best to appreciate Mike Trout for what he is: The finest reason to tune in to playoff baseball, an unquestionable MVP gearing up for a coronation due him long ago.

*FROM FOX SPORTS WEST*

## **Week ahead for Angels: Regular season ends at Oakland, Seattle**

By Rahshaun Haylock

### **The week ahead**

It wasn't that long ago that it was believed the Angels trip to Oakland during the last week of the regular season would have huge ramifications. AL West ramifications, to be exact.

However, the division won't be on the line this week thanks to the Angels clinching the AL West last Wednesday. There is still much to be earned for the Halos. For starters, a 100-win season is still up for grabs. 101 wins would be a franchise record. More importantly, home field advantage throughout the playoffs is something to be had.

The Angels will conclude the regular season with three in Oakland, beginning Monday, followed by a weekend series in Seattle.

### **The week behind**

For the first time since 2009, the Angels can call themselves American League West Champions. The team clinched last Wednesday with a 5-0 win over the Mariners in conjunction with Texas' come-from-behind 6-1 win over Oakland. It's the ninth division title in franchise history. The Angels finish the regular season with a 52-29 record at Angel Stadium. It's the first time the Angels have had 50 home wins in a season since 2008.

### **Record and standings**

At 96-60, the Angels enter this week with the best record in baseball. They are 2.5 games ahead of Baltimore. The team that finishes with the best record will have home field advantage throughout the playoffs. The American League will have home field advantage in the World Series as a result of the league's 5-3 win in last July's All-Star Game in which Mike Trout was named MVP.

### **Thumb's up**

Joe Smith has been asked to change roles many times this season inside the Angels bullpen. To his credit he's been successful at whatever the club has asked of him. On Sunday, Smith set an Angels record with his 65<sup>th</sup> scoreless inning of the season. Smith also leads the majors in that category. For the season, Smith has made 74 appearances and posted a 1.86 ERA. He has 17 holds and 15 saves.

### **Postseason Watch**

If the playoffs started today, the Angels would host the winner of the Oakland and Kansas City wild card playoff. The Angels split the season series with the Royals. The Angels are 8-8 against the A's this season entering their three-game series Monday.



**Stat to watch**

2.5. The Angels lead over Baltimore for best record in baseball.

**Quotable**

*"(We have) great team chemistry and we have a bullpen now. I love this team."* -- Angels centerfielder Mike Trout following the Angels AL West clinching win.

*FROM LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS*

**Los Angeles Angels close out home schedule with loss to Texas as playoffs beckon**

By Vincent Bonsignore

The cool breeze flowing through Angel Stadium on a lazy Sunday afternoon did more than offer relief for a weary region suffering from a persistent heat wave.

It was the best sign yet that fall is rapidly approaching.

Used to be that consistently meant playoff baseball for the Angels, who fell 2-1 to the Texas Rangers to close out the home phase of their regular-season schedule.

From 2002 to 2009, the Angels reached the playoffs six times, but the four-year slump that followed proved that playing into October isn't a right as much as it is a privilege.

The Angels over the last four seasons fell conspicuously short of earning that honor, a failure that put jobs and philosophies on the line and sent club leadership scurrying around for answers.

Coming into this season, Mike Scioscia was managing for his job. The vision of general manager Jerry DiPoto was under question. The validity of Albert Pujols as one of the game's best players was in doubt and the ability of Jered Weaver to remain a dominant pitcher was uncertain.

Into that dubious soil, the seeds of hope, belief and redemption were planted, from which one of the greatest Angels regular seasons of all time sprouted tall and proud.

Scioscia evolved from his small-ball beginnings to oversee a thunderous offense. DiPoto rebuilt a beleaguered bullpen, uncovered starting pitching gems and added youth and power to the everyday lineup. Pujols is again one of the most feared hitters in the game, offering tremendous coverage behind MVP candidate Mike Trout, and Weaver has the most wins in the American League.

It's been a revival of extraordinary proportions, and when the Halos bid farewell to Angel Stadium on Sunday in their final home game of the regular season, they did so with the promise of returning in 11 days to begin something even more grand.

Even in the loss — the result of a slow afternoon at the plate and Ryan Rua's ninth-inning home run, the first of his career — the mood was festive and hopeful. And tinged with anticipation.

The next time they step foot in their home stadium, it will be to begin their playoff odyssey.

"It's going to be exciting, no doubt," said Angels second baseman Howie Kendrick, who left Sunday's game with a tight hamstring but said he's hopeful he'll play today when the Angels visit the Oakland A's.

Still, Kendrick wasn't about to go there quite yet with the playoffs.

"I think the biggest thing is closing out the regular season as strong as we can," Kendrick said. "As far as the playoffs, we're not quit there yet. The key us finishing strong, building that momentum and hopefully going in playing as well as we can."

And there is work still to be done.

They remain 2 1/2 games ahead of the Baltimore Orioles for the best record in baseball, and a solid performance over the final six games will secure home-field advantage throughout the playoffs, which means the path to the American League pennant will be heavily influenced by the Big A.

The Angels finish the regular season with a pair of three-game series against the Oakland A's and Seattle Mariners.

"There's still a lot to play for," Scioscia said.

They were hopeful of closing out their home schedule with a win over the Rangers, whom they had beaten 14 times in 18 meetings heading into Sunday.

But they couldn't quite get to Texas starter Nick Tepesch, who gave up just four hits and a run over seven innings.

The lone run came in the sixth inning when, with first base open and the tying run at second base, he opted to walk Trout to get to Pujols, who immediately singled to left field to score Chris Iannetta to make it 1-1.

But that was all the Angels could muster behind starter Cory Rasmus, who threw a career-high 59 pitches before being lifted in the fifth after surrendering a double and walk to start the inning.

"They got on base and it was time to bring someone in to shut it down," Rasmus said. "But I felt really good."

Huston Street, pitching for the second consecutive game, came in with the score tied 1-1 in the ninth and left a fastball too far inside to Rua, who turned on it for his first career home run to give the Rangers the lead.

It was a temporary setback for the Angels, but with the promise of more to come they boarded their charter plane to begin their final road trip of the regular season knowing they'll soon be back home in Anaheim.

When they return, it will be to start the playoffs.

## **Los Angeles Angels' Jered Weaver is healthy finally again, and pitching like it**

By Vincent Bonsignore

Jered Weaver isn't one to make excuses, even when the naked eye of a novice baseball fan could detect something wasn't quite right with the Angels ace the last couple of seasons.

The reduced velocity was apparent, and the drop in numbers reflected it. But Weaver just carried on, never blaming anyone or anything for his struggles.

Turns out he'd been dealing with shoulder discomfort for sometime, a nugget he dropped on reporters Saturday night after notching his American League-leading 18th win of the season and second consecutive commanding performance.

The pain affected pretty much everything Weaver did relative to pitching. From his preparation to his mechanics right on down to altering his arm slot, in some way, shape or form he was compensating for the discomfort.

"I just didn't tell you guys," Weaver said.

Again, no big surprise. Weaver just isn't the type to put his business out there, especially if it comes off as making an excuse.

"It wasn't anything I couldn't throw through," Weaver said. "I just had to change the way I went about things. It's been a process to get everything strengthened up."

He's OK talking about it now because he's finally 100-percent healthy and his pitching dominance is backing that up.

He does so thankfully and retrospectively and with the confidence he's on top of managing the issue moving forward thanks to a revamped training regiment.

But he's also appreciative of the everything that went into rebuilding a pitcher who was considered one of the most dominant in the game from 2005 to 2012.

"It's been a long process of just getting everything feeling good again," Weaver said. "The last couple years has been a grind for me with some shoulder tightness and stuff. I've been able to throw through it but wasn't throwing the ball like I knew I was capable of."

The numbers back it up.

Weaver's 33 starts are his most since 2011, and by notching his 18th win of the season Friday he joins Nolan Ryan as the only pitchers in team history to put together three 18-plus-win seasons.

And with the Angels within days of their first playoff appearance in four years, Weaver is pitching as well as he has all year over his last two starts while giving up just four runs over 14 innings and striking out 19. The Angels, in turn, have relied heavily on him while winning 15 of his last 18 starts.

The key, of course, is he's feeling better. And that's allowed him to make more starts than he has in three seasons and pitch deeper into games, thus have more control over his fate rather than handing games off to the bullpen earlier in games.

"This is probably the best I've felt in about three or four years," Weaver said. "This whole year I've felt great. Obviously the velocity hasn't been there but like I said, it's been a process to get everything

strengthened up and strengthened in the right areas to be able to go out there and through nine innings or 100 pitches.”

#### INJURY UPDATES

The Angels remain status quo on outfielder Josh Hamilton and pitcher Matt Shoemaker, who remain sidelined with rib inflammation and a mild oblique strain, respectively.

Both players have expressed improvements in their conditions, but neither is ready yet to resume any sort of baseball activities.

The Angels remain hopeful both will be ready to start the postseason in 10 days, but there are contingency plans in place to in case either or both aren't able to go.

#### TEAM AWARDS

Injured starter Garrett Richards was voted the Nick Adenhardt Award, given to the club's pitcher of the year, and Mike Trout joined Bobby Knopp and Garret Anderson as the only players to win the Angels MVP award three straight years.

*FROM ESPN.COM*

## **Vance Worley member of All-Surprise Team**

By David Schoenfield

Teams make the playoffs with expected production from their stars, with young players who improve, maybe a couple rookies who step up. But on almost every playoff team, you can find a guy who came out of nowhere to offer a major contribution.

Vance Worley is one of those guys. Where would the Pittsburgh Pirates be without the journeyman right-hander? The Pirates all but wrapped up a wild-card spot with Sunday's 1-0 win over the Brewers, giving Pittsburgh the series victory and moving the Pirates into the wild-card lead with the San Francisco Giants, 4.5 games over the Milwaukee Brewers. Worley went eight innings and allowed just four hits before a sellout crowd at PNC Park, improving his season numbers to 8-4 with a 2.93 ERA over 17 appearances (16 starts).

Worley wasn't even supposed to be out there on Sunday. Charlie Morton had replaced him in the rotation earlier in the week, but Morton's hernia flared up in his start so Worley was back out there against the Brewers. Worley pounded the strike zone with 63 strikes in 82 pitches, relying on his sinking fastball, a cutter and a slider, with an occasional curve.

"A little rest was good for me," Worleysaid after the game. "This is the deepest I've gone into a season the last couple of years, so it gave me some time to get my feet back under me, to gather up some of the energy I used up early in the season."

Worley is a journeyman right-hander because his fastball velocity doesn't light up the radar gun, but this is a guy who has had intermittent success in his four seasons in the majors. Of course, none of that came last year with the Twins, who had acquired him from the Phillies. In 10 starts with Minnesota, Worley

got pounded like few pitchers in recent history, going 1-5 with a 7.21 ERA and .381 batting average allowed -- the highest average allowed by a pitcher with at least 40 innings since Mike Torrez in 1984.

With numbers like those, it's no surprise the Pirates were able to purchase Worley from the Minnesota Twins late in spring training. There was no downside for the Pirates, and he started the year in Triple-A before joining the Pirates' rotation in mid-June when Francisco Liriano went on the disabled list. He tossed seven scoreless innings against the Miami Marlins in that game and has been solid ever since.

Worley is one member of what we'll call the All-Surprise Team. Or maybe we can call it the lucky pickup team. Should the Pirates receive credit for Worley turning into gold? Hard to say. The Twins had actually put Worley on waivers and nobody claimed him until the Pirates made the cash deal. In the end, it's still a lot of luck. I'm pretty sure the Pirates didn't envision Worley making 16 starts with a sub-3.00 ERA. Here are some other members of the lucky pickup team:

### **Steve Pearce, Orioles**

Pearce began the season with the Baltimore Orioles (they had originally claimed him off waivers from the New York Yankees in 2012) but only appeared in three games before they released him on April 27. The Toronto Blue Jays actually claimed Pearce, but he had the right to refuse the deal and instead become a free agent and apparently had an agreement to sign back with Baltimore. Two days later, with Chris Davis injured, the Orioles re-signed him. Pearce has responded with 20 home runs in 327 at-bats -- after hitting 17 in 743 career at-bats spread out over seven previous seasons. A new, closed stance has done wonders. Among American League hitters with at least 350 plate appearances, he's fourth in wOBA behind Jose Abreu, Victor Martinez and Mike Trout.

### **Chris Young, Mariners**

Young has faltered a bit of late, including a bad loss in a vital game against the Houston Astros on Saturday, but the big right-hander is 12-9 with a 3.65 ERA. That's one more than he had from 2009 to 2013. That the Seattle Mariners ended up with Young was a result of their own penny-pinching ways. Originally, they had signed Randy Wolf as their token veteran to fill out the back of the rotation. Wolf had made the team out of spring training but the Mariners refused to give Wolf a guaranteed full-year contract, instead insisting he sign a 45-day contract. Wolf refused and the Mariners released him, picking up Young, who had been cut by the Washington Nationals. Now that was a stroke of luck, as Wolf ended up making just four poor starts with the Marlins.

### **Justin Turner, Dodgers**

ESPN researcher Mark Simon wrote about Turner last week. The Los Angeles Dodgers' infielder has hit .332/.397/.467 in 310 PAs while starting games at all four infield spots. The Dodgers signed him as a free agent in February after the New York Mets non-tendered him, apparently because they tired of him not running hard. The Mets saved \$500,000 or so, replacing Turner's \$1 million salary with a minimum-salaried player. The Dodgers got themselves one of the year's best utility infielders.

### **Josh Harrison, Pirates**

Harrison wasn't a free pickup since he was already in the Pirates' system, but nobody could have projected the 26-year-old to have this kind of breakout season. He entered 2014 with a .250 career average in 575 PAs and actually played more in Triple-A in 2013 than with the Pirates. Now he may win a batting title.

### **Tanner Roark, Nationals**

After beating out Ross Detwiler and others for the final spot in the Nationals' rotation, Roark has gone 14-10 with a 2.85 ERA in his first full season in the majors. The 27-year-old has actually been in the

Washington system since the 2010 trade deadline, but his production this year was certainly a surprise. Plus, consider how the Nationals acquired him: For Cristian Guzman, whose major league ended that year with a .152 average in 15 games for the Rangers. Think Texas could have used Roark the past couple of seasons?

### **Matt Shoemaker, Angels**

We've written about Shoemaker here before, so you know what kind of season he's put together, helping the Angels surge to the AL West title even after Garrett Richards went down. He's certainly the definition of free talent: The Angels signed him as an undrafted free agent out of Eastern Michigan in 2008. But consider this: Before the season, Baseball America rated the Angels' farm system the worst in the majors and Shoemaker wasn't listed as one of the team's top 30 prospects. *Thirty*. Riding a terrific splitter/changeup, he's 16-4 with a 3.04 ERA.

### **J.D. Martinez, Tigers**

For all the moves the Tigers have made, this has perhaps been the biggest as Martinez has been worth 3.9 WAR with his .320/.363/.570 line with 23 home runs and 76 RBIs. Released by the Astros in spring training, Martinez made some minor tweaks to his swing and the results have obviously been impressive. After a hot start and prolonged slump, he's been red hot again in September, hitting .394 with six home runs. *(Note: I missed Martinez upon first publishing the piece. Apologies to Tigers fans!)*

### **Pat Neshek, Cardinals**

The veteran reliever pitched OK in 40 innings with the A's last year, but that was also the most he had pitched since 2007. So it wasn't a surprise that teams weren't pounding down his door with offers over the winter. He finally signed a minor league contract with the Cardinals in February, with an invite to spring training. He made the team, pitched his way into a setup role and even made the All-Star team. He's 7-1 with a 1.39 ERA and a 65/8 strikeout/walk ratio.

What do these guys prove? For starters, all the analytics out there can't project every player, and that's a good reminder that players aren't robots, their statistics always predictable within a small range. And as much as we praise front offices for building a winner or criticize them for building a loser, there is still a fair amount of luck involved. It's hard to really praise the front office for any of these performances.

None of these guys may do this again next year, but that's not important now. They did it this year and helped their teams into the playoffs or into contention.

*FROM SI.COM*

## **For red-hot Angels, three keys to becoming best team in baseball**

By Albert Chen

ANAHEIM -- They wrestled the AL West lead from the mighty Athletics in August and built a Secretariat-like lead by mid-September. They overcame the loss of their ace, Garrett Richards; a season-ending injury to promising starter Tyler Skaggs; a putrid first-half performance from the bullpen; and another lost season from Josh Hamilton. They have the best run-differential in baseball and, at 95-58, they have a good shot at reaching 100 wins for just the second time in franchise history and finishing with the best regular-season record in the majors.

But should the Angels be the consensus favorite to win the World Series next month? To answer that question, let's take a look at the biggest reasons — other than another transcendent, MVP-worthy season from Mike Trout — why Los Angeles will enter the postseason with the title of Best Team In Baseball.

### 1. Matt Shoemaker's Moment

The best starter on the Angels' staff was sitting at his locker on Wednesday afternoon, reflecting on where he was just six years ago: undrafted out of Eastern Michigan University and not sure about his future in baseball. "Not being drafted after my junior year was frustrating," says Shoemaker. "I'd already graduated, so I was thinking about going back to school for another year, for my MBA. And then the Angels called up."

Los Angeles asked Shoemaker if he would sign for \$10,000. "It wasn't a huge amount of money, and at that point I wasn't old, but I wasn't young, either," says Shoemaker. "I was a college guy, officially a redshirt junior, and I wasn't 18. I was 22, and getting into a system at that age, instead of going to back to school, seemed like the best decision, after spending a few days to really think about it."

Through his years in the Angels' system, Shoemaker was never considered much of a prospect; he toiled in the minors for six years — his ERA at Triple A is 5.38 — before making one start last season as a September callup. After a handful of spot starts this season, Shoemaker began to turn heads on June 17, when he struck out 10 and allowed two runs over eight innings against Cleveland. In 11 outings since July 1, he has a 2.09 ERA, and in August, he became the ninth player to win both AL Pitcher and Rookie of the Month honors in the same month.

In a rotation that's been hit with season-ending injuries to Richards and Skaggs and has seen an off year from C.J. Wilson, Shoemaker's emergence has been key. The other day, when Mike Scioscia was asked what Shoemaker has meant to the Angels this year, the manager said, "Besides saving our season?"

- Scioscia names Weaver as Angels' ALDS Game 1 starter

Shoemaker's best pitch is a splitter, which he's thrown 21.1 percent of the time this season. And like the Japanese imports whose arsenals are splitter-heavy, Shoemaker's secondary stuff is better than his fastball. "I started throwing the pitch at 14," he said. "I never threw a good changeup at that age, and my dad and the head coach on my travel team were just messing with grips and we just went into a split grip, and it just developed from there. I've used it since I was 14, and each year it got better."

Pitchers who throw the splitter are thought to be at a higher injury risk, but Shoemaker has remained healthy much of his career. "It helps that I've been throwing it for so long. My arm and body are used to it," he said. "And when I throw it, I just try to make the pitch. I don't try to overdo it."

However, in his most recent start, on Monday, Shoemaker left with discomfort on his left side. He'll miss his next turn but was feeling better on Wednesday, and the Angels are hoping he'll be available in the postseason. "There are a lot of hurdles Matt is going to have to cross before he's out there pitching again," Scioscia said on Wednesday, "and we're not going to have that answer in 24, 48 hours. It's going to take some time. It's still open-ended, and we're going to keep our fingers crossed. We're not going to have that answer for some time now."

Forget Hamilton's various injuries or Wilson's struggles: Shoemaker's health is the most significant question facing the Angels right now. They've already lost their ace; they certainly can't afford to lose Shoemaker.

### 2. The Emergence of Kole Calhoun, Tablesetter

"My job, hitting in front of Mike Trout, is simple," said Calhoun, the leadoff man on the best offense in baseball. "Get on base any way I can."

The Angels, somewhat unexpectedly, boast the best offense in the majors: They've scored more runs than any team in baseball and rank second in the AL in average (.263) and OBP (.326), and fourth in slugging (.412).

The unsung hero in the lineup has been Calhoun. He was sidelined for five weeks earlier this season with an ankle injury and plays on a team loaded with stars, yet he still ranks fourth in FanGraphs' Wins Above Replacement (3.9) and second in Weighted Runs Created Plus (131). Calhoun has hit .293/.348/.486 with 16 home runs out of the leadoff spot, and the Angels are 26-1 in their last 27 games when he scores a run.

Calhoun began 2013 as the 11th-ranked prospect, according to *Baseball America*, in a minor league organization widely regarded as among the worst in baseball. He has come a long way from the beginning of last season, when he played himself off the 25-man roster with a poor spring training and fractured the hamate bone in his right wrist in April. "Breaking my hand, I look at it now as a blessing in disguise," says Calhoun. "I started working on just putting the ball in play." As a result, he shortened his swing, which "just got shorter and shorter and shorter, and that really was the key to take things to another level."

When you see Calhoun in person, it's easy to see why so many have dismissed the Arizona State product — drafted in the eighth round in 2010 — through the years. He is built like a fire hydrant, listed at 5-foot-10, 200 pounds, though even his manager has his doubts. "Put him on a rack and maybe he's 5-9," Scioscia said.

Throughout his career, Calhoun has heard the same thing: Not big enough, not fast enough, not good enough defensively to be anything more than a fourth outfielder. "Scouts can be like robots, afraid to take a chance, go outside the box," says Calhoun. "I've always been hearing the same thing, but for me, all that stuff has always been fuel to the fire to prove those guys wrong." In the leadoff role in Anaheim, "Scioscia has given me the opportunity to just go out and have my at-bats. That's really [all] he's asking for, put up a good at-bat to start off a game," says Calhoun. "It started with a subtle conversation in spring, him telling me that how it was probably going to be me at the top of the order, and once you hear that, you kind of relax in the role."

The Angels can seem like an aging, crumbling team: Aside from Trout, the biggest stars on the club are a 34-year-old first baseman clearly on the downside of his career in Albert Pujols and a \$125 million outfielder who can't stay healthy in Hamilton. But the emergence of Calhoun, Collin Cowgill, C.J. Cron, Shoemaker and Skaggs give the Angels hope that it's not World Series or bust this season. Indeed, this is a club that is better set up for the future than people think.

"A lot of youngsters that helped us in the minors have come up and made an impact," Scioscia said. "I think we're more of a team, strong one through nine in the order, rather than focused on some guys in the middle. That's been key for us on the offensive side."

### **3. The Masterful Bullpen Reconstruction**

At the end of May, the Angels' relief corps was dead last in the majors in bullpen ERA. Soon after, the great bullpen makeover began: General manager Jerry Dipoto acquired closer Jason Grilli, an All-Star last year, from Pittsburgh in June; he added lefty specialist Joe Thatcher from Arizona in early July; and a few weeks later, he landed closer Huston Street from San Diego. The Angels have used 31 pitchers this



season, the most in a single season in club history, and on the current staff, only two Opening Day relievers — Joe Smith and Kevin Jepsen— remain.

The addition of Street, a flyball pitcher who throws a ton of strikes, has turned out to be a perfect fit in the Angels' park. It allowed Smith, who is tied with Jepsen for the major league lead in scoreless appearances this season (63), to move back to an eighth-inning role, and pushed Jepsen, who has a 1.42 ERA since May 7, to the seventh inning. Scioscia now has the luxury of using Grilli in the sixth, and rookie Mike Morin, who has stranded 32 of 38 runners this season, as another bridge to his late-inning relievers.

Now Los Angeles has one of the best bullpens in the game. It has logged a 2.39 ERA its last 78 appearances to rank second in the majors over that span. Since July 1, the bullpen has worked three-plus scoreless frames to end a game 20 times.

It's no coincidence that the Angels became the best team in baseball once the bullpen was stabilized. They were six games behind the A's in June, and on Aug. 10, they trailed Oakland by four games with 45 to play. The Angels, according to Stats Inc., are the first team in AL history to be six games or more behind after 70 games and take a lead of at least eight games at any later point in a season.

An MVP year from Trout; Calhoun's emergence; strong seasons from Pujols, Erick Aybar, and Howie Kendrick in the lineup; another solid year from Jered Weaver atop the rotation; Shoemaker's breakout; the drastic improvement of the bullpen: Add it all up, and you have a 95-win juggernaut that's capable of winning its first World Series title in 12 years. The Angels march into the postseason as the Best Team in Baseball, and over the next few weeks, if Shoemaker can get healthy, if Calhoun can continue to be a catalyst atop the order, and if the bullpen can be the lock-down staff they've been over the last three months, they'll have an excellent chance of holding that title all the way through October.

*FROM CBS SPORTS*

## **Mike Scioscia says Angels may use three-man rotation in ALDS**

By Mike Axisa

The Angels have already clinched the AL West title and it's only a matter of time before they clinch the best record in baseball. Their magic number to do so is seven.

Thanks to clinching early, the Halos will spend the final eight days of the regular season resting players and lining up their postseason rotation. Manager Mike Scioscia told reporters on Friday the team may only have three starters in that postseason rotation, at least for the ALDS.

There are scheduled off-days between Games 2 and 3 and Games 4 and 5 of the ALDS. A three-man rotation would mean the Game 1 starter starts Game 4 on three days' rest while the Game 2 starter starts Game 5 on regular rest. Of course, Games 4 and 5 might not even be necessary.

The Angels have already lined up Jered Weaver for that Game 1 start. He became the obvious candidate to start a postseason series opener as soon as Garrett Richards went down with his season-ending knee injury. Here's how Weaver has fared on various days of rest throughout his career:

I Split	W	L	W-L%	ERA	G	GS	CG	SHO	IP	H	R	ER	HR	BB	SO	WHIP
3 Days,GS	1	1	.500	6.75	2	2	0	0	12.0	14	9	9	3	5	4	1.583
4 Days,GS	71	36	.664	3.13	141	141	9	4	919.1	812	337	320	102	233	741	1.137
5 Days,GS	41	23	.641	3.71	88	88	3	2	543.2	498	234	224	64	162	476	1.214
6+ Days,GS	17	8	.680	2.52	32	32	0	0	200.0	151	61	56	13	52	172	1.015

Provided by Baseball-Reference.com: View Original Table  
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Both of those starts on three days' rest came in 2011. One was a very bad (seven runs in six innings on August 28) and one was pretty good (two runs in six innings on Sept. 18). Those games don't tell us anything about how Weaver would pitch on short rest in October 2014, however. Not much track record here.

Weaver will be followed in the rotation by C.J. Wilson, Matt Shoemaker and Hector Santiago in some order. Shoemaker is nursing an oblique injury right now but is expected to be ready in time for the postseason.

*FROM USA TODAY*

## Angels' Huston Street on his dad: 'He's my hero'

By Joe Haakenson

You'd never know it by watching him on the mound or seeing him interact with his teammates, but Los Angeles Angels closer Huston Street has a heavy heart these days.

Street is anchoring an Angels bullpen that manager Mike Scioscia says has gone from "being a question mark to being an exclamation point."

It is a bullpen that has been as important as anything in helping the Angels rise to the top of the American League West and become a favorite to win the World Series.

But Street knows a couple of weeks from now will mark the one-year anniversary of the sudden and unexpected death of his father.

James Street, remembered as the quarterback of the Texas Longhorns' 1969 national championship team, died of a heart attack at 65 on Sept. 30, 2013.

"He's my hero," Street says. "Was, is, to this day was my best teacher at almost anything: life, sports, business. He was one of those rare people who knew the answers. He had a very strong gut instinct, and he also lived what he preached.

"A lot of people know the 'answers,' they're just not willing to put it in practice. And he lived every breath of what he spoke, every single second of every single day to the point where us kids would marvel at his wisdom."

Street is one of five brothers mentored, molded and raised by Janie and James Street, who was a great athlete. A wishbone quarterback, he led the Longhorns to an undefeated championship season and a victory against Notre Dame in the Cotton Bowl.

He was a good pitcher, too.

"One perfect game, one no-hitter, and he was 29-8 with a (1.86) ERA," Street says. "Went to the College World Series three times. He and Burt Hooton were the No.1 and No.2. Baseball, actually, was his passion, but he was also good enough to play football."

Huston was good enough to play football, too. He was a standout defensive back at Westlake High School in Austin and could have walked on at Texas, after accepting a baseball scholarship.

But a chat with his father resulted in the end of his football career.

"I can remember the decision, the day, the conversation with my father," Street says. "My dad very rarely stepped in my life and said, 'This is what I think you should do.' Being a grown-up, being a more mature human, he was able to see my life evolving before I could."

"He'd keep saying things like, 'You're my son, and I love you, and I'm telling you you're good at baseball. I think you can play football at the next level, but Bud, you have to be a different type of animal to play football.'"

It didn't take long for his father's advice to begin to pay dividends.

Persuaded by baseball coach Augie Garrido to become the club's closer, Street was named the most outstanding player of the College World Series after leading the Longhorns to the 2002 title.

He had three successful seasons at Texas before the Oakland Athletics drafted him in the first round in 2004. By 2005, he was the club's closer.

"It was something I learned to love," Street says of closing games. "I really started emulating and paying attention to other closers in baseball, Trevor Hoffman, Mariano Rivera.

"Growing up, Dennis Eckersley just happened to be one of my favorite players. Not so much because I knew anything, but because I loved his persona on the mound. It was really fun when I got drafted by the A's because Dennis was one of the first people I got to meet."

Street was the AL rookie of the year in 2005, and went on to average 26 saves a season for the Athletics, Colorado Rockies and San Diego Padres before this season. Soon after being named to the All-Star team for the second time in his career, he was traded to the Angels and is putting together the best year of his career.

Street, 31, has set a career high with 38 saves, including 14 with the Angels, while compiling a 1.29 ERA with three blown saves.

The Angels bullpen had shown signs of improvement before Street was acquired July 18 for a package of minor leaguers. General manager Jerry Dipoto signed Joe Smith and traded for Fernando Salas and Jason Grilli.

Mike Morin emerged from the minor league system and Kevin Jepsen has finally put it all together.

But landing Street has put the exclamation point, as Scioscia says, on a lock-down relief corps.

"It makes it much easier to work your way back and shorten games when you have that guy in the ninth inning," Scioscia says. "Huston has such a knack for making pitches and not beating himself that it's been a big part of his success."

Street says there is no real secret to being a successful closer.

"Do I think the eighth inning or ninth inning is any more difficult than the first inning? No, it's just more climactic," he says.

"In some ways, the ninth inning is like an island. You're like a cornerback out there playing man-on-man coverage, and it's you and you're expected to get the job done. But for the guys who approach the bullpen best, every single pitch matters, and it doesn't matter what inning you're pitching."

It's the kind of mentality the club's starting pitchers can appreciate.

"It's great to have a guy like that," right-hander Jered Weaver says. "We've been kind of flip-flopping back and forth over the last couple of years. To bring over a guy like that who has proven he can shut down games is huge."

Street wears No. 16 in honor of his father, who wore it as Texas' quarterback.

Street's brother Juston, an actor, will be wearing No. 16 in the soon-to-be released movie *My All American* about the tragic tale of Freddie Steinmark, a defensive back on that 1969 national champion Texas team and a teammate of James Street.

A pitcher on the Longhorns' 2005 national championship team, Juston will play the role of his father in the movie.

Huston will be watching, still missing his dad.

"It's tough to talk about," he says. "It's not easy. It's a process. I'm thankful I had my mom and my wife (Lacey).

"I would not have made it through the way I made it through had I been left alone to my own internal way of processing. It's a level of emotion I can't describe."

*FROM SPORTS XCHANGE***Team Report – LOS ANGELES ANGELS**

ANAHEIM, Calif. Outfielder Josh Hamilton's indefinite absence due to injury could open a place on the Los Angeles Angels' playoff roster.

Given the injuries to the Angels' starting rotation, manager Mike Scioscia might use that spot for a relief pitcher, especially since the American League's designated hitter reduces the need for bench strength. Scioscia has used various relievers as spot starters to replace injured right-handers Garrett Richards and Matt Shoemaker.

Otherwise, Scioscia could enhance his outfield depth.

Collin Cowgill and Efen Navarro are expected to platoon in Hamilton's place left field once the playoffs begin. Navarro, originally signed a first baseman, has played 23 of his 59 games this year in the outfield. The 28-year old made 19 of those outfield appearances in left field, where Navarro started the past two games.

Navarro brings a left-handed bat to the Angels' bench. With seven games left in the regular season, Navarro is batting .247 with one home run and 47 RBIs.

"Efen has a good eye," Scioscia said. "He's going to put the ball in play."

Cowgill, a career .236 hitter before this year, impressed Scioscia with his all-around play during the season's first two months, when Hamilton and fellow outfielder Kole Calhoun spent considerable time on the disabled list. With Hamilton and Calhoun sidelined, Cowgill compiled a batting average as high as .327 in their absence.

"He's been really big in helping us keep some offensive continuity," Scioscia said at the time. "He's always had good tools but has never really had the opportunity to get out there and get after it like he has these last few weeks."

Currently, Cowgill is batting .259 with 10 doubles in 101 games. A right-handed hitter, the 28-year-old Cowgill usually rests against right-handed pitchers.

Brennan Boesch and Tony Campana have remote possibilities of making the post-season roster. Boesch, another left-handed hitter, led the Pacific Coast League with a .332 average and a .636 slugging percentage while playing for Triple-A Salt Lake. Since being recalled Sept. 2, Boesch is batting just .188 in 23 games with the Angels. But the 29-year old is 6-for-16 in his last five games with two home runs and three RBIs.

Campana, acquired from the Arizona Diamondbacks on July 5, scored six runs while going 4-for-13 in 14 games. The fleet Campana could serve as a pinch-running specialist, as Chone Figgins did when the Angels won the 2002 World Series.

Regardless of the choices he makes, Scioscia recognizes the balancing act he must perform as the regular season winds down.

"There's a lot to play for, a lot to look at," Scioscia said. "We definitely want to get that best overall

record. But you're going to have to be sensitive to the needs of every individual player. That's going to take a precedent over trying to push players too hard to where some of these guys break."

RECORD: 96-60

STREAK: Lost one

NEXT: Angels (LHP C.J. Wilson, 13-9, 4.42 ERA) at Athletics (RHP Jeff Samardzija, 4-5, 3.13 ERA)

#### PLAYER NOTES:

1B Albert Pujols drove in a run in the sixth inning Sunday against the Texas Rangers to tie Hall of Famer Napoleon Lajoie in career RBIs with 1,599. Pujols and Lajoie share 33rd place on the all-time list. Pujols, who went 1-for-4, has driven 18 runs home over his past 16 games.

CF Mike Trout made a leaping, one-handed catch against the fence in right-center field in the top of the first inning on Sunday to rob the Texas Rangers CF Leonys Martin of a hit. Offensively, Trout walked twice (once intentionally) and was hit once while going 0-for-1 with his 15th stolen base. Trout has reached base in 14 of his past 17 games.

RHP Cory Rasmus threw 59 pitches in his longest outing of the season Sunday. Rasmus, who replaced injured RHP Garrett Richards in the rotation, threw four-plus shutout innings and faced just one batter over the minimum in his first four innings. Rasmus conceded just two hits and a walk before finishing with three strikeouts.

RHP Joe Smith registered his 65th scoreless appearance of the season, which leads the major leagues. Smith retired all three hitters he faced, striking out one, in the top of the eighth inning Sunday against the Texas Rangers. Smith broke the team record of 63, set by former closer Francisco Rodriguez in 2008, on Saturday night when he allowed one hit in one-third of an inning.

LHP C.J. Wilson hopes to build on his last outing when he faces the Oakland Athletics on Monday night. Against the Seattle Mariners on Sept. 17, Wilson pitched seven shutout innings, permitting just one hit and three walks while striking out seven.

2B Howie Kendrick (strained hamstring) left the game in the eighth inning. He is day-to-day. Kendrick went 0-for-3 before Gordon Beckham replaced him at second base.

#### QUOTE TO NOTE:

"It seems like with every start, he gets a little better, a little stronger. He threw a lot of strikes. His ability to change speeds put us in a position we wanted to be in. He's doing a terrific job." Angels manager Mike Scioscia on RHP Cory Rasmus after a loss to Texas on Sunday

#### MEDICAL WATCH:

2B Howie Kendrick (strained hamstring) left the Sept. 21 game. He is day-to-day.

LF Josh Hamilton (sore right side) last played Sept. 16, and he will sit out the rest of the regular season. He hopes to be ready for the start of the playoffs.

RHP Matt Shoemaker (mild oblique strain) left the Sept. 15 game, and he missed his scheduled start Sept. 20.

RHP Garrett Richards (torn left patellar tendon) went on the 60-day disabled list Aug. 21. He underwent season-ending surgery Aug. 22. He might not be ready for the start of the 2015 season.

LHP Tyler Skaggs (strained flexor tendon in left forearm) went on the 15-day disabled list Aug. 1, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on Aug. 10. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery Aug. 13. He will miss the rest of the 2014 season and all of the 2015 season.

LHP Sean Burnett (torn left ulnar collateral ligament) went on the 15-day disabled list May 29, and he was transferred to the 60-day disabled list June 3. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery June 5.

RHP Ryan Brasier (right elbow strain) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 21, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on April 16.

LHP Brian Moran (left elbow inflammation) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 21, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on April 13. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery in mid-April.

#### ROTATION:

RHP Jered Weaver

RHP Matt Shoemaker

LHP C.J. Wilson

LHP Hector Santiago

RHP Cory Rasmus

#### BULLPEN:

RHP Huston Street (closer)

RHP Joe Smith

RHP Jason Grilli

RHP Kevin Jepsen

RHP Michael Morin

LHP Joe Thatcher

RHP Fernando Salas

RHP Yoslan Herrera

LHP Michael Roth

RHP Cam Bedrosian

LHP Wade LeBlanc

RHP Vinnie Pestano

RHP Jairo Diaz

RHP Drew Rucinski

CATCHERS:

Chris Iannetta

Hank Conger

John Buck

INFIELDERS:

1B Albert Pujols

2B Howie Kendrick

SS Erick Aybar

3B David Freese

INF John McDonald

INF Gordon Beckham

INF Grant Green

INF C.J. Cron

INF Luis Jimenez

INF Efran Navarro

INF/OF Shawn O'Malley

OUTFIELDERS:

LF Josh Hamilton

CF Mike Trout

RF Kole Calhoun

OF Collin Cowgill

OF Brennan Boesch

OF Tony Campana



## Team Report – OAKLAND ATHLETICS

OAKLAND, Calif. The struggling Oakland Athletics have been searching for a spark, something to ignite a strong stretch run in the American League wild-card race.

Third baseman Josh Donaldson delivered exactly what the A's needed Sunday, crushing a two-run, walk-off home run in the bottom of the 10th inning that lifted Oakland to an 8-6 victory against Philadelphia.

Donaldson sent Phillies reliever Miguel Alfredo Gonzalez's 1-0 fastball deep over the left-center field fence for his third walk-off home run of the season, tying Reggie Jackson, Dave Kingman and Matt Stairs for the Oakland single-season record. It was his fourth career walk-off home run.

"It's just something, ever since I was a little kid, that's what you prepare for, whether it's basketball, trying to hit a game winning shot, football, making the catch, baseball, getting the game-winning hit," Donaldson said. "Ever since I was a kid that's just the moment I've always wanted to be in."

Donaldson's 28th home run of the season powered the A's to a crucial victory. The A's retained the top spot in the AL wild-card race, a half-game ahead of the Kansas City Royals. They A's extended their lead to two games over the Seattle Mariners.

"Donnie loves the spotlight," said A's closer Sean Doolittle (2-4), who pitched two scoreless innings and earned the victory. "A number of times this year he's put the team on his back. He likes being the guy. Great players, they want to be in those pressure situations with the team counting on them, and today he came through huge for us."

A's first baseman Nate Freiman grounded a one-out single off Gonzalez (0-1) in the 10th and was replaced by speedy pinch runner Billy Burns.

"When Billy comes in at first base right there, he threw the first pitch and I noticed he was trying to be a lot quicker," Donaldson said of Gonzalez. "He's got to respect Billy's speed out there, and anytime a pitcher has to make that adjustment and speed their delivery up, I feel like they're probably going to be a little more apt to make a mistake, and that's what happened."

RECORD: 85-70

STREAK: Won one

NEXT: Angels (LHP C.J. Wilson, 13-9, 4.42 ERA) at Athletics (RHP Jeff Samardzija, 4-5, 3.13 ERA)

PLAYER NOTES:

LHP Scott Kazmir had another rough outing Sunday, allowing six runs on a season-high 11 hits over 5 1/3 inning and getting a no-decision in Oakland's 8-6, 10-inning victory against Philadelphia. Kazmir struck out nine and walked one. He's gone 0-4 over his past six starts. "My body, everything feels great," Kazmir said. "Everything feels good. It's just a matter of consistency. I'm not consistent out there."

3B Josh Donaldson hit his third walk-off home run of the season Sunday, a two-run shot in the bottom of the 10th inning in an 8-6 victory against Philadelphia. Donaldson tied Reggie Jackson, Dave Kingman and Matt Stairs for the single-season Oakland record for walk-off home runs. He now has four career walk-off home runs. Donaldson went 3-for-5 with three runs, two RBIs and his team-high 28th home run of

the season.

SS Jed Lowrie (left foot contusion) was hit by a pitch in the first inning and came out of the game Sunday against Philadelphia after the fourth inning. INF Nick Punto replaced him at shortstop. "He's all right," A's manager Bob Melvin said of Lowrie. "Just got it pretty good on the foot. As a shortstop you have to have your range, and the ball in the hole the next inning he was having a little trouble getting over there. That's why we have a guy like Punto."

LHP Sean Doolittle pitched the final two innings in Oakland's 8-6, 10-inning win Sunday against Philadelphia, blanking the Phillies on no hits and striking out a season-high four batters. Doolittle, the A's closer, got the win, improving to 2-4.

C Geovany Soto went 1-for-3 with a two-run double, walked twice and drove in three runs Sunday in an 8-6, 10-inning victory against Philadelphia. He also threw out Phillies RF Marlon Byrd, who attempted to steal second base in the seventh inning. Soto started in place of Derek Norris, who was sidelined after being hit in the chin Saturday by a wild pitch. "He had a good game all the way around," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Made a great throw, blocked numerous balls in the dirt with guys on base or with two strikes, huge hit, walk."

C Derek Norris, who had a wild-pitch bounce off his chin Saturday against Philadelphia, was out of the lineup Sunday and was not available off the bench. "Hopefully he's able to play (Monday)," A's manager Bob Melvin said.

OF Craig Gentry (concussion) hasn't played since being hurt during a collision on Sept. 9 and has yet to resume baseball activity. "If you look at that hit, it was a pretty good hit, and he's had a concussion before," A's manager Bob Melvin said before the A's 8-6, 10-inning victory against Philadelphia. "He's still having a little bit of a tough time with it. I think yesterday he went and saw another doctor." Melvin acknowledged that there's a possibility Gentry might not return to action this season.

#### QUOTE TO NOTE:

"It's just something, ever since I was a little kid, that's what you prepare for, whether it's basketball, trying to hit a game-winning shot, football, making the catch, baseball, getting the game-winning hit. Ever since I was a kid that's just the moment I've always wanted to be in." A's 1B Josh Donaldson after a walk-off homer against the Phillies on Sunday.

#### MEDICAL WATCH:

SS Jed Lowrie (left foot) left the Sept. 21 game. He is day-to-day.

OF Craig Gentry (concussion) left the Sept. 9 game and did not play Sept. 10-21. As of Sept. 21, he was still feeling concussion symptoms and hadn't resumed baseball activities. There was no timetable for his return.

C Derek Norris (bruised chin) was hurt Sept 20 but remained in the game. He did not play Sept. 21. He is day-to-day.

C John Jaso (concussion symptoms) went on the seven-day disabled list retroactive to Aug. 24. He battled concussion symptoms since Aug. 8, when he took a hard foul ball off his mask. Jaso ran, shagged balls, played catch and hit in the cage Sept. 1. Jaso took batting practice on the field Sept. 2, ran the

bases Sept. 5 and began catching bullpen sessions Sept. 6. He visited a concussion specialist Sept. 10 in Pittsburgh and was not cleared to return. He is out indefinitely.

1B Kyle Blanks (torn left calf, left Achilles tendinitis) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to June 23, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on Aug. 24. Initially out due to the calf ailment, Blanks began a rehab assignment with Triple-A Sacramento on Aug. 9. He experienced a setback Aug. 20 when he developed left Achilles tendinitis, and he was shut down. There is no timetable for his return.

RHP A.J. Griffin (right flexor tendinitis) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 21, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on May 4. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery April 30.

RHP Jarrod Parker (torn right ulnar collateral ligament) went on the 60-day disabled list March 20. He had a second Tommy John surgery March 24, and he will miss the entire season. He resumed playing catch Aug. 4.

#### ROTATION:

LHP Jon Lester

RHP Sonny Gray

LHP Scott Kazmir

RHP Jeff Samardzija

RHP Jason Hammel

#### BULLPEN:

LHP Sean Doolittle (closer)

LHP Eric O'Flaherty

RHP Ryan Cook

RHP Luke Gregerson

RHP Dan Otero

LHP Fernando Abad

RHP Jesse Chavez

RHP Evan Scribner

LHP Drew Pomeranz

RHP Fernando Rodriguez

#### CATCHERS:

Derek Norris

Geovany Soto

Bryan Anderson

INFIELDERS:

1B Stephen Vogt

2B Alberto Callaspo

SS Jed Lowrie

3B Josh Donaldson

DH Adam Dunn

INF Nick Punto

INF Eric Sogard

INF Nate Freiman

INF Andy Parrino

OUTFIELDERS:

LF Brandon Moss

CF Coco Crisp

RF Josh Reddick

OF Jonny Gomes

OF Sam Fuld

OF Craig Gentry

OF Billy Burns