



*Clips*

**(April 12, 2016)**

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- **Trout hits first home run of 2016 to lift Angels past A's**

*FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES***Nick Tropeano helps deliver a 4-1 victory for the Angels over the Athletics**

Pedro Moura

The starting pitchers had combined to throw 155 pitches in a scoreless tie into the sixth inning Monday. Much of the typically fierce Oakland Coliseum crowd had been lulled to sleep, the same state the Angels' offense occupied for the season's first week.

And then, at once, the game between the Angels and Oakland Athletics came alive. Yunel Escobar laced a one-out double off the right-field wall. On Sonny Gray's next offering, Daniel Nava singled to center, driving in Escobar. Mike Trout slammed Gray's proceeding pitch to straightaway center field, at least 420 feet, well beyond the fence in this football stadium-turned-ballpark.

On three pitches, the Angels had three runs. There would be only one more for each team, as the Angels secured a comfortable 4-1 victory and moved to 3-4 on the budding season behind a solid start from young Nick Tropeano.

"Tropeano and Sonny were cruising," Trout said. "We were just trying to get something started."

Said Angels Manager Mike Scioscia: "That inning was important to us."

Tropeano turned in the best start the Angels have had in 2016, striking out six Athletics while walking two and scattering six hits in five innings. The 25-year-old right-hander is in the majors only because left-hander Andrew Heaney had to be put on the 15-day disabled list last week. He should have at least three more starts to prove he deserves to stay.

He exited Monday's start after walking Stephen Vogt to begin the sixth. Fernando Salas served up a double-play ball and saved Tropeano, and the Angels asked left-hander Jose Alvarez to toss 12/3 innings before giving way to Joe Smith and then Huston Street in the ninth.

Smith permitted the lone run on two singles before Street quickly warmed, entered and recorded the final out for the save. Until the ninth, it was an altogether smooth affair, considering the Angels had to face Oakland's ace in the first game of a three-city, 10-game trip. They won't face another accomplished starter in Oakland or Minnesota until at least Sunday.

During their season-opening six-game homestand, the Angels mustered only 12 runs. It seemed their offensive woes would continue until the sixth-inning outburst.

Trout worked his fifth walk of the young season in the first inning but was stranded after Albert Pujols flied out to center on the next pitch. In the second inning, Kole Calhoun singled and then was erased on his own volition, caught trying to steal second base with C.J. Cron swinging and missing a Gray fastball.

The Angels botched an Oakland hit-and-run in the third inning. Josh Reddick took off running from first, and Danny Valencia singled through to right field. Calhoun threw to third to try to get Reddick, but Andrelton Simmons cut it off and threw to first, where Valencia appeared caught off the base. Pujols and Cliff Pennington could not coordinate their subsequent throws and Valencia reached second safely. Fortunately for them, Tropeano induced a pop-up from Vogt to end the inning.

He also worked out of trouble when a Coco Crisp drive bounced off Calhoun's glove in right for a triple in the fifth.

Pujols stole the Angels' final run in the eighth. After he singled off Oakland reliever Liam Hendriks, he caught Hendriks forgetting him and stole second standing and without a throw. Cron grounded him over to third and Simmons singled him home.

Improbably, the plodding Pujols became the only Angel to steal a base this season. Scioscia called that fact a "little ironic." Trout asserted that teams cannot leave his teammate alone on the bases, for the 36-year-old still has "some speed."

Pujols laughed and then grinned when questioned about it.

"I put my cape on," he said.

## **Rookie pitcher Greg Mahle joins Angels and parents get to share the occasion**

Pedro Moura

Greg Mahle walked into the visitors clubhouse at the O.co Coliseum just before 4 p.m. Monday. His new Angels teammates were surprised to see him. He smiled, nodded and asked a group which way was Manager Mike Scioscia's office.

One week after missing out on the Angels' opening-day roster, Mahle was on the team. He will serve as a second left-hander in the bullpen. He pitched once with triple-A Salt Lake — 1 2/3 scoreless innings — and received the call Sunday evening. He replaced right-hander A.J. Achter on the Angels roster.

"I haven't not thought about this a day in my life," Mahle said. "That pressure, I can't wait for that."

Mahle's life has been shorter than most major league rookies, and his journey perhaps less likely. The 22-year-old will be only the eighth player in the 2014 draft class to appear in the major leagues. The seven others were all picked among the top 55 selections. Mahle was a 15th-round choice, 449th overall.

But he had a 2.97 earned-run average in 97 minor league innings and impressed after earning an invitation to big league camp this spring. Oakland's lineup features four left-handed hitters, accentuating the Angels' need for an additional left-hander alongside Jose Alvarez.

When Mahle heard the news from Salt Lake Manager Keith Johnson, he first called his father, also named Greg. The dad raised Greg and Tyler, a Cincinnati Reds Class-A pitcher, as baseball fans and Dodgers devotees, and watched happily as they became prospects.

"He was so shocked that he didn't say much," Mahle said of his father. "He was super confused. I had to spell it out for him."

The elder Mahle arrived in Oakland in time for Monday's game, along with the pitcher's mother, Lissett, who brought with her a suit for her son to wear when the Angels leave Oakland for Minneapolis on Wednesday.

"I hope they have enough tissues," his father said.

Mahle's parents live in Westminster. If he remains in the majors when the Angels return home to face Seattle on April 22, Mahle will stay with his parents.

#### Short hops

Albert Pujols started at first base for the first time this season. Pujols played the position twice during spring training. The last time he played it in 2015 was Sept. 4. Scioscia would not say how often he plans to play Pujols in the field. ... Left-hander Andrew Heaney completed weighted-ball exercises with team physical therapist Bernard Li. Heaney, encouraged by the development, said he has passed several tests since he was put on the 15-day disabled list Wednesday because of a flexor tendon strain.

## **Angels mailbag: Yet another 2-4 start has Angels fans wondering about the future**

Pedro Moura

The Angels have opened 2-4 for the fifth consecutive season, so there is plenty about the team to discuss.

I would not expect the Angels to become a primary free-agent destination next winter, because being one would require a significant departure from their typical manner of operation.

Even without Jered Weaver and C.J. Wilson, the Angels have nearly \$67 million committed to five players who will play for them in 2017, plus more than \$26 million committed to one player who will not, Josh Hamilton.

Then there are more millions due to arbitration players Kole Calhoun, Hector Santiago, Garrett Richards and, probably, Tyler Skaggs. Let's call the total for those four \$24 million.

So, that's \$117 million, and that's not counting more players likely to qualify for arbitration, such as Matt Shoemaker and Johnny Giavotella.

The Angels have never paid more than \$165 million in salaries in a single season, so let's assume that as a guideline for a cap. For 16 spots, they should have something short of \$40 million to spend. Ten or so of those would be taken up by minimum-salaried players, leaving the Angels no more than \$35 million to spend on six spots. Blowing \$20 million-plus annually on one player will leave certain spots — third base? set-up man? — in substandard states.

But, to actually answer your question, Edwin Encarnacion and Jose Bautista will be free agents in the big-bat category. I suppose Yoenis Cespedes could be a candidate. He can opt out of his contract with the New York Mets. Colby Rasmus will be a free agent. Jay Bruce might be a free agent.

Stephen Strasburg will be up for auction, if you fancy dreaming on pitching. Other starting pitchers would include Clay Buchholz and Andrew Cashner. Catchers Matt Wieters and Jason Castro will be free agents. And so will second baseman Neil Walker.

I would not expect that to be expressly said at any point this season. But he remains under contract for two more seasons, and I would not expect him to leave his job this year. He has a good situation in Anaheim, if that wasn't already obvious.

That will not happen mathematically, of course. How many games back would they have to be for you to declare them effectively out? Ten? Twelve? Fifteen? I doubt they will be as far back as any of those numbers. A better question might be Aug. 1.

I don't see that Trout is being asked to lead the team any more than he did last year, or the year before, and he led off each of those seasons with home runs off Felix Hernandez. So it is hard to argue he would be feeling more pressure.

However, I think it stands to reason that at some point Trout will have a letdown sort of season. That's not to say it will happen this year, or that it will be dramatic when it happens, but it only seems logical. The pace he is on is unprecedented. Because he has been so great, we have no real idea what to expect about how he will age, but he does seem slower than when he debuted.

It will be difficult to trade C.J. Wilson, as he's likely looking at a late-May, early-June return and would need time to reestablish his value. If the Angels are indeed out of the race come July, trade candidates could include third baseman Yunel Escobar, setup man Joe Smith and left-hander Hector Santiago.

I think the offense will be about league average, maybe a bit above. By wRC+ -- a [fangraphs.com](#) all-inclusive advanced metric -- they were tied for 15th in the majors last season. That range again seems reasonable, since they should receive better left-field production and, really, similar offensive numbers from every other position. Allot for one injury somewhere and average makes sense.

I don't know that either Erick Aybar or David Freese were particularly vocal team leaders. Both were respected in the Angels' clubhouse, but I never got the idea they were the outward leaders. Mike Trout is the center of the team. He is the leader of the team. And then are other, more vocal players who provide leadership, such as closer Huston Street.

The Angels started 2-4 in each of the last five seasons. They finished two of those seasons well below .500 at April's end, right at .500 last year, and above it the two other years. The slow-starting trend is overblown, I believe, in part because of the team's 8-15 record in 2012, after the big Wilson and Albert Pujols signings.

I wouldn't do anything now. What could you even do?

This seems like a chemistry question. It's nearly impossible to discern a team's chemistry until they've played a fair number of games. But, generally, it is more fun to win than lose. They seem to want to win.

Personally, I would bat Escobar first, Trout second, Pujols third and Calhoun fourth, followed by some hodgepodge of the other hitters. But I wouldn't say that Mike Scioscia's reasoning for batting Calhoun fifth makes no sense. The Angels right fielder hit well last season, but he had morphed into a power-focused, strikeout-heavy hitter, which is not the type who fits well atop the order.

Escobar's career on-base percentage is 30 points higher than Calhoun's. Last year, it was 67 points higher. You want your best hitters batting as often as possible, but you also want your best on-base threats to bat ahead of your singular best hitter.

*FROM THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER*

## **Angels make it two in a row with the expected (a Mike Trout HR) – and unexpected (Nick Tropeano outdueling Sonny Gray)**

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND – The latest installment of You Can't Predict Baseball begins with Angels No. 6 starter Nick Tropeano tossing five scoreless innings and ends with Albert Pujols stealing a base that led to a run.

Add in something that was entirely predictable – a titanic Mike Trout homer, his first of the young season – and the Angels have themselves a winning streak.

The Angels beat the Oakland A's, 4-1, Monday night, their second straight victory after losing four of their first five games.

A day after Jered Weaver defied his skeptics by pitching six strong innings, Tropeano blanked the A's into the sixth inning.

He was getting the ball only because Andrew Heaney was placed on the disabled list with a forearm problem, resulting in Tropeano making a quick U-turn after being assigned to Triple-A Salt Lake City.

Tropeano surprisingly was matching A's ace Sonny Gray in effectiveness, if not efficiency, for the first five innings.

Although the Angels were barely touching Gray, the A's had a couple rallies that required nifty escapes by Tropeano.

"Nick did a great job," Manager Mike Scioscia said. "He had really good stuff. The pitch count got a little bit elevated. He had to work for every out. But when he got in some trouble he made good pitches to get out. And we played good defense behind him."

With runners on the corners in the fifth, second baseman Cliff Pennington made a nice play going over the middle to get the final out.



After that, the Angels finally managed some offense. Having not so much as gotten a runner into scoring position in the first five innings against Gray, the Angels began a rally with Yunel Escobar's double into right center.

Daniel Nava then dropped a single into center, driving in Escobar.

Gray then threw a first-pitch fastball down and in to Trout, and he – surprise! – blasted it about 430 feet, well over the center-field fence. Trout swung at the lowest percentage of first pitches in the league last year, and he has said he wants to become more aggressive, to a point.

Trout also became the first player to hit three homers against Gray.

"It's a battle each and every pitch," Trout said. "Just when you get that one pitch, you can't miss it."

The Angels got an insurance run in the eighth in an unusual way.

Pujols led off with a single. Although first baseman Yonder Alonso was holding him on the bag, pitcher Liam Hendriks was totally ignoring him. Pujols, as he's prone to do when he feels the defense is giving him a base, stole second standing up.

"Still got wheels, man," Trout joked, while sitting within earshot. "You can't just not look at him. He'll get you."

Quipped Pujols: "I put my cape on."

The fact that Pujols stole a base this season before Trout proved to be more than just a humorous bit of trivia a few moments later. Andrelton Simmons' two-out single into right drove home Pujols.

It was also a good night for the Angels defense, with Pennington making a nice play on a ball up the middle to help Tropeano escape a jam in the fifth. The Angels also turned double plays in the fifth and sixth.

Relievers Fernando Salas, Jose Alvarez, Joe Smith and Huston Street collaborated on the final 12 outs.

"That's a team win," Tropeano said. "Cliff and A.P. hooking up in the fifth. Salas coming in and getting the big DP and the bullpen locking it down."

## **NBA fan Mike Trout to pay tribute to retiring Kobe Bryant, and expecting to meet Steph Curry**

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND – This will be a big week for Mike Trout and a couple NBA stars.

Trout will honor Kobe Bryant by wearing specially designed black cleats, with purple and gold accents, for pregame workouts Wednesday, the day Bryant will play his final NBA game.

“It’s cool to represent a guy who is a true ambassador to the NBA,” said Trout, who can’t wear the shoes during the game because of MLB uniform rules. “It (stinks) that he’s retiring, but he’s doing what’s good for him and his body and his family. He had a great career.”

Trout was among a handful of Angels players who met Bryant during the final week of spring training, when the Lakers were in Phoenix to play the Suns.

Trout also said he and a few of his teammates are planning to attend the Golden State Warriors practice Tuesday. Trout said he’s looking forward to meeting Warriors star Steph Curry on the eve of the Warriors going for the NBA record of 73 victories.

“It should be fun,” Trout said. “I really want to meet Curry. They are going for history. It will be pretty cool to meet them.”

## **Westminster’s Greg Mahle calls promotion to Angels ‘unbelievable’**

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND – To say Greg Mahle had been anticipating the moment he experienced on Monday would be an understatement.

“I haven’t not thought about it a day in my life,” said Mahle, who made his first appearance on a major league roster. “It’s unbelievable, of course.”

Mahle, a product of Westminster High and UC Santa Barbara, was one of the most pleasant surprises of spring training for the Angels.

He was among the last players cut before opening day, but it took just over a week for him to make his way back.

The circumstances that led to Mahle's opportunity began with Cory Rasmus throwing 55 pitches in relief on Friday. That led to the Angels optioning Cam Bedrosian – who beat out Mahle for the last spot – in favor of A.J. Achter, a reliever who could give the bullpen some multiple-inning coverage.

Two days later, when Rasmus was available again, the Angels no longer needed Achter. Option rules prevented Bedrosian from coming back, because he hadn't been down for 10 days.

So, Mahle was the next man up.

"I think Greg can give us a little length if we need it but he's a guy who can be an unconventional at-bat for a left-handed hitter," Manager Mike Scioscia said. "We'll give him a look in a multitude of roles."

Mahle, 22, is a left-hander who mostly throws over the top, but occasionally drops down to a sidearm delivery, which makes for a difficult matchup for left-handed hitters. During spring training, Mahle gave up two runs in 12 1/3 innings. As the spring wore on, Scioscia used him in more traditional lefty-specialist situations, including against major league hitters.

That helped build confidence for Mahle, who had only pitched 35 1/3 innings as high as Double-A last year.

"I didn't know if I could do it, because I hadn't faced the guys yet," Mahle said. "As confident as you can be, you don't know it till you do it. Of course, it gives me some extra confidence coming into this. I know if I go out and challenge guys I'll be successful."

The lineups...

#### **ANGELS**

Yunel Escobar 3B

Daniel Nava LF

Mike Trout CF

Albert Pujols 1B

Kole Calhoun RF

C.J. Cron DH

Andrelton Simmons SS

Carlos Perez C

Cliff Pennington 2B

#### **ATHLETICS**

Coco Crisp CF

Chris Coghlan DH

Josh Reddick RF

Danny Valencia 3B

Stephen Vogt C  
Jed Lowrie 2B  
Khris Davis LF  
Yonder Alonso 1B  
Marcus Semien SS

## **Angels Notes: Albert Pujols makes 2016 debut at first base**

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND – Albert Pujols isn't a full-time designated hitter just yet.

Pujols made his first start of the year at first base Monday, after being the Angels' DH for the first six games.

Manager Mike Scioscia said the Angels will essentially take their cues from Pujols as to when he feels he can play first. Pujols is recovering from foot surgery last November.

Pujols is a better defensive first baseman than C.J. Cron, but Scioscia has said repeatedly they don't want to have Pujols play in the field if it risks his health to the point that he couldn't hit.

"We'll evaluate him after every game and let his health take us where it takes us," Scioscia said. "We certainly don't want to push it. We're going to be conservative. He knows his body and we'll listen to how he feels."

### **SKAGGS UPDATE**

Scioscia got positive reports on Tyler Skaggs' three-inning outing on Sunday at Triple-A, his first regular-season game since undergoing Tommy John surgery in August 2014. Skaggs gave up one run and three hits.

"The first inning he was kind of feeling for some stuff but the last couple innings the reports were he was really executing his pitches well," Scioscia said. "That's probably the biggest thing Tyler needs to do, is get that repetition of repeating his pitches that will give him a chance to push his way onto our staff."

Skaggs will continue to pitch every fifth day, his next turn coming Friday. Skaggs likely needs at least four or five more starts before he could join the Angels rotation.

## **On deck: Angels at A's, Tuesday, 7 p.m.**

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

**Where:** O.co Coliseum

**TV:** Fox Sports West, 7 p.m.

**Did you know?** Mike Trout's home run Monday night was his 11th at Oakland Coliseum, most among all current Angels players.

### **THE PITCHERS**

#### **ANGELS LHP HECTOR SANTIAGO (0-0, 3.00)**

Vs. Athletics: 3-3, 3.14

At Oakland Coliseum: 1-3, 6.00

Hates to face: Josh Reddick, 5 for 13 (.385)

Loves to face: Jed Lowrie, 0 for 18

#### **ATHLETICS RHP KENDALL GRAVEMAN (0-1, 3.38)**

Vs. Angels: 0-1, 2.45

At Oakland Coliseum: 2-5, 4.10

Hates to face: Albert Pujols, 4 for 6 (.667)

Loves to face: None

*FROM ANGELS.COM*

## **Trout hits first HR of '16 to pace Angels**

By Willie Bans and Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com | 3:28 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Mike Trout crushed his first home run of the season against Sonny Gray, a two-run shot that traveled roughly 430 feet, and Nick Tropeano kept the A's scoreless in his season debut, leading the Angels to a 4-1 victory at the Coliseum on Monday night.

Tropeano, filling the rotation spot of an injured Andrew Heaney, pitched five-plus innings, scattering six hits, walking two and striking out six. The 25-year-old right-hander has allowed only one run in 17 2/3 innings in his career against the A's.

"He's a guy we're going to have to count on," Angels first baseman Albert Pujols said of Tropeano. "He came out here, no pressure, kept the ball down, and I thought his changeup was pretty amazing."

The Angels, who sported the Majors' second-lowest OPS in the season's first week, finally broke through off Gray in the sixth, getting a one-out double from Yunel Escobar and an RBI single from Daniel Nava. The next batter, Trout, made it a three-run game with a prodigious blast to left-center field.

"We were slow offensively in our first few games at home," Trout said, "but it's coming along. You just take it one at-bat at a time."

The A's, in first place in the American League West entering this series, stranded a runner on third with one out in the fifth and failed to capitalize on another opportunity in the sixth. Stephen Vogt led off with a walk against Tropeano, prompting Fernando Salas to enter. Salas then gave up a single to Jed Lowrie, but got Khris Davis to ground into a 5-4-3 double play and Yonder Alonso to line out.

The Angels' win snapped the A's three-game winning streak.

Said A's manager Bob Melvin: "It came down to they got the big hits and the opportunities and we didn't [capitalize]."

## **MOMENTS THAT MATTERED**

**Escaping trouble:** Coco Crisp hit a one-out triple off the glove of right fielder Kole Calhoun, who nearly made a sensational catch before crashing into the fence, putting the A's 90 feet away from their first run in the fifth. But Tropeano got Chris Coghlan to hit a shallow popout, then intentionally walked the left-handed-hitting Josh Reddick and got the right-handed-hitting Danny Valencia to ground out. Cliff Pennington made a slick charging play and Albert Pujols scooped his short-hop throw to end the inning.

"I felt good," Tropeano said. "I think Carlos and I had a pretty good game plan going in, and I thought I executed pretty well."

**Cruise controlled:** Gray only allowed two hits through the first 5 1/3 innings of shutout ball. Then a crushing sequence: Double. RBI single. Two-run monster homer by Trout on the first pitch.

**Big fish:** Trout hit his first home run of the season, and it was prodigious. The Angels' center fielder turned on a first-pitch fastball from Gray and crushed a line drive that bounced off the side of the bleachers that sit well above the "388" sign in left-center field for a two-run homer. It was only the second home run the Angels had hit all season. Trout is the only player in the

game with three home runs against Gray. Even more encouraging for Trout: It came on the first pitch.

"Timing was right," Trout said of jumping on the first pitch. "When I get in trouble is when I don't get that foot down. Last couple games, it's been coming back; my timing's been good. I obviously feel better at the plate."

**Almost, but not quite:** Oakland had chances. For example, in the bottom of the sixth. Behind 3-0, the A's had the tying run at the plate with no outs and runners on first and second. But Davis grounded into a double play, and Alonso flew out to left field to strand Vogt at third. Overall, Oakland went 0-for-9 with runners in scoring position until Marcus Semien's two-out RBI single in the ninth.

"We did get guys into scoring position off him, but we gotta be better than that," Vogt said of Tropeano.

## SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Six games into the season, the Angels' leader in stolen bases is none other than Pujols, who picked up his first --and the team's first -- steal by surprising Liam Hendriks and not even drawing a throw from Vogt. Pujols has 104 career stolen bases, which ranks 14th among the 27 players who have hit 500 homers. He later scored his 1,600th career run on an RBI single by Andrelton Simmons, joining Hank Aaron, Barry Bonds and Rafael Palmeiro as the only players with 550 homers, 550 doubles and 1,600 runs.

"That's the advantage that you need to take," Pujols said. "I take those. I put my cape on."

## WHAT'S NEXT

**Angels:** Hector Santiago takes the ball for the second of this three-game series on Tuesday, with first pitch set for 7:05 p.m. PT. Santiago limited the Rangers to two runs through the first six innings in his last start. He has a 3.14 ERA in 51 2/3 career innings vs. the A's.

**A's:** Right-hander Kendall Graveman takes the mound for his second start of the year. He took the loss in his season debut after allowing two runs on three hits, including a home run, in 5 1/3 innings with one walk and four strikeouts against the White Sox.

## In a pinch, Tropeano comes up big for Halos

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com | 3:11 AM ET

OAKLAND -- When Angels starter Nick Tropeano took the mound to face the A's at the Oakland Coliseum on Monday night, it marked his first regular-season start and his first time pitching in any sort of game in nine days.

It was hard to notice.

The changeup, first baseman Albert Pujols said, "was pretty amazing." The slider, catcher Carlos Perez noted, was as good as ever. He mixed that in with a 92- to 93-mph fastball and a splitter that darts down and away to opposing left-handed hitters. And he used it all to keep the A's off the board through the first five innings of the Angels' eventual 4-1 victory.

"He had command of everything," Perez, who also caught Tropeano when they were in the Astros' system together, said in Spanish. "I think his aggressiveness was great, too."

Tropeano, filling the rotation spot of an injured Andrew Heaney, scattered six hits, walked two and struck out six. He put two runners on in the second, third and fifth, but didn't let anyone score. Tropeano was noticeably tiring by the fifth, to be expected for someone who didn't pitch past four innings in Spring Training, but that's when he did his best work.

With one out and Coco Crisp at third base after a triple, Tropeano used back-to-back sliders to get Chris Coghlan to hit a shallow popup that wasn't deep enough to score the speedy center fielder. After walking the left-handed-hitting Josh Reddick, he used another slider, tailing outside the strike zone, to induce an inning-ending groundout off the bat of a right-handed-hitting Danny Valencia.

Tropeano has now allowed only one run in 17 2/3 career innings against the A's.

"My expectation was going in there and throwing a complete game," said Tropeano, who exited with 92 pitches, after a leadoff walk in the sixth. "Every time you go out there, you want to contribute to the win, help your team win. I only went five today, but I thought I did that."

Tropeano, acquired alongside Perez in the November 2014 trade that sent Hank Conger to Houston, lost out to Matt Shoemaker for the fifth spot of the Angels' rotation in Spring Training. He left Arizona having given up 11 runs in 12 2/3 innings.

But then he took the mound against the Dodgers in the Freeway Series finale in Southern California and his stuff looked sharper, helping him give up just one run in four innings and end his spring on a high note.



"I think it was just getting into that routine, that night-game routine, getting a feel," Tropeano said. "That was big for me."

Heaney is feeling good about his recovery from a tight left forearm, but he still isn't playing catch. C.J. Wilson just *started* to play catch in Arizona on Monday, and Tyler Skaggs is still only pitching three innings at a time in Triple-A. The Angels will rely on Tropeano for a while, and that may not be such a bad thing.

"To me, he's a great starter," Perez said. "I've known him for a while. I know he's a competitor. He always tries to be aggressive. He can be a great pitcher."

## Trout makes Gray, A's pay with big home run

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com | 2:05 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Sonny Gray's first pitch to Mike Trout in the sixth inning Monday came in at 93 mph, low, slightly inside and reasonably well-located, especially for the first pitch of an at-bat.

"I thought it was a good sinker," Gray said, "but it sunk a little too much and went right to his barrel."

The result in the series opener from the Coliseum between the Angels and A's, was one of the most impressive home runs of this young season. It sailed, almost on a line, beyond the "388" sign in left-center field and off the side of the bleachers that are stationed well beyond it.

It traveled roughly 430 feet, giving the Angels a three-run lead in an eventual 4-1 victory, and it went for Trout's first home run of 2016.

"Timing was right," said Trout, who finished the first week of the regular season with four hits and four walks in 25 plate appearances. "Where I get in trouble is when I don't get that foot down. Last couple games it's been coming back, my timing's been good. I feel better at the plate."

Trout has now homered three times off Gray, more than any other player in baseball. Only two others, Miguel Cabrera and Mitch Moreland, have even homered *twice* against the A's ace. Trout succeeds against basically every ace in the American League West, including the Mariners' Felix Hernandez (.354 career batting average) and the Astros' Dallas Keuchel (.323), but Gray had held him to five hits in 28 at-bats heading into this season.

"He's tough," Trout said. "It's a battle each and every pitch. It's just that one pitch you get, you can't miss it."

The pitch Trout didn't miss was the first one, and that is also significant.

Trout at times fights himself on the frequency with which he should attack first pitches. The 24-year-old center field put the first pitch in play only 26 times last year, fewer than 299 other players. He's done so only three times so far this year, but it's just enough to keep pitchers honest.

"I don't think Mike's doing anything different," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "He's jumped on first pitches before. When he feels it, he's aggressive. He put a good swing on it."

## **Angels' Heaney hopes to test flexor strain soon**

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com | April 11th, 2016

OAKLAND -- The Angels measured the strength of players' grips during Spring Training, largely to get a baseline for follow-up testing during the season. Pitcher Andrew Heaney took part in it, and he did it again recently.

The grip with his left arm, the one that is nursing the flexor strain that currently has him on the disabled list, actually got stronger.

"Working hard, feeling good," said Heaney, traveling with his teammates for this 11-day road trip that began Monday against the A's. "Hopefully I'll be throwing soon."

Heaney isn't sure when exactly "soon" will be, though. He's still six days removed from suffering the ailment, but he's encouraged by his progress. The 24-year-old left-hander has been working out with Angels' physical therapist Bernard Li, doing his normal conditioning while also taking part in an assortment of range-of-motion tests and weighted-ball drills.

Heaney is probably still at least another week from playing catch, but at this point, early as it might be, he doesn't seem to think this will be an injury that will knock him out for very long.

"I want to push it, but within the confines of what they say is safe," Heaney said. "From there, we'll move forward."

Worth noting

- Albert Pujols, now five months removed from surgery to his right foot, started his first regular-season game at first base on Monday, a position he played only twice over the course of Spring Training. Manager Mike Scioscia stated that Pujols' starts at first base will be decided on a day-by-day basis, saying: "We certainly don't want to push it; we're going to be conservative. But he knows his body. We'll listen to how he feels."

- Scioscia on Tyler Skaggs, who pitched three innings of one-run ball for Triple-A Salt Lake on Sunday: "First inning, he was kind of feeling for some stuff. But the last couple of innings, the reports were he was really executing his pitches well. That's the biggest thing Tyler needs to do, get that repetition and repeat his pitches. That will give him a chance to push his way onto our staff." Skaggs will start again Friday, going three to four innings.

## **Dream come true: Mahle joins Angels**

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com | April 11th, 2016

OAKLAND -- Greg Mahle began to play baseball at around the age of 5 and never much considered doing anything else.

Being here, in the Major Leagues?

"I haven't not thought about it a day in my life," Mahle said. "It's unbelievable, of course."

The Angels made Mahle's lifelong dream come true on Monday, adding the 22-year-old lefty to their bullpen for the start of an 11-day road trip. Mahle takes the place of fellow reliever A.J. Achter, barely a week after losing out to Cam Bedrosian for the final bullpen spot on the Opening Day roster.

Ranked 12th in the Angels' system by MLB Pipeline.com, Mahle pitches from two different arm slots -- three-quarters and sidearm -- and commands three pitches, a fastball that can reach the mid-90s, a slider thrown with varying velocities and a solid changeup. The Angels love his moxie, his deception, and the way he profiles against left-handed hitters, of which the A's have plenty.

Mahle, the eighth player from the 2014 Draft to reach the Majors, pitched to a 3.26 ERA, a 1.28 WHIP and a 4.79 strikeout-to-walk ratio for Class A Advanced Inland Empire and Double-A Arkansas last year.

The Angels then invited Mahle to Spring Training for an up-close look, and he very nearly won a spot on their team.

"It gives me extra confidence coming in," Mahle said of succeeding against Major League competition throughout March. "I know that if I go out and challenge guys, I'll be successful."

Mahle was given the news on Sunday, after a day game for the Triple-A Salt Lake Bees. He had gone three days without being used, so Mahle figured something may be up. But he left to his apartment that day without being told anything.

Then he got a phone call from an unrecognized number, returned to the ballpark and went into manager Keith Johnson's office, who asked Mahle if he watched the Angels game on Sunday.

When Mahle said yes, Johnson told him, "You're going to get to see them up close in Oakland."

His first call went to his father, also named Greg. Mahle didn't just think about playing in the big leagues; he thought about how he would tell his Dad when that day finally came. And like most of this stuff, it didn't turn out quite so smoothly.

"Hey," Mahle told his dad, "can you get a ticket to Oakland?"

The elder Greg was confused.

"What?"

"I got the call," Mahle said.

Silence.

"What do you mean?"

"He's just, like, super confused," Mahle recalled. "I had to spell it out for him."

Mahle's mom cried instantly. Eventually, his dad got it, too. And later, after it all set in, they spent the night talking on the phone. Mahle's parents were able to make the trip to Oakland, as did his aunt, his uncle, his cousin and his agent. His mom brought him a suit, because the Angels have a strict dress code on travel days and Mahle didn't really pack for that sort of thing.

"I can't wait," Mahle said -- regarding the baseball games, not the formal attire. "I can't wait."

Mahle attended Westminster High School, just east of Huntington Beach, then went to UC Santa Barbara, ultimately getting drafted in the 15th round. He grew up a Dodgers fan, rooting for Shawn Green and Eric Gagne and, until this Major League Baseball thing began to feel real, Andre Ethier.

"Playing in front of the fans, playing the game that you love as a job," Mahle said of what he imagined about being a big leaguer. "Watching the playoffs, that pressure -- I can't wait for that."

## **Santiago looks to continue fast start vs. A's**

By Willie Bans / Special to MLB.com | 1:52 AM ET

A's pitcher Kendall Graveman is looking to halt a six-game losing streak dating back to last year when he faces the Angels on Tuesday at the Oakland Coliseum.

Graveman's streak is the longest losing streak by an Oakland starter since Tyson Ross' eight-gamer in 2012. No Angel player has more than six plate appearances against Graveman. Angels starter Hector Santiago is 3-3 with a 3.14 ERA in 11 career games (nine starts) against the A's. He had 4.95 ERA in four starts against the A's last year.

### **Three Things to Know**

- Billy Burns is scheduled to spell Coco Crisp at the leadoff and center field spots on Tuesday, A's manager Bob Melvin said. The two rotate and going into Monday's game Crisp has started three consecutive games. Melvin will try to keep Crisp fresh considering his past neck injuries. "Early on [in the season], three in a row I think's enough," Melvin said.
- Santiago is coming off a really solid start, holding the Rangers to three runs [two earned] on four hits and two walks in six-plus innings, striking out seven. His fastball was 93-94 mph, a couple of ticks harder than where it has been the last couple of years.
- Graveman took the loss in his season debut Thursday after allowing two runs on three hits, including a home run, in 5 1/3 innings with one walk and four strikeouts against the White Sox.

### *FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS*

## **Trout hits first home run of 2016 to lift Angels past A's**

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Los Angeles Angels slugger Mike Trout waited out Sonny Gray just long enough for the Oakland ace to make his one mistake of the night.

When Gray's sinker in the sixth dropped over the plate, Trout did what he's done so many times to the Athletics.

Trout hit his first home run of the season, Nick Tropeano pitched five scoreless innings in his season debut and the Angels beat the A's 4-1 on Monday night.

"We pitched well tonight and held on," Los Angeles manager Mike Scioscia said. "When (Trout) feels it, he's aggressive. He put a good swing on it."

Trout struck out looking twice but homered on the first pitch he saw from Gray in the sixth, a towering two-run shot that ricocheted off the right side of the bleachers just below the luxury suites in left-center field.

"He had thrown a lot of fastballs and was working in and out," Trout said. "If you get a pitch to hit, you can't miss it especially against him. He can throw all his pitches for strikes. If you miss that one pitch, you put yourself in a hole."

Trout's home run was the 140th of his career and the 17th against the A's.

Daniel Nava and C.J. Cron added RBI singles to help the Angels win their second straight following a 1-4 start.

Gray (1-1) was sharp in his second outing but lost for just the second time in 12 April starts. He allowed three runs over 6 1/3 innings, struck out six and walked three.

"It was three pitches and they got three runs," Gray said. "Trout was the dagger for us. When I threw it, I thought it was a good sinker, but it sunk a little too much and went right to his barrel."

Tropeano (1-0) was just a little better.

Called up from Triple-A Salt Lake City last week after the Angels placed Andrew Heaney on the disabled list, Tropeano gave up six hits in five-plus innings. He struck out six, walked two and pitched out of two-on, two-out jams three times while stopping the A's three-game winning streak.

"Just making pitches when I had to and big plays from the defense," Tropeano said.

Huston Street retired one batter for his second save.

Marcus Semien singled in Oakland's lone run in the ninth.

#### PUJOLS FIRST AT FIRST

Albert Pujols went 1 for 3 and collected his first stolen base of the season. He also looked just fine in his first appearance at first base after being the Angels' designated hitter in the first six games of the season. Scioscia said the team will continue to monitor the 10-time All-Star closely after Pujols had right foot surgery in November. "He knows his body better than us guessing it," Scioscia said.

#### DOUBRONT DONE

Felix Doubront, projected to be Oakland's No. 5 starter, will have Tommy John surgery Tuesday to repair a torn elbow ligament. "Felix made his mark here and I think he found a home for himself based on what he did last year, the versatility he brings us in any particular role we put him in," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "I feel bad for him."

#### UTILITY MAN

Chris Coghlan was Oakland's DH, his fifth straight start at a different position. Coghlan started at second base, right field, left field and third base in his previous four games.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Angels: Scioscia is encouraged by the progress of pitcher Tyler Skaggs, though it could be some time before the left-hander is back in the majors. Skaggs gave up one run over three innings of a minor league start Sunday. He had Tommy John surgery in 2014. ... LHP Greg Mahle was recalled from Salt Lake City. RHP A.J. Achter was optioned down to make room.

Athletics: Coco Crisp made his third consecutive start in center but is likely to rest Tuesday. Crisp played in only 44 games in 2015 due to neck issues.

#### UP NEXT

Angels: LHP Hector Santiago (0-0) faces the A's in the second game of the series Tuesday night. Santiago has a 3.14 ERA in 11 games against Oakland.

Athletics: RHP Kendall Graveman (0-1) pitches against Los Angeles hoping to end a six-game losing streak -- longest by an Oakland pitcher since 2012.