



Clips

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*FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES***Giant love for Tim Lincecum on the eve of his Angels debut**

Bill Shaikin

The best views in baseball are the ones at AT&T Park. On a clear day, you can look beyond the outfield and across San Francisco Bay, with the Oakland Coliseum in your sights.

The San Francisco Giants will extend their hearts across the Bay on Saturday. Tim Lincecum, whose artistry on the mound and happy-go-lucky personality off it helped launch the most treasured era in this city's baseball history, is set to take the mound in Oakland.

For the first time in a major league career that started in 2007, Lincecum will not pitch for the Giants. He will start for the Angels, but his biggest fans will be the ones in his old clubhouse.

"We'll all be pulling for him," Giants Manager Bruce Bochy said.

In his first two full seasons, Lincecum won the National League Cy Young Award. In 2010, as the Giants won the World Series championship for the first time since moving to San Francisco in 1958, Lincecum struck out 14 in the playoff opener, then won the first and last games of the World Series.

He is a four-time all-star and three-time NL strikeout champion. Juan Marichal and Gaylord Perry — both Hall of Famers — are the only pitchers to win more games for San Francisco.

"At some level, we're all fans," Giants General Manager Bobby Evans said. "You want to see the great stories evolve. There's something special about him; the impact he had here, the impact he had on all of us — in the clubhouse, in the organization, in the fan base.

"It's going to be exciting to see him on the hill."

That, of course, raises the question of why Lincecum is not on the hill for the Giants. There is no team in the major leagues that trusts its veterans more — and spends millions to retain them.

The Giants' fourth and fifth starters, Matt Cain and Jake Peavy, each has an earned-run average above 5.00. When Lincecum solicited contract offers last month, the Giants did not make one, sparking conjecture about whether he still could succeed at the major league level if the team that knew him best did not want him.

"I think that's a little reach," Evans said.

Evans said he respected Lincecum for completing a methodical rehabilitation from hip surgery rather than rushing to try to win a job in spring training. However, by the time Lincecum was

ready to sign, Evans said the Giants were committed to Cain and Peavy, and to giving those pitchers the time they needed to right themselves.

Peavy has a 3.42 ERA in his last five starts. Cain has a 2.39 ERA in his last five starts, although the Giants put him on the disabled list this week because of a strained hamstring.

Lincecum had made clear — to every team, not just the Giants — that he wanted to start. The Giants would have welcomed him back as a reliever, but the focus for Lincecum this season is establishing that he still has the ability to start so that he can prosper in a weak free-agent market this winter.

“This isn’t just about this year for him,” Evans said. “It’s about next year, and the years after.

“I didn’t want him to come here under the guise of a chance to be one of our starters.”

The Angels, with five starters on the disabled list, have a rotation spot available for Lincecum. They do not appear poised to contend this season, so they might be able to be more patient if he struggles.

Lincecum, 32, is set to make his first major league start since June 27, 2015. He has rated as a below-average pitcher — according to the OPS+ statistic — in each of the last four seasons.

“When your body changes and is hurt and you need surgery, it starts to change things,” Peavy said. “You’re trying to push through. You change your mechanics. You’re trying to figure out things. Tim fought that for as long as he could before giving in and having to get fixed.

“In talking to Tim, he feels good, as good as he can. If nothing else, he’s going to have the best chance possible going forward. I can’t promise any results. But I’d take him if he’s healthy.”

Bochy said he has exchanged text messages with Lincecum.

“It’s nice to see him pitching again,” Bochy said. “It’s been a long road for him.”

Lincecum posted a 4.13 ERA in 15 starts for the Giants last year. Before his last two starts — and his decision to shut down and submit to surgery — he had a 3.31 ERA.

Bochy said he expects Lincecum to look “close to what he was with us. He’s a tough pitcher with good stuff. He’s going to give his team a chance to win.”

Ron Wotus, the Giants’ longtime bench coach, talked about the “free spirit” who loved to roam the San Francisco clubhouse, headphones on, smiling and singing. He said Lincecum could find motivation in falling down and out in San Francisco, then trying to get up with the Angels.

“Now you get a fresh start with a new organization,” Wotus said.

"I think it's a good shot for them, to see if they can catch lightning in a bottle. If he's healthy, he definitely has the stuff. He's probably matured quite a bit. He's lived a little bit now. For any player, sometimes that's refreshing."

FROM THE OC REGISTER

Angels pitching coach Charlie Nagy has earned respect of pitchers while dealing with injuries

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND - Huston Street has tried to put himself in Charlie Nagy's shoes, and he doesn't like how they feel.

"Dude," Street said he told Nagy, "if I were you, I'd be losing my mind."

The Angels closer has empathy for his first-year pitching coach because of what he's had to endure.

When Nagy, 49, began spring training, he had a corps of eight major league starters and a bullpen with two accomplished relievers at the end.

Now, five of those starters are hurt, and each of the top two relievers, including Street, has been on the disabled list. Among the other pitchers, just about all of them have had at least some periods of ineffectiveness.

"You come to a brand new team and there are so many injuries, so many new faces," Street continued. "And as a staff, we are underperforming for our talent."

Nagy, a former All-Star pitcher on his second big league pitching coach gig, just shrugs his shoulders when asked about the injuries.

"It is what it is," he said. "It's just part of the game. You have to take the good with the bad. Just ride the wave sometimes."

That attitude has made Street and the other pitchers a fan of Nagy in their first four months with him.

"You get to learn so much more about a coach in seasons like this," Street said. "Everybody loves everybody when everything is going perfect, but when someone maintains their sense of

self and doesn't overreact. ... He's the exact same guy at the start of spring training as he is today, and that's what you always ask for."

Jered Weaver, who first worked with Nagy in 2006 when Nagy was the Angels' Triple-A pitching coach, also endorsed him.

"He's great," Weaver said. "He's got a lot of insight. He's definitely more laid back than (Mike Butcher) was. He's a guy who had a lot of experience and was a great pitcher in his own right. Anytime you can get some feedback from a guy like that is great."

Matt Shoemaker gave Nagy some of the credit for his dramatic season turnaround. Shoemaker had an 8.49 ERA through his first seven starts, but he has a 1.88 mark through his past five.

"I enjoy him," said Shoemaker, who will open the Angels' series at Oakland on Friday. "He's a very personable guy, easy to talk to, knowledgeable. ... Sometimes you need other people to get you to key on mental things."

Despite those flowery opinions of Nagy, he is responsible for a pitching staff that so far has failed to deliver.

The main reason the Angels are fighting to stay out of the American League West cellar is a pitching staff that has a 4.47 ERA, which ranks 13th in the league. The starters' 4.82 ERA ranks 12th.

Obviously, injuries have played a huge role in both those numbers. Garrett Richards and Andrew Heaney, who started the first two games of the season, are both out indefinitely. They started a combined seven games before they were hurt. C.J. Wilson and Tyler Skaggs, who each figured prominently in the rotation plans, haven't pitched a major league inning yet.

The unavoidable question is whether Nagy's program had anything to do with the injuries. The obvious answer, to a couple of the pitchers, is no.

"I think it's just an unfortunate coincidence," Shoemaker said. "Stuff was pretty much run the same as it has been as long as I've been here. Very similar if not exactly the same."

Added Street, who was on the disabled list because of a strained oblique: "I think the injuries are just circumstantial."

Nagy said he – nor the Angels as an organization – could not have done anything differently to avoid these injuries.

"We haven't done anything out of the ordinary, not anything that other teams haven't done as far as preparing guys or getting guys ready to go," he said. "It's just one of those things. We've been hit by the injury bug this year. You can't really explain it."

As for the performance of the pitchers who have remained, that's been a mixed bag. Nick Tropeano has certainly exceeded expectations. Cam Bedrosian is having his best extended stretch of work in the majors. Santiago and Shoemaker have hit both ends of the spectrum. Weaver has also been up and down. Starter Jhoulys Chacin and relievers Fernando Salas, Jose Alvarez, Mike Morin, Joe Smith and Street have all pitched about to expectations, other than Smith's issues when pitching hurt.

"I think as a pitching staff we should be better than we're pitching, but that's on us as players," Street said. "I put that 100 percent on the players, as always. The coaches are there to give you the feedback and not let you feel sorry for yourself and keep you moving forward."

By all accounts, Nagy has done that. The pitchers say he's gotten to know them, and learned how to communicate and push the right buttons with each.

"Anytime you come into a new environment, you have to figure out how to talk to people and how not to talk to people," Weaver said. "He's done well with that. It's always good talking to him. He's got a lot of experience. He's a great guy to talk to."

On deck: Angels at A's, Friday, 6:30 p.m.

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

Where: Oakland Coliseum

TV: Fox Sports West

Did you know? The Angels have won 20 of their past 27 games against the A's.

THE PITCHERS

ANGELS RHP MATT SHOEMAKER (3-7, 4.76)

Vs. A's: 3-2, 3.96

At Oakland Coliseum: 2-0, 3.57

Hates to face: Marcus Semien, 5 for 13 (.385)

Loves to face: Stephen Vogt, 3 for 18 (.167)

A'S RHP KENDALL GRAVEMAN (2-6, 5.28)

Vs. Angels: 0-1, 2.12

At Oakland Coliseum: 3-7, 3.90

Hates to face: Albert Pujols, 4 for 8 (.500)

Loves to face: Johnny Giavotella, 0 for 6 (.000)

UPCOMING GAMES

Saturday – Angels RHP Tim Lincecum (7-4, 4.13 in 2015) vs. A's TBA, 1 p.m., Fox Sports West

Sunday – Angels RHP Jered Weaver (5-6, 5.71) vs. A's LHP Eric Surkamp (0-4, 8.07), 1 p.m., Fox Sports West

FROM ANGELS.COM

Lincecum ready to show world he is back

After long road back from hip surgery, former Cy Young Award winner hopes to help Angels

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com

Chris Lincecum met his son at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport on Jan. 25. He thought he'd stay for five or six weeks, tops, but it wound up being 18. Tim Lincecum was nearly five months removed from hip surgery and was ready to resume throwing. So he called on Chris, the man who constructed and groomed his distinctive delivery, and their work ensued throughout the state of Arizona.

It was there -- at a softball park on school days and a high school football field on weekends; at a community-college soccer field on some mornings and a substandard Minor League mound on others -- that Lincecum tapped into who he was and began to establish who he was going to be.

By May 20, the two-time National League Cy Young Award winner, three-time World Series champion and four-time All-Star had signed a pro-rated, incentive-laden \$2.5 million contract with the Angels.

And now, at last, Lincecum's moment has come.

He is expected to make his highly-anticipated season debut on Saturday, against the A's in Oakland, a five-mile bridge away from the city where Lincecum will forever be exalted.

The hip?

"That hip is perfect," Chris Lincecum said. "He'll be dead before that hip goes bad."

Lincecum's career appeared dead, or perhaps on life support, by the middle of last summer.

Prolonged stiffness in Lincecum's left hip had restricted the range of motion in his violent delivery, forcing the right-hander's body to drift toward the first-base side and putting unnatural stress on his arm. His ERA had gone from 2.81 in 2008-11 to 4.68 from 2012-15, a four-year stretch in which Lincecum's strikeout rate and fastball velocity steadily declined.

Lincecum had a 3.31 ERA by the time he finished his June 16 start with the Giants last season, but he was charged with five runs in 1 1/3 innings on June 21 and exited his June 27 outing after taking a line drive to his right forearm in the second inning.

He spent the next two months shut down with a hip injury, then finally relented to surgery on Sept. 3.

At the Steadman Clinic in Vail, Colo., that day, Dr. Marc Philippon repaired a torn labrum, shaved a bone buildup to alleviate impingement in his socket and gave Lincecum a rehab timeline of about five months.

Chris believes the surgery "saved him from further injury" to his arm.

The throwing program that followed played out methodically.

It began with long toss, then firmer throws from a short distance, then flat-ground work from 60 feet away, then bullpen sessions. Lincecum threw off a mound every five days in the five or so weeks leading up to his May 6 showcase, most of the work coming in the back fields of the Giants' Spring Training complex and some of it exceeding 90 pitches.

He threw only 41 of them in front of dozens of scouts and media members in Scottsdale, Ariz., but that was enough for the Angels, who had a desperate need in their rotation and fulfilled Lincecum's desire to remain on the West coast.

In his first four weeks with the organization, Lincecum has struck Angels general manager Billy Eppler as something of a low-maintenance perfectionist.

"His ego is of the common-man standard," Eppler said. "It's not an elevated ego. He's just very real, very honest."

Eppler noticed that on the afternoon of June 7, after Lincecum completed his second rehab start for Triple-A Salt Lake. The Angels believed he might be ready to take the ball for their Major League team in five days, but Lincecum asked Eppler for one more start. His off-speed pitches felt good, but he wasn't precise with his fastball location and was still having trouble finding his rhythm in the early innings.

So Lincecum took the ball for the Bees once again this past Sunday and twirled seven innings of one-hit ball, walking one, striking out eight and throwing his fastball 88 to 91 mph, which has basically been his range for most of the spring.

"I think he's going to be able to come in here and contribute," Eppler said when asked for his expectations of Lincecum. "He's going to be able to locate his secondary stuff, locate his fastball. He's going to get them with moxie and some deception and pitchability."

Mike Morin was called up from Triple-A nine days ago and raved about the way Lincecum immersed himself into a Minor League setting. Morin, a non-closing reliever with less than two years of service time, introduced himself one day. And on the next, Lincecum walked by and said, "Hey Mike, how's it going?"

Morin called him "unbelievably personable."

"Just seeing him interact, he was seriously one of the guys, which made it that cool," Morin said. "What a cool thing when you're in the Triple-A locker room and you have a guy who's done everything that he's done, and he's there, and he's just literally enjoying being there. It didn't matter. He was just friendly, to everyone."

Lincecum, who turned 32 on Wednesday, is the only pitcher to capture a Cy Young Award in each of his first two full seasons. He vaulted the Giants to their first championship since moving to San Francisco in 1958, winning the first and last game of the 2010 World Series. He's thrown two no-hitters, in his lean years, and has led the NL in strikeouts three times.

But he is also universally beloved, because he did it all with a scrawny build and because he is as intelligent as he is endearing. Chris -- biased on the subject, of course -- called Tim "the best team guy I've ever known. Ever. In anything."

But all that matters now is how he'll pitch.

"He'll have good games and bad games, just like everybody does," said Chris, who finally left Arizona on May 31, aboard a private jet arranged by his son. "Hopefully it starts off good, because so far it has."

Dad's support helps Shoemaker through adversity

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- David Shoemaker has a pretty good feel for his son by now. He knows not to call immediately after the bad starts, and he knows to offer up only encouragement on the days that he does. That happened a lot through the first six weeks of this season, a stretch that included some time with the Angels' Triple-A affiliate and finished with Matt Shoemaker's ERA at 8.49.

Now that the struggles have passed and Matt has put together a five-start stretch in line with some of the greatest in recent memory, David keeps thinking back to something his son told him towards the end of those dark times: "Dad, the thing that's most frustrating is that I don't think I'm that far away," Matt said. "I really don't think I'm that far off."

Inside, David's heart was breaking. But on the outside, he consoled and assured. David continued to watch Matt's starts from the recliner of his Trenton, Mich., living room with nervous anxiety. But suddenly David began to see the action of Matt's splitter return. He saw his sequencing change, he saw more conviction with each pitch, and finally, he began to see the results Matt anticipated.

Entering his Friday start in Oakland, Matt has been charged with only eight runs over his past 38 1/3 innings, a stretch in which he has struck out 48 batters, and somehow managed to issue only one walk. He previously struck out 49 batters between walks, tied for the third-longest stretch in the Majors since 1974.

"Now are the times when you just want to go back and pinch yourself, and just enjoy it to the max," David said in a phone conversation. "He just couldn't seem to get over the hump. I don't know if he just really made a new concerted effort to just really bust his butt on every pitch or what, but something went on to change everything, that's for sure."

David, a devout Christian who has passed his faith on to his children, has been there everywhere baseball has taken Matt. He drove hundreds of miles in the summer so his son could play in showcases as a teenager, put a hand on his shoulder when he went undrafted in 2008, stuck by his side as he trudged through the Minor Leagues, and rode the elation of Matt's breakthrough 2014 season.

Matt said David "pushed me like no other."

David coached Matt from T-ball to travel ball at age 12. That year, his team played more than 80 games in three months, traveling throughout the Midwest to squeeze in as much baseball as possible while the weather was warm.

"He was extremely instrumental in my development, my love for the game, and more importantly, the way he pushed me," said Matt, who also played basketball and football in high school. "He pushed me to be great. Not just in baseball, but in life. The biggest thing was the work ethic. He worked his butt off to provide for us as kids. And all of his vacation time was for us, going to play in tournaments."

Matt, 29, is now a father in his own right. His wife, Danielle, gave birth to a boy in January 2015, and she is due with a girl this October. Growing up, David recalls how Matt would get 96 percent on a test and negotiate with teachers for the extra four points. He wanted to be great at everything he did, which is why David was never surprised that Matt beat the odds to reach the Major Leagues.

But David believes being a father has given Matt an extra edge.

"I think he realizes how important his job and his career is, and he wants to provide for his family," David said. "He knows that this is not a career that you're going to do until you're 60 years old, so he's got to make the most of it while he can. I think that really drives him now."

David was uncommonly anxious as he watched his son pitch earlier this season. His stomach would turn, his heart would sink, and so he would pray. David spent a lot of time in prayer during those first six weeks, while Matt gave up almost as many runs as he threw innings, and began to lose grip on the Major League job he worked so hard to attain.

Right around that time, Matt tweeted:

@MattShoe52: Whoever has a voodoo curse on me, please reverse it now, thank you.

And then suddenly he began to dominate again.

"Lately, since he's been on this run and everything's going so well, I'm afraid to get out of the chair," David said, laughing. "I guess it's crazy, because I've always said I'm not superstitious, but I find myself not moving."

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Glove at first sight: Major leaguers recall getting their first mitts

Jim Caple
ESPN Senior Writer

Former United States poet laureate Donald Hall wrote that baseball is "fathers and sons playing catch." Of course, to play catch with fathers (and mothers), the sons (and daughters) must first have baseball gloves. And those first gloves can last a long time, if not always on the players' hands, then certainly in their memories.

Arizona Diamondbacks bullpen coach Garvin Alston is 44 years old but still vividly remembers the first baseball glove his father gave to him at age 7. It was a used, brown Rawlings glove with Dave Winfield's signature on the leather that his father found while working as a janitor for the White Plains Housing Authority in New York.

"My dad brought it home, cleaned it up, took the strings out and showed me how to restring it," Alston says. "He put the oil in it, two baseballs in it, tied it up and told me, 'Don't touch it for a few days.' I asked why, and he said we had to form it again. ... And I kept that glove *forever*. I used it until I went to college. I played shortstop and center field with it, pitched with it. That was my glove.

"At the time my dad couldn't afford a new glove, so I used it."

As parents will tell you, first gloves can definitely be expensive.

"Mine came with a special price tag, so my dad wanted to make sure I understood the value of it and how to take care of it," Kansas City Royals pitcher Chris Young says. "That lasted me through high school. I just know that my dad was apprehensive about buying it for me, but he was willing to do so as long as I was willing to take care of it. ... He wanted us to appreciate the value of the dollar. There are no freebies in life. You've got to work for it.

"That was my first real, special glove and I cherished it."

Regardless of the price, first gloves are valuable. That's how Seattle Mariners second baseman Robinson Cano considers the one he received from his father, Jose, who pitched briefly in the majors.

"You always want to follow your dad's footsteps, so I was so happy to have one of my dad's gloves," Cano says. "It was pretty amazing. You can go around and maybe be the only kid with a good glove and be able to play."

Not that a first glove a father gives is always perfect -- or worth keeping. Tampa Bay Rays shortstop Brad Miller says the first one he received from his dad was a Kirby Puckett model. That was great except for one thing: The glove was for left-handers and Miller is right-handed.

"He thought I was going to throw lefty. And then I would put it on my left hand and throw right-handed," Miller says. "And then he had to get me a new glove."

San Francisco Giants left-handed reliever Javier Lopez hopes that won't be a problem with his son. Lopez still has his first glove and takes good care of it, occasionally changing the laces to keep it in good shape.

Says Lopez: "It's holding up nicely and hopefully my son [can use it]. Right now he is left-handed and that might change because he's only 3 -- but if he gets to that point, I'll get him to use my glove."

Or perhaps he should take the approach Chris Lincecum took with his son. Tim Lincecum had left- *and* right-handed gloves as a child, he says, "Because my dad didn't know what I was going to be when I was growing up. I don't know when I decided I was going to be a righty. I kind of made a mistake there."

Yeah, big mistake. After all, Lincecum won only two Cy Youngs and tossed just two no-hitters throwing right-handed.

Now, while we may be near Father's Day, not every player receives that first glove from a dad. Many receive it from a mom.

Buster Posey's first glove was the one his mother used playing softball. It was an old Bobby Bonds model but you could still see his signature on the leather. Posey says he was around 5 years old and used it while playing T-ball and peewee ball. He still has it.

"It's a cool piece to have in the family," the Giants catcher says, "and I still think it would be neat if my kids used it when they start playing."

Rays third baseman Evan Longoria says his mother got several gloves for him, but he also wound up losing them. Or they were stolen.

"I used to get reamed for that," he says. "We didn't have a whole lot of money and growing up, she would buy me nice gloves and put name and phone number on it, but nobody would ever call if they stole it."

No matter who they come from, gloves are always special.

Los Angeles Angels reliever Huston Street says he has used five gloves in his life, the first of which was a blue Mizuno he keeps on his top shelf. He has used just two gloves during his big league career. He warms up with one of them, and pitches in games with the other.

Asked how he has maintained using that one glove his entire big league career, Street says that he won the American League Rookie of the Year award with it in 2005, "so why would I ever change?"

Those gloves are so important to Street that he always makes certain they are safe. Or nearly always.

"I got nervous [one] night because I left my glove in the front seat of my car when I valeted it. And I was like, 'Someone might take that glove!' It would be like a piece of me being gone," he says. "My gloves are special. When I go home and I fly commercial rather than the team plane, the gloves fly with me -- they fly on my person."

As special as gloves are, Chicago Cubs catcher David Ross says the first one should be an old one.

"To give a young kid a new glove is actually kind of counterproductive," Ross says. "To give them an older, used mitt helps because the key is to let the ball stick in the glove and they build confidence off that, rather than a new glove where the ball always pops out."

Ross says his first baseball glove was a used Rawlings catcher's mitt that his father found in a park. And now that Ross is a father, the gloves he gives to his children evoke sweet memories.

"Now I have kids, and am buying them their first gloves, I want to make it memorable," Ross said. "I've done all kinds of things for my son, as far as putting his name on his glove. I bought him a catcher's glove at Play It Again Sports, a Mizuno glove that was already broken in really nice.

"Now that I've done that, it makes me reflect on the glove that my dad found and ended up being my glove for a long time. It takes me back to Little League is what it does. It takes me back to the memories of learning how to catch and just the purity of the game.

"Back then you didn't care what kind of leather it was, you were just happy to have a glove."

FROM FOX SPORTS

Angels-Athletics Preview

Stats LLC

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Oakland Athletics have scheduled a fireworks show following their series opener against the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim on Friday night.

Given the recent forms of Angels right-hander Matt Shoemaker and A's righty Kendall Graveman, the show might start earlier than planned.

As the San Francisco Bay Area awaits the return of Tim Lincecum as the Angels' starter Saturday, the series opener figures to serve as virtual batting practice for the California rivals.

First off, both teams come in swinging the bats well.

The Angels totaled 19 runs in winning two of three from the Minnesota Twins earlier this week, a series that they capped with a 10-2 romp.

The A's, meanwhile, were nearly no-hit by Texas Rangers right-hander Colby Lewis on Thursday afternoon. But they'd crushed the ball in their previous four games, totaling 31 runs on 50 hits.

Then there's Friday's scheduled pitchers.

Shoemaker has struggled on the road since April 30, having been lit up for 23 hits and 14 runs in 15 innings.

His most recent road start was the most encouraging of the three. He pitched into the eighth inning on June 6 against the New York Yankees, limiting them to four runs mostly on the strength of a no-walk effort.

He did, however, allow two home runs among eight hits, the fifth and sixth homers he's allowed in his five road starts.

Shoemaker rebounded from that to throw eight shutout innings on Saturday against the Cleveland Indians. But that was at home, where his ERA (4.43) is significantly better than his road mark (5.27).

Even last weekend's effort didn't turn out well for Shoemaker. He left with a 3-0 lead, only to see Angels closer Huston Street blow it in the top of the ninth.

The Angels rallied to win it in the bottom of the ninth, but everyone left the stadium feeling the club owed its starting pitcher more than just a team win.

"That's a shame for Matt," Angels manager Mike Scioscia told reporters after the game. "You can't pitch a better ballgame."

Added Street: "I feel bad for Matt Shoemaker. He's the one who deserved to win."

It was an all-around bad night for the right-hander, whose streak of 49 consecutive strikeouts without issuing a walk ended in the seventh inning.

Shoemaker has won twice on the road this season, including 5-1 at Oakland on April 13. That was so long ago, he actually walked three in the game, the same number he's issued in his last six starts combined.

The A's counter with Graveman, who's been less-than-stellar no matter where he's pitched this season.

His last five outings have been especially generous to the opponent, having allowed 35 hits and 11 walks in 24 1/3 innings.

Like Shoemaker, Graveman can look back on an April start against the Angels for inspiration. He held the Angels to one run on four hits over six innings on April 12 in a game the A's went on to lose 5-4.

The thought of Shoemaker-Graveman wasn't nearly as exciting to A's manager Bob Melvin on Thursday as Lincecum's pending season debut.

"That'll be kind of cool," the former Arizona Diamondbacks manager said, fast-forwarding to Saturday. "When he was in his prime, he was one of those guys when you saw the probables coming up, you'd prefer not to be one of them. He's quite a show."

FROM CBS SPORTS

Mike Trout may be the best player in MLB, but the Angels' future may be the worst

Despite having a once-in-a-generation talent, the Angels have too many things working against them

Jonah Keri

From 2012 through 2015, Mike Trout was the best player in baseball.

There are those that would argue that Bryce Harper might've now caught up with or even surpassed him for that title. Or that upstarts like Manny Machado might be getting close. Whatever the case, Trout certainly warrants a place on the Mount Rushmore of active ballplayers, a toolbelt terror who helps his team in too many ways to count.

Yet despite another terrific season for their best player, the Angels are in dire shape. Even after winning two straight against the sad-sack Twins, they've still lost seven of their past 10 games. They own the third-worst record in the American League. At 29-37, they're on pace for their worst season since 1999, the final year before Mike Scioscia, and a season that ended with a young go-getter named Joe Maddon managing the final 29 games. And there's not a damn thing that any one player can do ... even if that player is the best in the game.

The problems start with the rotation. C.J. Wilson started the season on the disabled list with shoulder tendinitis, hasn't pitched a game all year, and doesn't look likely to return any time soon. Andrew Heaney made one start, hit the DL with a flexor strained and a damaged ulnar collateral ligament, hasn't pitched since, and doesn't look likely to return any time soon. Nick Tropeano hit the DL June 3 with shoulder discomfort. He might return soon, but he isn't particularly good, having given up 58 hits, 28 walks, and eight homers in 55 1/3 innings before going on the shelf. The biggest blow came in May. Garrett Richards left his May 1 start with what the Angels believed was simple cramping and dehydration. Five days later, they found the real culprit: a torn UCL. Like Heaney, Richards chose to forego Tommy John surgery and try other methods to heal, opting for a platelet-rich plasma injection.

Any team losing four of its starting pitchers would likely be in a tough spot. But the Angels' alternatives are particularly bad. Hector Santiago owns a 5.30 ERA. Jhoulys Chacin was a Hail Mary pickup from the Braves who doesn't miss enough bats to succeed. And while Matt Shoemaker has pitched impressively of late, he's more than negated by Jered Weaver. How bad has it gotten for the Angels' erstwhile ace? This bad:

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Jered Weaver average fastball velocity: 82.7 MPH

Noah Syndergaard average curveball velocity: 82.4 MPH

The Angels' great hope, at this point, lies with Tim Lincecum. In 17 innings at Triple-A Salt Lake City, Lincecum posted a 2.65 ERA, showing excellent command. But that solid cameo obscured Lincecum's long-running downtrend, one that has seen his strikeout and walk rates deteriorate for the past several years, and his fastball velocity tumble from 93 mph in 2011 to below 89 last year. If things break right, Lincecum becomes a useful stopgap -- but it's highly unlikely he can

save what's been the third-worst rotation in the American League, by both park-adjusted ERA, and fielding independent pitching.

Neither the starting pitching problem, nor the team's other issues, qualify as temporary. For one thing, the Angels owe so much money to so many fading stars that they're hamstrung until they can escape that financial burden. The four biggest salaries on this year's roster belong to Josh Hamilton (who got chased out of town by owner Arte Moreno), Wilson (who might not pitch all year), Weaver (who owns the second-worst ERA in the AL), and Albert Pujols (who's on pace for career lows in batting average, on-base percentage, and slugging average, yet is by far the best player of the four at this stage).

Wilson will make \$20.5 million in his final year before free agency and might not throw a single pitch. Weaver will make \$20.2 million in his walk year and is pitching so poorly that he might get bumped to the bullpen even when the alternatives aren't pretty. That's nothing compared to what the Angels owe the other two: The Angels agreed to pay Hamilton \$63 million over three years when they chucked him to the curb last spring, while Pujols is owed a jaw-dropping \$140 million over the next five years ... not counting the rest of this season's \$25 million salary. The only other player owed anywhere near that much is Trout, who's owed \$122 million from 2017 and 2010, but also counts as the only reasonably-paid player signed to a long-term deal.

It gets worse. The Angels have nothing resembling a major league-caliber starting catcher or major league-caliber starting left fielder, on the major league roster or close to it. They're employing a replacement-level second baseman. They're paying big money to a shortstop who's an all-world fielder but can't hit a lick, and they gave up a front-line pitching prospect to get him.

That was something the Angels could ill afford. This isn't just a team with a thin farm system. It's one that was rated by multiple sources as the worst farm system in the league. In discussing the Angels' dearth of talent before the start of the season, ESPN.com prospect expert Keith Law didn't mince words: "I've been doing these rankings for eight years now, Law wrote, "and this is by far the worst system I've ever seen."

Losing can be temporary, if those in charge are willing to change. The problem is, it's not clear when or if that will happen. While Billy Eppler came with a top-notch reputation when the Halos hired him last offseason as the team's new general, the Angels still have deeper problems: An owner who meddles far too much in personnel decisions (the Hamilton fiasco and the massive Pujols albatross being just the tip of the iceberg), and a manager who so thoroughly has the owner's ear, the two can depose Eppler's skilled predecessor, and hold too much sway over future decisions.

Add it all up and you have a team that won 98 games two years ago ... and might be in worse shape than any other organization now. With Trout locked up for the rest of the decade on this woefully talent-starved team, he might end as the best player in the game, but also the loneliest.