



*Clips*

**(June 19, 2015)**

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*FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES*

## **Angels' Erick Aybar, Matt Joyce, Chris Iannetta on bench Thursday**

By MIKE DIGIOVANNA

Angels shortstop Erick Aybar is not in the lineup for Thursday's game against the Arizona Diamondbacks in Chase Field, which is understandable.

The leadoff hitter is in a one-for-27 slump that dropped his average from .271 on June 10 to .246, and he was clearly pressing when he tried to bunt for a hit — and popped out to the pitcher — with runners on second and third and no outs in the seventh inning of Wednesday night's 3-2 loss to Arizona.

But left fielder Matt Joyce and catcher Chris Iannetta are also not in the lineup, which normally would be understandable. Both have been mired in season-long slumps, Iannetta hitting .169 with three homers and 14 runs batted in and Joyce batting .189 with four homers and 17 RBIs.

But Joyce had a good game Wednesday night, hitting a triple to deep left-center field, an infield single and drawing a walk, and Iannetta singled sharply to center field twice.

Wouldn't Scioscia want to get both back in the lineup Thursday to see if they can build on their good swings from the night before and possibly get on a hot streak?

"It's more of a day-game-after-night-game thing," Scioscia said. "I think eventually they'll settle into playing more. Matt was going to be off today regardless of what he did last night."

Scioscia moved second baseman Johnny Giavotella to the leadoff spot, and Taylor Featherston will get the start at shortstop. Efen Navarro, who had a pinch-hit double Wednesday night and is hitting .289 in 21 games, will start in left field and bat sixth.

"You're definitely balancing the rhythm of when a hitter is going to start swinging the bat well, and you also grind out some at-bats when you're going poorly, which we've done with Matt," Scioscia said. "In the big picture, it's one game. Matt is still going to get his opportunity to contribute."

"But we've got some guys who we also feel very confident are going to contribute, and Efen is one of those guys. This isn't anything to do with what Matt did or didn't do last night. It's a function of a day game after night game and wanting to get Efen in there."

Scioscia hopes a day off will help Aybar clear his head a bit.

"He's been playing a lot, and I think offensively, he's putting a little pressure on himself because some hits aren't falling in," Scioscia said. "I think he still suits our lineup in front of Kole [Calhoun] trying to set the table, but right now, he needs a little bit of a blow."

## **Angels beat Arizona Diamondbacks. 7-1**

By MIKE DIGIOVANNA

**KEY MOMENT:** The Angels took a 2-1 lead into the sixth inning but broke open the game with a five-run, four-hit rally. Johnny Giavotella led off with a single. Kole Calhoun struck out, and Mike Trout hit a run-scoring triple to right-center field, his first triple since last Sept. 20, a span of 74 games. Albert Pujols was intentionally walked, and David Freese walked to load the bases. Efen Navarro hit a two-run single to right, and Carlos Perez followed with a two-run double to left for a 7-1 lead.

**AT THE PLATE:** The Angels had only eight hits but went two for five with runners in scoring position. That doesn't seem like much until you consider they were two for 23 with runners in scoring position in the previous five games. They also won a game in which Calhoun, Trout and Pujols didn't carry them. "The encouraging thing today is we got production independent of Kole, Mike and Albert," Manager Mike Scioscia said. "That's critical. We pressured those guys in a lot of innings, and that's what we have to evolve to."

**ON THE MOUND:** Angels starter C.J. Wilson, who has allowed one earned run in 15 innings of his last two starts, induced double-play grounders to end the third and fourth innings. He was nicked for a run in the fifth on back-to-back, two-out doubles by David Peralta and Nick Ahmed but blanked the Diamondbacks over his next three innings. The left-hander also struck out Paul Goldschmidt, who is batting .357 with 19 homers and 54 RBIs, three times and ended the first baseman's 27-game on-base streak. "He did a great job in a tough park to pitch against tough hitters," Scioscia said. "He got under swings well and got the ball over the plate with good life."

**EXTRA BASES:** Shortstop Erick Aybar, mired in a one-for-27 slump, was given Thursday off. "I think he's putting a little pressure on himself because some hits aren't falling in," Scioscia said. "I think he still suits our lineup in front of Kole trying to set the table, but right now, he needs a little bit of a blow." ... Reliever Cory Rasmus, who had left-abdominal surgery in March, is scheduled to begin a minor league rehabilitation stint with triple-A Salt Lake on Friday.

**UP NEXT:** Right-hander Matt Shoemaker (4-5, 4.85 ERA) will oppose Oakland right-hander Sonny Gray (8-3, 1.60) at Oakland Coliseum on Friday at 6:30 p.m. TV: FS West; Radio: 830.

## **Featherston, Giavotella provide power, C.J. Wilson provides pitching in Angels' 7-1 win over Arizona**

By MIKE DIGIOVANNA

The Angels got a pair of third-inning solo home runs from unexpected sources — light-hitting utility infielder Taylor Featherston and second baseman Johnny Giavotella — and broke the game open with a five-run sixth en route to a 7-1 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks in Chase Field on Thursday.

The seldom-used Featherston, a Rule 5 pick who entered with three hits in 36 at-bats on the season for an .083 average, lined the first homer of his career into the left-field seats.

Featherston, filling in for slumping shortstop Erick Aybar, got the silent treatment upon returning to the dugout — it's become tradition for players hitting their first career homers — but was eventually mobbed by teammates on the bench.

Giavotella hit his third homer of the season, also into the left-field seats, and Mike Trout (RBI triple), Eren Navarro (two-run single) and Carlos Perez (two-run double) keyed the sixth-inning rally.

The outburst for a team that scored all of 11 runs in the previous five games was more than enough support for left-hander C.J. Wilson, who allowed one run and eight hits in eight innings, struck out nine and walked none and somehow avoided injury on an ill-advised attempt to stretch a single into a double in the fifth.

Wilson lined his second hit of the season — he now has half as many hits as Featherston — to right-center field with two outs in the fifth and did not even slow as he rounded first.

Right fielder Yasmany Tomas' throw beat Wilson to second by several feet but was slightly wide of the bag. That prompted Wilson to launch his body into a wild, twisting, headfirst slide to the inside of the bag, a play few pitchers, especially those in the American League, who rarely bat or run the bases, would attempt.

Wilson was tagged out by shortstop Nick Ahmed to end the inning. Even if Wilson had beaten the throw, he would have been tagged out because his slide took him about four feet past the bag.

The Angels were just glad Wilson, who has been one of their most reliable starting pitchers, with a 5-5 record and 3.39 earned-run average, wasn't hurt.

Wilson returned to the mound in the bottom of the fifth and got two quick outs before David Peralta and Ahmed hit back-to-back doubles to pull the Diamondbacks to within 2-1.

But the Angels broke the game open in the sixth with a five-run, four-hit rally that Giavotella sparked with a leadoff single to left. Kole Calhoun struck out, but Trout hit a run-scoring triple to right-center, his first triple since last Sept. 20, a span of 74 games.

Albert Pujols was intentionally walked, and David Freese walked to load the bases. Arizona Manager Chip Hale pulled starter Allen Webster in favor of Josh Collmenter, but Navarro hit a two-run single to right, and Perez followed with a two-run single to left for a 7-1 lead.

## **Angels pitcher C.J. Wilson is unscathed after a wild slide**

By MIKE DIGIOVANNA

It's all fun and games until somebody gets hurt. That expression, uttered by parents to kids for generations, was ringing in the ears of Angels Manager Mike Scioscia in the fifth inning of Thursday's 7-1 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks at Chase Field.

Scioscia watched in horror as pitcher C.J. Wilson, trying to stretch a single into a double in a two-run game, launched his body into a wild, twisting headfirst slide into second base in an attempt to avoid shortstop Nick Ahmed's tag.

The left-hander was called out as he tried to reach back for the base with his right hand. After hitting the ground, Wilson flipped over on his left side, his momentum carrying him a few feet beyond the bag.

Wilson is athletic for a pitcher and was a good outfielder in college, but Mike Trout, he is not. Wilson, 34, has been an American League pitcher for 11 years, which means he doesn't hit much — this was his 28th career at-bat — and runs the bases even less.

It seemed like a disaster waiting to happen, but Wilson, much to the relief of his manager, got up after the play, ran off the field and remained in the game, giving up one run and nine hits in eight innings, striking out nine and walking none to improve to 5-5 and lower his earned-run average to 3.39.

That did little to mollify Scioscia, who clearly thought Wilson's baserunning was reckless.

"Those are the kinds of slides that end careers if it's on the wrong side," Scioscia said. "I was obviously concerned when I saw it. C.J. felt it was more on his right side, he's athletic enough, and he came out of it unscathed. ... But you still cringe when you see a pitcher doing that."

The Angels had scored all of 11 runs in their previous five games and had a 2-0 lead when Wilson lined his two-out single to right-center. Thinking he would have a much better chance of scoring from second, Wilson did not slow as he rounded first and right fielder Yasmany Tomas fielded the ball.

"I got a good break out of the box and ran hard — I was gonna challenge him right there," Wilson said. "I work on a lot of plyometrics and stuff like that, so I figured I might as well try to flex the New Balances a little bit. He made a perfect throw. I tried to do a Mike Trout turbo-slide, but he just nicked me in the elbow."

Plenty of American League pitchers look overmatched in the batter's box and awkward on the basepaths, but Wilson, in an effort to be a complete player, has always taken those tasks seriously.

"If you're a bad athlete, then you're not going to try something like that," Wilson said. "I'm a good athlete, so every time I get on base I'm either gonna try to advance on a ground ball or a wild pitch or break up a double play. It's the way I've always played."

"I'm not gonna concede any effort level out there, because in a one- or two-run game, an insurance run could be the difference. I expect all the players to play hard all the time, and we do. I went up to [Erick] Aybar and asked if that was stupid. He was like, 'I would've done the same thing.' I was like, 'All right, cool.' "

Before Wilson's slide, the Angels had some actual fun and games, giving Taylor Featherston the silent treatment when the .100-hitting rookie infielder returned to the dugout after lining his first career homer to left for a 1-0 lead in the third.

"Growing up, you always see that on SportsCenter," said Featherston, who was eventually mobbed. "It's part of the game, a rite of passage. I loved it."

The Angels enjoyed it so much that when Johnny Giavotella hit a solo homer two batters later, they gave him the silent treatment with a twist, even though it was the second baseman's sixth career homer.

"I was a little shocked," Giavotella said. "I came in and no one was congratulating me. I felt like I just struck out."

Scioscia then called Giavotella over and, in the words of Giavotella, "reamed me out" for being out of position during a Paul Goldschmidt at-bat. A minute later, the entire bench broke out in laughter, and Scioscia congratulated Giavotella.

"After that," Giavotella said, "it was a little less stressful."

*FROM THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER*

## **Westminster native Greg Mahle putting up zeros for Double-A Travelers**

By MICHAEL WEST

Greg Mahle knew exactly where he wanted to be. Raised in Westminster before playing his college ball at UC Santa Barbara, the talented left-hander would have been happy to be a part of any professional organization, but there was one club he was eyeing in particular.

"Being from Southern California, the Angels were obviously my first choice," Mahle said of the team that would select him in the 15th round of the 2014 draft. "It was such a great thing to experience with my family... it was something I had always dreamed of growing up."

Greg Mahle's ascension has been quick and steady ever since making waves in his freshman year at UCSB. Following a remarkable 2012 season as a two-way player for the Gauchos, Mahle earned Louisville Slugger Freshman All-America honors as well a spot on the John Olerud Two-Way Player of the Year Watch List after hitting .347 with 35 RBIs while leading the team with four saves.

His rapid rise continued shortly after signing with the Angels in June 2014.

After not allowing an earned run in five outings with rookie-level Orem to begin his professional career last June, Mahle joined the Class-A Burlington Bees in early July. The lefty struck out 38 hitters in 18 relief outings, helping the Bees earn a spot in the Midwest League playoffs.

The lefty began his 2015 season with the Advanced-A California League's Inland Empire 66ers, posting 31 strikeouts to just three walks in his 21 appearances before earning a promotion to the Double-A Arkansas Travelers.

In Arkansas, the 22-year-old Mahle is the manager he ended his 2014 season with in Bill Richardson and the Travs' skipper has seen the same success in 2015 out of the lefty as he did in 2014.

The former Westminster High Lion made his Double-A debut on the road in Corpus Christi on June 7, albeit with a little bit of that pre-first outing nervousness that comes with a promotion.

“I had a little bit of jitters with it being my first time in Double-A,” Mahle said. “I settled in especially after getting that first out and overall it was a pretty good outing.”

The deceptive left-hander has tossed scoreless outings in each of his first four Double-A appearances, earning his first save with the Travelers on June 12 after locking down a 15-12 win at home. Overall, Mahle has surrendered only two hits while striking out five over his first 3 2/3 Texas League innings.

Getting the call that he'd be promoted up to Double-A a year to the day after being drafted, if Mahle continues his excellent performance, it may not be long until the lefty will be playing baseball back home.

The big leagues have always been in the Mahle's sights with Angel Stadium being just 10 miles away from Westminster High School, but that vision has only become more in focus with each outing for the left-hander.

## **Unheralded as high school pitcher, Sean Newcomb making an impact with Class-A 66ers**

By GEORGE ALFANO

In 2011, Sean Newcomb graduated from Middleboro (Mass.) High. He had a decision to make.

The tall left-handed pitcher was also a renowned tight end and had several football scholarship offers. He was a three-sport star in high school, also playing basketball.

As for baseball, Newcomb, who is now 6-foot-5 and weighs 245 pounds, had never pitched more than 30 innings in a year before his senior season.

The only major league organization to contact him was the Chicago Cubs.

“They sent me a questionnaire and I filled it out,” Newcomb said. “I never heard anything after that.”

His only scholarship for baseball was from the University of Hartford, a member of the America East Conference. Football might have been the logical choice, but Newcomb went in another direction.

“I thought the opportunity to have a career would be better in baseball,” said Newcomb, who turned 22 on June 12. The decision to select baseball showed his wisdom.

Newcomb's freshman season at Hartford showed improvement and he pitched a no-hitter against Yale.

“I pitched in the spring and played in the Cape Cod League during the summer,” said Newcomb, who earned all-conference honors in academics. He felt that with pitching more, his velocity increased before the start of his sophomore season.



He went on to become the Angels' first-round (15th overall) selection in the 2014 draft. After negotiations went down to the final deadline, the Angels signed Newcomb for a \$2.518 million bonus.

Newcomb was promoted to the Inland Empire 66ers after spending the first five weeks of the season at Burlington (Iowa) in the Midwest League. He has a 2-0 record and has struck out 42 batters in 33 innings for the 66ers, the Angels' Advanced-A California League affiliate, which happens to be 39.6 miles from Angel Stadium.

After struggling at Burlington in 2014 – opposing hitters had a .289 batting average against him – Newcomb was 1-0 in seven games and had a 1.83 ERA in the Midwest League before being promoted. He went from a virtually anonymous high school pitcher to a first-round draft selection within three years.

“It’s pretty rewarding and the hard work paid off,” Newcomb said. “I’m pretty good at moving on.”

Newcomb’s fastball is in the mid-90s, and he has a lot of confidence in his curveball.

“It’s one of my better pitches and I know how to use it now,” Newcomb said. “I can use it with two strikes as a put-away pitch.”

The last two starts show what Newcomb has accomplished and where he needs to get better.

On June 11, he earned his second victory of the season by allowing only four hits and one walk, while striking out seven in a six-inning stint.

His five-inning effort at Bakersfield on Tuesday showed great promise and potential problems. He struck out nine of the first 10 batters in three innings, with the only non-strikeout victim reaching base on an error.

After notching his 10th strikeout to start the fourth inning, Bakersfield scored five runs on four hits. Newcomb added to the trouble by hitting a batter, walking another, throwing a wild pitch and not handling a ball hit to him, which was scored a single.

“Once they got their first hit, I might have been too upset,” said Newcomb, who wasn’t charged with a loss because Inland Empire scored seven runs in the seventh inning to pull out a 9-6 victory. “Bad things happened all at once and they scored some runs.”

Newcomb said the lesson learned was that he has to maintain an even keel in terms of emotions.

“I just want to deeper into games and be more consistent,” he said.

## Wilson's pitching makes up for his baserunning as Angels get easy win over Diamondbacks

By PEDRO MOURA

PHOENIX – C.J. Wilson took off running out of the batter's box in Thursday's fifth inning and didn't stop until he was steps away from second base, at which point he attempted an acrobatic, dangerous slide and was thrown out by a few feet.

Fortunately for the floating-around-.500 Angels, the 34-year-old left-hander pitched a lot better than he ran the bases in a weekday matinee at Chase Field, throwing eight innings of one-run ball against Arizona in a 7-1 victory. But the ill-advised decision to try to stretch a routine single into a double and downright reckless headfirst slide into second base was as much a topic of conversation in the clubhouse afterward.

"Those are the kinds of slides that end careers, if it's on the wrong side," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "So, I was obviously concerned when I saw the slide. But C.J. felt it was more on his right side, and he's athletic enough, and he came out of it unscathed.

"He knew what he was trying to do and was athletic enough to accomplish it, but it's still something you cringe at when you see a pitcher doing it."

Wilson would not accept such an answer, stressing the athletic ability he works steadily to maintain.

"The way I look at it is, if I get into scoring position, then it only takes a single to get me in, whereas someone's gotta hit a double or we've gotta get two hits if I'm on first," he said. "I figured I might as well try to flex the New Balances a little bit. I tried to do a Mike Trout turbo-slide, but he just nicked me in the elbow and I didn't get up."

As Wilson talked, catcher Chris Iannetta listened and packed his bags for Oakland.

"He's been watching 'Cool Runnings,'" Iannetta quipped, referencing the 1993 film about Jamaican bobsledders whose sled blades turn sideways during a run.

In the end, the slide was just a funny sidenote to the Angels' comfortable win. The team received solo homers from unlikely sources in Taylor Featherston and Johnny Giavotella and struck for five runs in the sixth inning. Mike Trout doubled and tripled, Efen Navarro hit a two-run single and Carlos Perez a two-run double.

The only damage done against Wilson came in the half-inning that followed his baserunning blunder, when David Peralta and Nick Ahmed notched back-to-back doubles.

Otherwise, he successfully scattered four singles and a double, striking out eight and walking none, reducing his ERA to 3.39. Wilson threw only 67 pitches through five innings and 115 in all, 76 of which were strikes. He finished eight innings for the third time this season and proudly proclaimed he loved playing baseball under National League rules.

"I'm not gonna concede any effort level when I'm out there, because in a one or two-run game an insurance run could be all the difference," Wilson said. "I expect all the players to play hard like that all the time, and we do.

"I'm just a competitive guy and let my enthusiasm out. That's why I'm still, I think, playing at a high level at my age. A lot of guys tend to fall off by the time they're my age. I'm still hungry. I haven't won a World Series yet."

The Angels (34-33) secured a split of an unusual home-and-home four-game set with the Diamondbacks and took one up-stroke in their attempt to stay afloat.

"We've been kind of treading water for a couple weeks," Scioscia said. "Up a bit, down a bit."

## **Featherston, Giavotella get a taste of first home run tradition**

By PEDRO MOURA

PHOENIX – The ball went from a fan in the outfield bleachers to one, two, and then three Diamondbacks players. It finally landed in the hands of Angels bullpen coach Steve Soliz in the dugout, at almost the same second Taylor Featherston returned to his teammates after his first career home run Thursday.

Featherston had just laced a fastball from Arizona right-hander Allen Webster five feet past the outfield wall. He had watched the umpire do "the little twirl with his fingers." He had broken into the trot he has practiced for a couple decades in preparation for this moment.

And then, in accordance with the tradition he grew up seeing on SportsCenter, his teammates totally ignored him, until Manager Mike Scioscia turned around and shook his hand, Mike Trout grabbed his head and tugged, and the dugout erupted.

"It's part of it, a rite of passage you have to deal with. I love it," Featherston said. "It's tough love, but you've gotta love it."

That love was shared with Johnny Giavotella when, two batters later, the Angels second baseman launched a home run of his own. Shortstop Erick Aybar, sitting out the game, suggested they give the same treatment, and so they did. Giavotella was befuddled.

"I felt like I just struck out," he said. "I came in and no one was even happy."

After a minute, Scioscia called him over like he was going to shake his hand. Instead, he berated him, telling Giavotella he'd be removed from the game the next time he didn't accurately position himself in a defensive shift.

"Just to kind of rub in the silent treatment, make it even worse," Giavotella said. "And it worked."

It was too funny for some to take. Angels bench coach Dino Ebel turned around and put his hand over his mouth to cover his laughing. Giavotella sat in the corner and whispered a question to starting pitcher

C.J. Wilson, the only man anywhere near him. And then, after another minute, Scioscia called him over a second time and actually shook his hand.

Again, the dugout erupted, this time in overwhelming laughter.

"Everybody was laughing at me, having a good time," Giavotella said. "After that, it was a little less stressful."

For Giavotella, 2015 has provided the best opportunity to date to establish himself. He has started 61 of the Angels' 67 games at second base. But he has not operated sans stress, especially while hitting .245 with a .301 on-base percentage since April's end.

"This game's so up-and-down," Giavotella said. "You gotta enjoy the good days."

Featherston has not had the same opportunities. Thursday was his ninth big-league start; the home run was his fourth career hit in his 41st major-league plate appearance. But, he said, the season has been instructive all the same.

"I'm in a very good position," he said. "I'm constantly asking questions, watching how they handle success and failure. There's a lot to learn."

#### REGULARS RESTING

Aybar sat out Thursday's game after his seventh-inning bunt pop-out Wednesday that dropped his batting average to .246 and his OPS to .581. The shortstop is struggling something awful, riding a 1-for-27 slump.

"I think, offensively, he's putting a little pressure on himself because some hits aren't falling in," Scioscia said. "I think he still suits our lineup in front of Kole (Calhoun) trying to set the table, but, right now, he needs a little bit of a blow."

Also out of the lineup was left fielder Matt Joyce, in what Scioscia said was a planned day off. Joyce reached base three times Wednesday for only the fourth time this season; Efen Navarro started for him Thursday.

"This isn't anything to do with what Matt did or didn't do last night," Scioscia said. "It's really a function of a day game after a night game and wanting to get Efen in there. I think Matt will be fine."

#### NOTES

Right-hander Cory Rasmus (core muscle surgery) is scheduled to begin a minor-league rehab assignment with Triple-A Salt Lake on Friday. ... Right-hander Mike Morin planned to throw to Angels' hitters in a live batting-practice setting Friday. ... Thursday, the Angels won their 101st interleague game since 2007, the most in the majors in that span.

## **On deck: Angels at Oakland, Friday, 6:30 p.m.**

By PEDRO MOURA

Where: O.co Coliseum

TV: Fox Sports West, 6:30 p.m.

Did you know: On Thursday, Mike Trout hit his first triple since Sept. 20. The 74-game stretch without a triple was the longest of his career.

### THE PITCHERS

RHP MATT SHOEMAKER (4-5, 4.85)

Shoemaker's last four starts have been pretty good, as the 28-year-old tries to make his way back from a rough beginning to 2015. He hasn't given up a homer in those four starts, after giving up 13 in his first eight. Shoemaker continues to display great control, and his strikeout rate is high enough to have success.

Vs. Athletics: 1-2, 4.57

At O.co Coliseum: 0-0, 4.76

Loves to face: Eric Sogard, 1 for 9 (.111), SO

Hates to face: Marcus Semien, 4 for 8 (.500), 2 2B, HR

RHP SONNY GRAY (8-3, 1.60)

Gray could start next month's All-Star Game in Cincinnati. He's been that good. Against the Angels in his last start, he struck out nine, walked none, and allowed just one unearned run in 7 2/3 innings. It was the fifth scoreless outing already this season for the 25-year-old right-hander, who should reach 100 innings pitched this season in this outing.

Vs. Angels: 5-1, 2.11

At O.co Coliseum: 14-10, 2.84

Loves to face: Chris Iannetta, 0 for 10, BB, 4 SO

Hates to face: David Freese, 5 for 17 (.294), 2 2B

### UPCOMING MATCHUPS

Saturday: Angels RHP Jered Weaver (4-7, 4.65) at Athletics RHP Jesse Hahn (4-5, 3.62), 1 p.m.

Sunday: Angels RHP Garrett Richards (7-4, 3.59) at Athletics LHP Scott Kazmir (3-4, 2.84), 1 p.m.

*FROM ANGELS.COM*

## **Joyce, Aybar given day off amid slumps**

By JAKE RILL

PHOENIX -- Angels manager Mike Scioscia was planning on giving several players a day off on Thursday as a result of it being a day game after a night game, no matter how they performed Wednesday.

Shortstop Erick Aybar and left fielder Matt Joyce were both out of the starting lineup on Thursday, perhaps also giving the duo a chance to regroup after struggling at the plate for the most of June.

It may have been more difficult for Scioscia to sit Joyce, who was 2-for-3 with a triple and reached base three times in Wednesday's game against the D-backs. But Joyce may still be able to benefit from a day of rest, as he entered Thursday batting .200 in June and .189 on the season.

"We definitely are balancing when a hitter is starting to swing the bat well and you also grind out some at-bats when they're doing poorly, which I think we've done with Matt," Scioscia said. "In the big picture, it's one day, Matt's still going to get his opportunity to contribute, but we've got some guys on our team who we feel very confident are going to contribute."

Scioscia mentioned one of those players is Efen Navarro, who got the start in left field on Thursday. Taylor Featherston started at shortstop in favor of Aybar, who has batted .167 in 15 games in June, lowering his average from .271 to .246. He also entered Thursday mired in a 1-for-27 slump.

"I think he's put a little pressure on himself right now at this point because some hits aren't falling in," Scioscia said. "He's playing a lot, he just needs a bit of a break."

## **Analyzing the Draft by division: AL West**

By JIM CALLIS

### **Los Angeles Angels**

In one of the biggest surprises of the first round, the Angels took Fresno State catcher Taylor Ward at No. 26 overall. He had the strongest arm among the Draft's catchers and some power, though he'll need to clean up his receiving and hitting. After Ward, they continued to zero in on bats, choosing them with eight of their first nine picks.

Wesleyan High (Norcross, Ga.) outfielder Jahmai Jones (second round), Louisiana State outfielder Jared Foster (fifth) and Houston outfielder Kyle Survance (eight) all have plus speed. Foster, a backup quarterback on Louisiana State's national championship team in 2011, has power potential as well. Loyola Marymount's David Fletcher (sixth) was one of the top defensive shortstops available.

## Angels cruise behind Wilson, 5-run frame

By JAKE RILL AND STEVE GILBERT

PHOENIX -- The Angels used a five-run sixth inning to back a strong outing from starter C.J. Wilson and beat the D-backs, 7-1, on Thursday afternoon at Chase Field.

Efren Navarro and Carlos Perez each drove in a pair of runs, while Taylor Featherston and Johnny Giavotella each hit a solo home run in the third inning. Wilson pitched eight innings of one-run ball, scattering eight hits and striking out nine with no walks.

"I've had some games where I felt like I had a couple guys on base, and a dude would come up and hit a single or something and the guys would score," Wilson said. "Today, I was able to prevent the guy from scoring once there was a guy on base."

lasted just 5 1/3 innings in his second start of the year and his Chase Field debut. The right-hander gave up six runs on five hits and five walks.

"He pitched very well for the five, kept us in the game," D-backs manager Chip Hale said. "Just two bad pitches up in the zone that they were able to hit the home runs on."

### MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Piling it on: A day after going 0-for-9 with runners in scoring position, the Angels had no trouble producing a big rally in the sixth. Mike Trout hit a one-out RBI triple, followed by walks from Albert Pujols and David Freese to load the bases. Navarro then poked a two-run single to right off of D-backs reliever Josh Collmenter and Perez laced a two-run double to left, completing a five-run inning that stretched the Angels' lead to 7-1.

"We got production independently from what [Kole Calhoun] and Mike and Albert are going to do," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "And that's critical."

Sixth-inning blues: In his first start for the D-backs last weekend, Webster lost a no-hitter in the sixth and could not finish the inning before allowing a pair of runs. This time around, Webster had allowed just two solo homers through five, but things spiraled out of control for him in the sixth as the Angels put together the five-run rally.

Special occasion: Featherston hit the first home run of his career in the third inning. The rookie shortstop hit a one-out solo shot to left to put the Angels up, 1-0. It also got the Angels' offense started as Giavotella hit a solo homer of his own just two batters later.

### QUOTABLE

"He made a perfect throw and I was out. I tried to do like a Mike Trout turbo slide into second, but it just nicked me on the elbow, so I didn't get out of the way well enough." -- Wilson, on getting thrown out at second base trying to stretch a single

## WHAT'S NEXT

Angels: The road trip continues with a three-game series against the Athletics at 6:35 p.m. PT on Friday, about a week after taking two of three from the A's at Angel Stadium. Matt Shoemaker takes the mound looking for better results against the Athletics, after going 0-2 with a 6.91 ERA in three starts against them this season.

D-backs: Arizona opens a three-game series with the division-rival Padres on Friday night (6:40 MST) at Chase Field. Rubby De La Rosa will get the start. The right-hander had one of his best starts of the year in his Sunday outing, when he tossed eight-plus shutout innings against the Giants.

## Wilson rolls, relishes chance to join offense

By JAKE RILL

PHOENIX -- Angels starter C.J. Wilson loves to play Interleague games, where he has an opportunity to flash his competitive edge in places other than the mound.

Wilson's main contribution to Thursday's 7-1 win over the D-backs was his eight innings of one-run ball. But the veteran left-hander was just as enthusiastic about his single and getting to watch teammate Taylor Featherston's first career homer from the on-deck circle.

"You feel like you're more of a part of the team because you're there to high-five the guy when he hits the homer," Wilson said. "That got me super jacked when Featherston hit the homer and I was on deck, it just sounded so solid. I was like, 'Whoa, that was tight.'"

"Solid" is also a way to describe what Wilson has been for the Angels' staff this season. It was the third time he went a season-high eight innings and his second straight win.

Wilson has allowed just one run over his last 15 innings, seeing his ERA drop from 3.92 to 3.39 in the process.

"C.J.'s actually been throwing the ball fairly consistently, there were a couple games that got away from him," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "I think he got under swings very well. He was getting the ball over the plate with good life and just pitched a terrific game."

Scioscia was less pleased with Wilson's baserunning blunder, however, which occurred in the fifth inning when he attempted to stretch his two-out single into a double. Wilson was nabbed by D-backs right fielder Yasmany Tomas, but tried an acrobatic slide headfirst into second.

"I'm not going to concede any effort level when I'm out there," Wilson said. "I just want to help the team win. It's just like any other guy in here, if they're going to play their [rear] off and try to play as hard as they can to win the game, I'm the same way."

Although Wilson allowed eight hits, he limited the damage and only once allowed a D-backs baserunner to get past second base. He produced nine strikeouts while walking none.



Wilson also helped end D-backs first baseman Paul Goldschmidt's streak of 27 consecutive games reaching base, even striking the slugger out twice. Wilson said the punchout of Goldschmidt in the first inning helped set the tempo for the rest of the game.

"I was fortunate to have really good run support, so I was able to challenge him a couple times," Wilson said. "I was able to kind of kick it up to another gear and either strike the guy out that was batting or use the defense the way we planned it out."

## **Halos' dugout doubles up on silent treatment**

By JAKE RILL

PHOENIX -- Angels shortstop Taylor Featherston hit his first career home run in the third inning of Thursday's 7-1 win over the D-backs, and he received the customary silent treatment when he returned to the dugout.

When Johnny Giavotella added a solo shot of his own two batters later, Erick Aybar gave Angels manager Mike Scioscia an idea from the bench.

"Aybar said, 'Give him the silent treatment,' so we gave him the silent treatment," Scioscia said. "Then they wanted me to call him over and act like I was shaking his hand at first."

So Scioscia first shook his hand, but then gave Giavotella a fake scolding, pretending to be mad at the second baseman. Giavotella went back and quietly sat on the bench.

But after a few minutes, the charade was up, and Scioscia and Giavotella's teammates congratulated him on the home run.

It wasn't the only fun for the Angels in the victory. They struck for five more runs in the sixth inning and had their largest offensive output since scoring eight runs on June 9.

"We're not going to get on the roll we can until we start to do some of the things offensively that we can. The last two nights are a good sign," Scioscia said. "We pressured those guys a lot of innings and that's what our offense has to evolve to."

## **Shoemaker, Gray set for rematch in Oakland**

By JAKE RILL

Athletics starter Sonny Gray has dominated the Angels three times this season, much like he has throughout his career. Angels starter Matt Shoemaker hasn't had the same success against the A's, however.

Gray and Shoemaker square off Friday night when the teams open a three-game series in Oakland.

Gray is 3-0 with a 1.19 ERA in three starts against the Angels this season. He is 5-1 with a 2.11 ERA in nine career appearances, eight starts, against the Halos. In his last start against them on Sunday, Gray (8-3, 1.60 overall) allowed just an unearned run in 7 2/3 innings. Gray has been on a roll of late, winning four of his last five starts.

On the losing end of that Sunday game was Shoemaker (4-5, 4.85), who allowed four runs (three earned) in 5 2/3 innings. He is 0-2 with a 6.91 ERA in three starts against the A's this season. In his career, Shoemaker is 1-2 with a 4.57 ERA against Oakland.

Three things to know for this game

- The Angels lead the season series, 6-4. They took two of three from the A's last weekend. After this weekend series, the American League West rivals will meet six more times.
- Several Angels hitters have struggled against Gray. Mike Trout and Albert Pujols are each 4-for-22 (.182 average) against the right-hander, while Kole Calhoun is 3-for-24 (.233).
- The Athletics are 12-10 in series openers. The Angels are 11-11.

*FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS*

## **Gretzky's son Trevor chasing baseball dreams with Angels' Class-A affiliate**

CLINTON, Iowa – Trevor Gretzky is known more for his iconic last name than his baseball career.

But Trevor isn't looking to escape his famous father's shadow.

He hopes "The Great One" can help him become "The Next One."

The 22-year-old son of retired NHL star Wayne Gretzky toils in relative anonymity as a left fielder for the Class A Burlington Bees in the Angels' farm system.

Beyond those famous seven letters atop the back of his jersey, Gretzky is just another kid hoping to beat the odds and reach the majors.

To do so, Trevor leans heavily on the advice of Wayne, whose passion for baseball has helped fuel his son's career.

"You'd be surprised. He knows a lot about baseball. Pretty much everything I know about the game is because of him," Trevor Gretzky said of his father, whose 894 goals are just one of a slew of NHL records he holds.

That Trevor chose baseball over hockey isn't a shock to the Gretzky family.

In fact, Trevor described his father as a “huge baseball nut” who nudged his son toward his adopted country’s national pastime from an early age.

Gretzky was born in Los Angeles just weeks before a season that ended with his father’s last trip to the Stanley Cup finals with the Kings.

Trevor gave hockey a go in elementary school. But driving back and forth in the early morning for ice time proved tedious, so he followed his friends into football and baseball.

With his father carting him back and forth to the batting cages on a near-daily basis, Trevor blossomed into a star at Oaks Christian in Westlake Village, and was selected by the Chicago Cubs in the seventh round of the 2011 amateur draft with the 219th pick.

“My dad let me do what I wanted to do. He never forced me to do anything,” Gretzky said.

But while his father took the NHL by storm as a wunderkind, winning the first of nine MVPs at just 19, Trevor has yet to emerge as an elite prospect.

Trevor signed a minor league contract for a \$375,000 bonus, hit .274 in rookie ball in 2012 and .306 in 49 at-bats with the full-season Class A Kane County Cougars two years ago.

Trevor was then traded to the Angels – for another famous kid, Angels manager Mike Scioscia’s son, Matt – before 2014. He posted a paltry OPS of .520 and 47 strikeouts in 179 at-bats.

The Angels are hoping that a full season in A ball will help Gretzky develop the consistency needed to advance to the next level. The Bees plan on giving Gretzky regular playing time in hopes of jumpstarting his career.

Gretzky was batting .269 through 22 games as of Wednesday, despite a recent trip to the disabled list for what the Bees said was a minor knee issue.

“He plays a good left field. Catches the ball, makes the plays. He’s got some power in his bat,” Burlington manager Chad Tracy said. “There’s a lot of things to like. Now he’s going to get a chance to show it here.”

Gretzky is set to spend the season in the Midwest League, which includes teams in Fort Wayne, Ind.; Bowling Green, Ky.; and Beloit, Wisc. His home for the summer, a town of roughly 25,000 on the west shores of the Mississippi River, couldn’t be more different from the glitz of Gretzky’s childhood.

But Trevor said his parents listen to the radio play-by-play as much as they can, and he speaks to his parents after nearly every game.

And if Trevor is fortunate enough to reach the majors, he said he hopes someday to wear No. 99 – the number Wayne made famous – as a tribute to the man who pushed him into baseball.

“All pro sports are the same. You work hard, and the guys who work the hardest and play the hardest come out on top,” Trevor said. “He’s been telling me that since I was a little kid.”

## Featherston hits 1st HR, Wilson strong in Angels' 7-1 rout

PHOENIX -- The Los Angeles Angels got another strong start from C.J. Wilson and offense from someone other than Mike Trout or Albert Pujols.

Thursday was the kind of day that makes manager Mike Scioscia feel good about the coming weeks.

Wilson struck out a season-high nine in his second straight strong outing, Taylor Featherston hit his first major league home run and the Angels beat the Arizona Diamondbacks 7-1 to split the four-game interleague series.

The first two games were played in Anaheim, the last two in Phoenix.

Wilson (5-5), after throwing seven scoreless innings in his previous start, gave up one run and scattered eight hits in eight innings. The left-hander didn't walk anyone.

Scioscia's only criticism was Wilson's head-first slide when the pitcher tried to stretch a single into a double but was tagged out on a throw from right fielder Yasmany Tomas.

"Those kinds of slides are the slides that end careers if it's on the wrong side," Scioscia said.

But, the manager said, Wilson was "athletic enough to pull it off."

Wilson made no apologies.

"He made a perfect throw and I was out," he said. "I tried to do like a Mike Trout turbo slide but he nicked me on the elbow."

Wilson said he loves to play all aspects of the game, including hitting and baserunning.

"If you're a bad athlete, then you're not going to try something like that," he said. "I'm just going to say I'm a good athlete so every time I get on base I'm either going to try to advance on a groundball or a wild pitch or break up a double play. It's the way I've always played."

Featherston and Johnny Giavotella each hit solo homers in the third off Allen Webster (1-1), making his second big league start.

Arizona's Paul Goldschmidt was 0 for 4 and struck out three times, failing to reach base for the first time in 28 games. It had been the longest active streak in the majors.

"You look at his numbers. He's hitting .360 with a .500 on-base percentage," Wilson said. "I was I guess fortunate to have really good run support today so I had a chance to challenge him. He wants to hit, he's a great hitter. I got him to chase a couple of pitches today. I don't think he's going to do that very often."

Carlos Perez had a two-run double and Efen Navarro a two-run single in the Angels' five-run sixth inning. Trout tripled in the inning's other run.

Webster was rocked for six runs on five hits and walked five, one intentional, in 5 1/3 innings. He left with the bases loaded and one out in the sixth. Josh Collmenter, who lost his rotation spot to Webster, came in and gave up the big hits to Navarro and Perez.

For the eighth time since they were 8-8 on April 24, the Diamondbacks failed in a bid to reach .500.

"I don't think anybody is thinking about that," manager Chip Hale said. "We just didn't play well enough today and they did. It's just the way it goes. You get beat some days."

Arizona had cut the Los Angeles lead to 2-1 with consecutive doubles by David Peralta and Nick Ahmed in the fifth.

Featherston, who entered the game hitting .083 in 36 at-bats, lined an 0-1 pitch into the left field seats.

"I had my head down and was thinking extra bases," he said, "and I looked up and the umpire raised his finger and starts doing the little twirly. You know you're getting into the trot. I'm just very thankful and blessed. It was a good day."

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Angels: RHP Cory Rasmus, on the 60-day DL and yet to play this season after undergoing abdominal surgery, begins a rehab assignment this week.

Diamondbacks: RHP Archie Bradley (shoulder tendinitis) pitched a simulated game on Thursday.

#### UP NEXT

Angels: Los Angeles opens a three-game series in Oakland on Friday night, starting Matt Shoemaker (4-5, 4.85 ERA) vs. RHP Sonny Gray (8-3, 1.60), the major league ERA leader.

Diamondbacks: The five-game homestand continues with the series opener against San Diego on Friday, Arizona's first game against the Padres since Pat Murphy, former coach at Arizona State, became their interim manager. Arizona goes with RHP Rubby De La Rosa (5-3, 5.27), who tossed eight scoreless innings in his last start. The Diamondbacks try to hand RHP James Shields (7-0, 3.59) his first loss of the season.

## Angels-Athletics Preview

The Los Angeles Angels have not been able to figure out Sonny Gray since he made his major league debut with the Oakland Athletics nearly two years ago.

That's especially been the case this season, though they're not the only team he's managed to shut down.

The major league leader in ERA looks to beat the Angels for the second time this week and fourth time in as many matchups in 2015 as these teams open a three-game series in Oakland on Friday night.

Gray (8-3, 1.60 ERA) will again be matched up with Matt Shoemaker (4-5, 4.85) after beating him in Anaheim on Sunday. Gray allowed an unearned run, five hits and struck out nine with no walks over 7 2/3 innings of an 8-1 victory.

"It's fun every time I go out there," Gray said. "It's still real early, but it's just nice to go out there and get some innings and put the team in a position to win. I'm just throwing the ball well."

The right-hander is 3-0 with a 1.19 ERA against the Angels (34-33) this season and 5-1 with a 2.11 mark in nine career matchups, including eight starts.

"Every time we've faced him, he's been tough on us," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "So we'll have to hopefully try and figure something out -- because in our division, we're going to face him a bunch of times."

Gray has posted a 1.04 ERA in going 4-1 in his last five starts, striking out 31 and walking four in 34 2/3 innings.

"My fastball location is better and I'm throwing a lot more strikes," he said. "... And when you do that, you're going to win more times than not."

Gray has been especially tough on Mike Trout and Albert Pujols. They are both 4 for 22 in the matchup, with Trout striking out 10 times but also homering twice. Kole Calhoun is 3 for 24 with nine strikeouts and Chris Iannetta is hitless in 10 at-bats while striking out four times.

"I'm under the impression that he's doing that to everybody," Iannetta said. "He's one of the best in the game, and I don't think he gets enough notoriety for how good he really is."

Shoemaker allowed four runs in 5 2/3 innings Sunday after going 1-0 with a 1.45 ERA in his previous three starts. The right-hander is 0-2 with a 6.91 ERA in three outings against Oakland (29-40) this year.

The Athletics failed in their bid for a season-best fifth straight win Thursday, falling 3-1 to San Diego while being held to five hits. They had 20 hits in a 16-2 victory Wednesday.

"A game like that when you give up a couple runs, you expect to be in a better position," manager Bob Melvin said. "We just didn't do enough offensively."

Los Angeles won for the second time in three contests Thursday, beating Arizona 7-1. Trout went 2 for 4 with an RBI triple and is 12 for 29 (.414) in the last eight games, while Efen Navarro and Carlos Perez drove in two runs apiece.

"We got production independently from what (Kole Calhoun) and Mike and Albert are going to do," Scioscia told MLB's official website. "And that's critical."

*FROM FOX SPORTS*

## **The newest attempt to retire Mike Trout**

By JEFF SULLIVAN

I've had something of an obsession. I feel like it's an understandable one, but that's the way everyone feels about his/her own obsessions, so let me explain a little bit. Mike Trout's the best player in baseball, right? I mean, even if you don't think he's No. 1, he's one of the top two or four or five. And he's probably been No. 1. He's done silly things to our WAR statistic. Trout makes people think about Mickey Mantle, and not in a way where it's like, "Mike Trout is good, but he's no Mickey Mantle." He might really be the new Mickey Mantle. He's great. OK. You know that.

Trout's been amazing, but last year it became apparent he had a weakness. It became increasingly apparent to everyone, and it was ultimately exploited in the playoffs by the Royals. On the off chance you don't remember what I'm talking about, Trout was incredibly vulnerable against high fastballs, and particularly high, inside fastballs. There was no mystery. Teams would face the best player in baseball, and they knew what they had to do to get him out.

Not that they were able to consistently pull it off. But my obsession was tracking how opponents were pitching to Trout because there was so much to gain from attacking his weakness. He was like an otherwise unbeatable video-game boss with a flashing red rectangle under the chin where he could be felled were he struck just so. Every team had the report, and as more time passed, Trout saw more elevated, inside fastballs. It seemed like something would eventually have to give. Either Trout would make an adjustment, or the major leagues would defeat him and knock him from his perch.

Over the winter, Trout talked from time to time about the hole in his swing. His typical line was that he'd just have to lay off the high-and-tight fastballs, because he said they were usually out of the zone. In reality, a lot of them were in the zone, so Trout's response was incomplete. He had to know the pitches he'd be seeing, so he had to try to get himself ready for those. And, sure enough, in the early going of the 2015 season, Trout was a high-inside-fastball magnet. Teams hadn't forgotten what they'd learned the previous summer.

But there's a funny thing about the best players in baseball. They know how to adjust, especially when they're young. During the offseason, Trout had a goal. And it became pretty clear early that Trout had fixed his weakness. Gone was the vulnerability. Trout improved his contact against those high, inside fastballs, and he improved his ability to hit them hard. There were loud hits and loud outs. All of them warnings. Trout had adjusted to the adjustment. Which meant it was up to the pitchers again to make an adjustment. How, now, would they work with the league MVP?

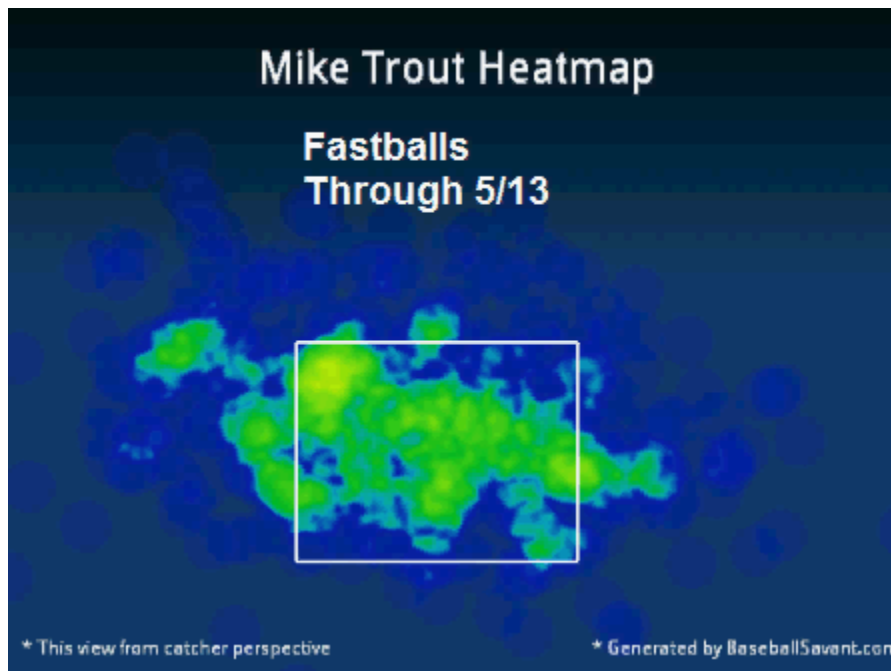
If you're wondering whether the pitchers are doing something different, the answer is a resounding yes. Opponents are now trying to get Trout out in a different way. Much of the following data comes from Baseball Savant. And I wrote the article above on May 13, so let's use that as a dividing point. Conveniently, it's just about in the middle of Trout's season so far.

The theory seems to be: Trout has prepared himself to turn around inside pitches, so maybe he's vulnerable against more outside pitches? And the idea there would be no hitter can cover the whole

hitting area at once. In the following image, you'll see all the pitches thrown to Trout through May 13, and then all the pitches thrown to Trout since the next game. The difference is stark.

Numbers might help, in case you're relatively unaccustomed to heat maps. The big swing is from inside to outside, so let's focus on the rate of inside pitches seen. Through May 13, among right-handed hitters, Trout's rate of inside pitches seen ranked in the highest 2 percent. Since May 14, among righties, Trout's rate of inside pitches seen ranks in the lowest 12 percent. He went from ranking second to ranking 120th. The average pitch to Trout is now further away, horizontally, by about four inches.

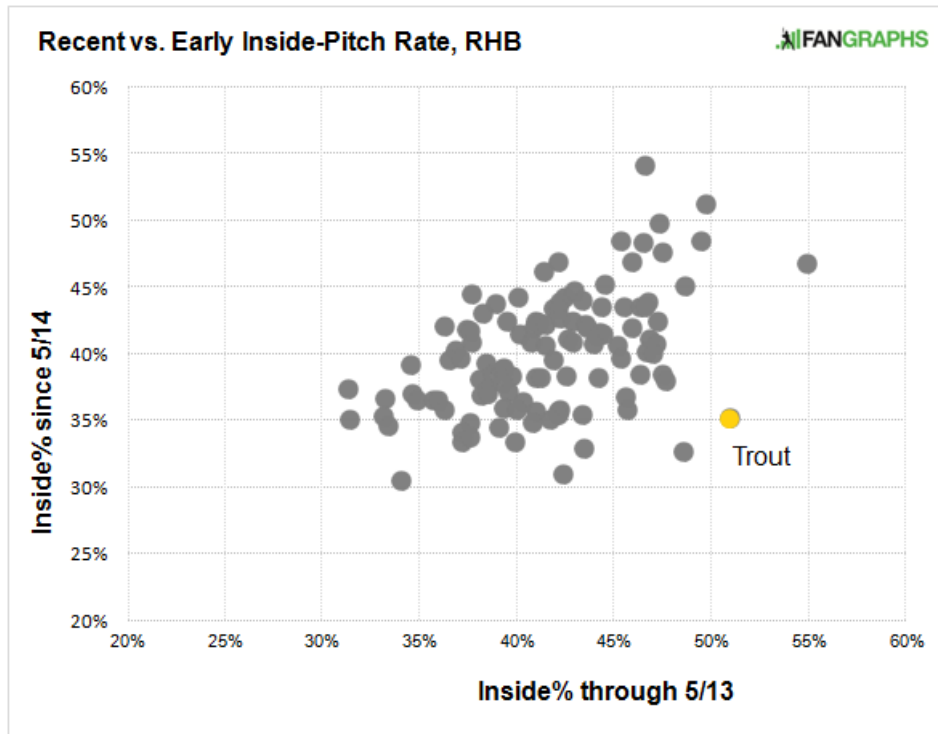
That covers all the pitches. Now let's just isolate the fastballs. It's the fastballs, after all, that had been giving Trout such fits.



Through May 13, among right-handed hitters, Trout's rate of inside fastballs seen ranked in the highest 2 percent. Since May 14, his rate of inside fastballs seen ranks in the lowest 15 percent. He went from ranking second to ranking 149th. The average fastball to Trout is now further away, horizontally, by nearly six inches. That's a hell of a difference, considering the width of home plate. Used to be, the average fastball was over the inner half. Now it's over the outer half. Pitchers are hoping that Trout is so geared up for stuff in that he can't protect against stuff away.

Let's look at another comparison of through-May-13 to since-May-14 data. Here are all the right-handed hitters, with their rates of inside pitches seen. I've highlighted Trout, and as you can see, the shift with him has been unusual.





There's a decent relationship between these points for the average hitter, because the average hitter isn't rapidly changing, so neither is the scouting report. Trout's an exception. He went from one of every two pitches being inside to one of every three pitches being inside. The only hitter with a comparable change in the sample is Michael Taylor. After Trout and Taylor, the hitter with the third-biggest change is separated by about five percentage points. The change in approach to Trout has been dramatic, and it happened almost overnight. On the fly, pitchers gave up trying to retire Trout inside and high, and now they're working the outer half.

It's fascinating. At least \*I\* think it's fascinating. They say baseball's a game of constant adjustments, even for the superstars. Here we see pitchers adjusting to Trout, and then Trout adjusting to the pitchers, and then the pitchers adjusting to Trout adjusting to the pitchers. It's all happened very fast. So how has this most recent adjustment worked out for the opponents? Has Trout indeed become vulnerable away?

Through May 13: .958 OPS

Since May 14: .949 OPS

If you squint, you see a higher strikeout rate. If you keep squinting, you see a lower walk rate. But if you don't squint at all, you see the exact same level of production. Trout hasn't been exposed, not in any meaningful way, not yet. He owns a career-high slugging percentage against inside fastballs. He also owns a career-high slugging percentage against outside fastballs. Trout is good for a high slugging percentage.

Because Mike Trout is good. Pitchers have a new way of trying to get him out, but to this point, it hasn't worked, meaning either they aren't executing well enough or they need to adjust to their own

adjustment. The high, inside fastballs stopped working. It seemed then like maybe pitches away could do the trick. But maybe that's not the answer. Evidence suggests it's not the answer. Maybe there isn't an answer. I don't know how to retire Mike Trout. Thankfully, it isn't my job.