Clips

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Angels fall to Rangers 7-5 in extras with wild-card playoffs still in reach

By Pedro Moura

What was once a pipe dream harbored only by the team’s fans, employees and players has become attainable. Even after their 7-5 loss in 10 innings to Texas on Wednesday, the resilient Angels are 35 games of above-average baseball away from earning a spot in the Oct. 3 American League wild-card game. As their unlikely season swirls and sways toward potential playoff position, a clear, present need has sprung: someone good to start that game against an opposing ace.

For a team in desperate search of a starter it can count on, Andrew Heaney represents an intriguing option. Heaney and his left arm have long been prized because of his propensity for control. That ability remains, as his walk-free first two starts back from elbow ligament replacement surgery have demonstrated. But hurdles, too, linger. In 10 innings between those two starts, including Wednesday at Angel Stadium, he has surrendered 15 hits, seven home runs, and nine runs.

Heaney framed his outings in the same way the Angels have their year: flawed, but with enough positives to move forward with hope.

“Every single time that we’re faced with adversity, our guys have stepped up,” Heaney said. “I’m going to do the exact same.”

On the simplest level, Heaney is an odd man on whom to rest the team’s fortunes. He was supposed to miss this season. Arm pain he felt in Anaheim on the second day of the 2016 season gave way to a torn ligament diagnosis, some failed injections, and eventually a successful surgery.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia said in spring training he could not see any possible way the pitcher would appear for the team in 2017. But Heaney believed he had a chance all along, steadily worked toward it, and proved his manager wrong.

In the first inning, he pumped his fastball harder and harder to strike out the side, once reaching up to 95 mph. It felt great, he said. Then his inability to command his curveball became clearer, and he had to depend on his fastball to stay in the strike zone. Perhaps sensing that, Adrian Beltre reached out to meet Heaney’s second fastball of the second and send it five feet beyond the left-field wall.

Robinson Chirinos hit a solo shot off a Heaney fastball in the third, and Beltre another off another fastball in the fourth. In the fifth, two Texas singles and a bunt scored a run. In the sixth, a Texas single and a double forced Heaney out of the game.

“I’m going to keep working to have more innings like the first,” Heaney said. “I want to feel in control of what’s happening, feel good about my process and the results I’m getting.”

Reliever Yusmeiro Petit entered, struck out Mike Napoli, issued an intentional walk to induce a favorable matchup, struck out Chirinos, and earned an inning-ending flyout from Ryan Rua. Sixteen opponents
have stood on the basepaths when Petit has taken the mound mid-inning this season. None have scored. No one in the sport has stranded more inherited runners without a mishap.

Rookie right-hander Eduardo Paredes inherited an unvarnished 10th inning but yielded the winning three runs on three singles, two walks and a sacrifice fly.

Cameron Maybin led off the Angels’ first inning with a single. The next 10 Angels to bat could not record a hit, until Albert Pujols snuck a single through to center to begin the fourth. With one out, Andrelton Simmons followed with another single, and Luis Valbuena soon sent a two-strike changeup soaring into the right-field seats. That tied the score, 3-3.

Come the sixth, Valbuena again tied the score, singling after Simmons doubled down the left-field line and swiped third on a delayed steal.

Petit pitched a perfect seventh and Blake Parker a clean eighth before Bud Norris took the mound for the ninth. With one out, he hit Chirinos with a cutter, then allowed a liner into left field. Maybin sprinted, dove and caught it, saving a certain single and possible double.

Undeterred, Norris allowed two clean singles. On the second, into center, Mike Trout cleanly recovered the ball and fired a strike home, where catcher Martín Maldonado tagged out Chirinos. After an extended review, the call was confirmed, the remaining crowd electrified, and, soon, the game sent into extras.

**Short hops**

The Angels will recall right-hander Troy Scribner from triple-A Salt Lake to start Thursday against Texas, taking the rotation spot of the injured JC Ramirez. Scribner, 26, has allowed three earned runs over nine innings in two previous starts this season. ... Left fielder Ben Revere expects to miss a few days after fouling a ball off a muscle above his knee Tuesday. It is sore, he said, but should not force him to the disabled list. ...On the disabled list because of a strained oblique, third baseman Yunel Escobar took batting practice for the first time in two weeks Wednesday.

**FROM THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER**

**Angels focus on the positives after extra-inning loss to Rangers**

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — Every baseball game is a like a nine-inning math problem, with a string of positives and negatives that all add up at the end to either a win or a loss.

Some games are simple, with one or two performances so glaring that they overshadow everything else.
And some games are like the Angels’ 7-5, 10-inning loss to the Texas Rangers on Wednesday night, one that left players in the losing clubhouse oddly content.

“Nothing to hang our heads about tonight,” Cameron Maybin said. “Everybody came to play, with that intensity, that energy. It’s just a tough one to drop.”

The Angels’ list of positives – from Luis Valbuena’s four RBI to brilliant ninth-inning defense from Mike Trout and Maybin to exceptional relief work from Yusmeiro Petit and Blake Parker – wasn’t quite enough.

The final negative came from rookie reliever Eduardo Paredes, who took the mound in the 10th and gave up three runs. He gave up three hits and walked one, with another put on intentionally.

It was the ugly finish to a game that started with another negative – or positive, depending on your perspective – from Andrew Heaney.

In his second start since returning from Tommy John surgery, which makes Heaney’s mere presence on the mound a bright spot, he gave up four runs in five innings, and it could have been worse if Petit hadn’t bailed him out.

Heaney’s breaking ball was still not there, forcing him to rely on his fastball and changeup, which he couldn’t place precisely enough to be effective.

“Physically, I felt good,” he said. “I didn’t make good pitches to good hitters. I think everybody knows, this game is (expletive) hard. When it gets tough, you don’t (expletive) roll over. You keep fighting. This team has proved that every single step. Every single time, we’ve faced some adversity, I think our guys have stepped up and done what it takes to win games. I’m going to do the exact same thing.”

After Heaney allowed three homers – two to Adrian Beltre – in the first four innings, the Angels sprung to life and seemed headed for a come-from-behind victory.

It started with Valbuena’s three-run, game-tying homer in the fourth. It was his 10th homer since the All-Star break. Valbuena was hitting .185 with a .585 OPS at the break, but in the second half he’s hitting .253 with a 1.025 OPS.

“This month Luis has been terrific,” Manager Mike Scioscia said. “He’s getting clutch hits, driving the ball. He gave us a big boost tonight.”

Valbuena also drove in the tying run in the sixth, with a single. The game remained tied through the ninth, thanks to the spectacular defense.

Maybin first sprinted in to make a diving catch of a Ryan Rua fly ball for the second out of the ninth, a catch that Scioscia said was “sensational.” Maybin, however, said his play paled in comparison to what Trout did two batters later. Shin-Soo Choo singled into center, and Trout picked up the ball and fired a ball on the fly all the way home, in time to nail Robinson Chirinos before he could score the go-ahead run.
“The throw he made was incredible,” Maybin said. “That play was huge right there.”

Unfortunately for the Angels, all it did was delay their defeat for another inning.

Even in a losing clubhouse, though, they still took enough out of this game that there didn’t seem to be a hint of regret.

“We’re still fighting,” Valbuena said. “We never put our heads down. You have to forget about it. Tomorrow is a new day. Come back with the same energy. Play the game tomorrow and win the game.”

**Angels Notes: Looking ahead to a healthier Albert Pujols as he climbs HR list**

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — As Albert Pujols climbs the home run leaderboard, Mike Scioscia is still optimistic that the slugger can return next season and climb at a more Pujols-like rate.

Pujols hit his 610th homer late in the Angels’ 10-1 victory on Tuesday night. The blast moved him past Sammy Sosa into eighth on the all-time list, and tops among players born outside of the United States.

With three more homers, Pujols will pass Jim Thome and move into seventh place. He is still 21 homers from passing Ken Griffey Jr. to move into sixth, and Scioscia is hoping that when Pujols is chasing that number next season, it will be a slightly different Pujols.

As of now, it looks like Pujols can head into an offseason without undergoing any type of surgery. He’s had three surgeries in the five winters he’s been with the Angels, and another time he was recovering from a torn plantar fascia that didn’t require surgery. He did not have any issues in the winter of 2014-15, and in 2015 he had his only All-Star season with the Angels, hitting 40 homers.

“There’s always been things he’s dealt with,” Scioscia said Wednesday. “The training has not been what he’s used to. This guys works extraordinarily hard on keeping his strength where he needs to be and he does as much as he can but sometimes the timing has truncated some of things he likes to do.

“If he’s ready to go, whenever our season ends, hopefully a couple months from now, he’ll get right into the swing of what he needs to do and I think it’ll have a positive effect on him for next year.”

Pujols was hitting .232 with a .661 OPS after Tuesday’s game, both career-lows. His team-leading 77 RBI have been his most positive contribution. Over his previous five games, he had hit .273 with a .924 OPS, including two homers.

The Angels are hoping for more weeks like that if they are going to push into the postseason.

“Some of the numbers aren’t Albert-like, but he’s still a force in the batter’s box,” Scioscia said. “He’s still hitting the ball hard. Hopefully he’s going to find holes and do what he can do.”
ESCobar update

Yunel Escobar took ground balls, did agility drills and did some hitting in the cage on Wednesday. Escobar, who is on the disabled list because of a strained oblique, could go on a rehab assignment in the next few days.

When he comes back, the Angels will have some decisions to make. Luis Valbuena has been playing third mostly in his absence, and he’s been at his most productive of the season. C.J. Cron, who has played first, has also hit well.

The Angels will need to find a way to wedge those three players into two spots, at first and third.

“Esky is obviously going to play third,” Scioscia said. “We’ll move some guys around and get bats in the lineup that we think are going to help us. On the offensive side, I don’t think it’s going to be a bad thing when you have some depth materialize.”

Also

Garrett Richards (biceps nerve irritation) is scheduled for a second simulated game on Friday, this one lasting three innings and about 45 pitches. Richards, who is in Arizona, will be evaluated after that workout to determine his next step, but it’s possible his next outing could be in a minor league game. The Angels are aiming to get Richards into the rotation in September, as soon as he can throw about 60 pitches. ...

Ben Revere said his left knee was still sore on Wednesday, but he figured he could play again in a couple days. Revere had to come out of Tuesday night’s game after fouling a ball off his leg. ...

Troy Scribner had no idea why he was pulled after just one inning of his start on Sunday for Triple-A Salt Lake City, but then he started to put the pieces together in his head. “I was kind of confused, and then I thought, Oh, maybe that’s good,” Scribner said. Scribner was in the Angels clubhouse on Wednesday, and he’ll start on Thursday in place of injured JC Ramirez. The short outing on Sunday was just to keep him sharp before pitching with three days’ rest on Thursday.

How Albert Pujols and his wife Deidre brought the fight against sex trafficking to Angel Stadium

By Keith Sharon

She cooked meals in a safe house for sex workers in Mexico City.

She met a 4-year-old girl selling condoms while her mother turned tricks in Cambodia.

She has been on the streets observing pimps and the women they have exploited in Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America and India.

She didn’t view the horror from a country club or the family seats at Angel Stadium.
Deidre Pujols, wife of Angels superstar Albert Pujols, wants you to be moved like she has been moved by the devastating, redemptive and inspirational images she has seen. She wants you to think about sex crimes in ways you haven’t before.

What does she say when she meets young girls in the sex trade on the street? What would you say?

**CALIFORNIA A FOCUS**

Returning from her life-changing and enlightening travels, Deidre inspired her husband’s employer, the Angels, to get involved. Her next goal is to inspire all the teams in Major League Baseball.

They are not concepts that seem to belong in the same universe – baseball, hot dogs, apple pie and sex slavery. But Deidre Pujols put them together.

On Sept. 16, Angel Stadium will host the first “Strike Out Slavery” event to raise money and awareness in the battle against human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Fans can win the chance to meet Albert Pujols by contributing on CrowdRise.com, where the proceeds (the goal is $400,000) will go to several anti-trafficking organizations.

“We are against anything that compromises the value of another human being,” Deidre said. Her effort is focused on stopping traffickers, pimps and their networks where force, fraud or coercion is used to compel humans into having sex for money.

According to the Global Slavery Index, human slavery is a $32 billion per year industry involving 45 million victims in 167 countries. UNICEF’s “End Trafficking Project” reveals that human trafficking in the United States is most prominent in California, New York, Texas and Florida.

Three California cities – Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco – have been designated by the FBI as high-intensity child prostitution areas. The National Human Trafficking Hotline Data Report for 2016 listed 1,321 unique cases in California reported to the hotline for the calendar year.

In Orange County alone, there were 225 victims of human trafficking in 2015. When the 2016 report is released, that number will be 319, said Lita Mercado, program director of community service programs for the O.C. task force. The number of victims has risen every year since the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force began keeping statistics in 2010.

“He County is clearly a destination location for human trafficking,” said Mercado. “In Orange County, there is a demand base for sex, a demand base for sex with children and a demand base for cheap labor.”

**NO STOPPING HER**

Deidre, the mother of five and a tireless advocate for causes like Down syndrome and the plight of the poor in the Dominican Republic, was introduced to her most recent obsession in February 2016.

At a dinner in Washington D.C., Deidre met Benny Yu, who invited her to visit a safe house he operates for girls escaping the sex trade in Mexico City.
Deidre told Albert about the invitation. “He wasn’t crazy about me going,” Deidre said.

“I didn’t understand,” Albert said. “I was concerned about her safety. She was traveling out of her comfort zone.”

There was no way Albert Pujols could stop his wife.

Once she met the young girls who had been saved in Mexico City, Deidre wanted to learn more. So she took off to find sex slavery around the world.

“I was locked in,” Deidre said.

“She makes things happen,” Albert said with a smile. He leaned over and reminded his wife about the time she went to the Dominican Republic with former major leaguer Adam LaRoche, who played with six teams in 12 seasons.

Deidre and LaRoche went to a casino with the former first baseman posing as a guy looking for sex. Deidre said she watched as he was approached by several men offering any kind of sex he wanted.

Deidre watched him for an hour.

“He was offered girls from any country in the world,” Deidre said. “Exploitation is so easy.”

She knew it was time to get out of there when men in the casino figured out who LaRoche was.

By last September, Deidre had seen enough. And she had an idea: Use the platform that made her husband famous.

Deidre and Albert met with representatives in Major League Baseball’s corporate office in New York. She called it an “open conversation.” Her goal was “helping them understand the way to use baseball’s platform” to increase awareness about human trafficking.

MLB officials didn’t say yes, but they didn’t say no.

Last December, Deidre brought her passion home. She put together another presentation for the Angels. She invited Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckas, members of law enforcement and others to meet with Angels brass John Carpino, Dennis Kuhl and Tim Mead.

The Angels didn’t hesitate.

“She has a mission,” said Mead, the Angels’ vice president of communications. “She has a focus. She will not be deterred. We will do whatever we can do.”

This week, the Angels unveiled the giant scoreboard graphics that will flash “Strike Out Slavery” at the game on Sept. 16.
Deidre became emotional when she saw the scoreboard for the first time. “If we can educate one more person, or prevent one more incident ...”

**FIRST, A TRYOUT**

Deidre said one of her heroes in the battle against human trafficking is a woman named Rebecca Bender, who will be one of the guests at Angel Stadium on Sept. 16.

In 2007, Bender escaped a six-year life as a sex slave in Las Vegas.

“There were days when I didn’t think I was going to live,” Bender said. “There were days when I didn’t want to live. I will be there on the 16th. I’m going to be humbled. I can’t believe all these people care so much.”

Deidre said she sees herself in Bender, who was a college student from a middle-class family. Bender, who was a young single mom, was tricked into trusting a man who promised her a better life in Las Vegas. That man threatened Bender’s daughter to compel her to prostitute herself.

“It could have easily happened to me,” Deidre said. “When I met Rebecca we hit it off. She is a strong survivor advocate. It’s critical we bring in people like her.”

Deidre and Albert consider Sept. 16 a tryout. If other MLB teams are inspired, they might have similar nights at their stadiums.

“This thing is in our heart, and it takes a lot of people to help,” Albert said.

Her next target, Deidre said, will be the Washington Nationals, near where she was inspired to look into human trafficking.

“Prevention is our biggest advocate,” Deidre said.

**REMINDER OF HOPE**

Deidre Pujols is moved every time she meets a girl who has been exploited.

She asks them to remember when they were children, about their hopes and dreams before they were forced to sell their bodies.

“What do you have deep down inside you?” she asks them. “I remind them there is something more. I tell them God has been with you every moment.

“You are beautiful. You are amazing. You will live what you believe.”

And something always happens in those conversations. The girls are not used to hearing those kind words.

“You can see the color in their faces change,” Deidre said.
Trout nails Chirinos at plate in ninth inning

By Maria Guardado / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- Mike Trout has been knocked for his arm in the past, but the Angels superstar delivered an incredible 250-foot throw to nail Robinson Chirinos at the plate and prevent the go-ahead run from scoring in the ninth inning of the Halos' game against the Rangers on Wednesday at Angel Stadium.

With the score tied at 4, a pair of runners on and two outs, Shin-Soo Choo shot a single to center field, prompting Chirinos to attempt to score from second. Trout fired a no-hop throw to catcher Martin Maldonado, who tagged Chirinos for the final out of the inning.

"That throw was incredible," left fielder Cameron Maybin said.

The Rangers challenged the call, but replay showed Chirinos' foot appeared to be elevated as it crossed the plate, leading the umpires to uphold the ruling.

The Angels ultimately fell, 7-5, after the Rangers rallied for three runs in the 10th, but Trout's impressive play still drew plenty of praise from his teammates.

"Did you ever make a better throw than that one?" shortstop Andrelton Simmons asked Trout afterward. "I don't think I've ever seen a better throw."

Trout just laughed.

"It's one of them, for sure," he said. "Obviously, it was a big play in the game. I saw him going around the bases, and I knew I had a shot. Just put it right on the money."

What you need to know for Players Weekend

By Daniel Kramer / MLB.com

As the pennant races heat up near the end of the dog days of summer, the inaugural Players Weekend commences on Friday, connecting fans with players for a celebration of creativity and individuality.

Here's everything you need to know about the festivities in a handy FAQ format.

What is Players Weekend?

Players Weekend is a first-of-its kind opportunity for players to show their individual flair and allows fans to get to know them better. Established in conjunction between Major League Baseball and the MLB Players Association, all 30 clubs will be participating through all games running Friday through Sunday, and every team will be in action each of those three days.
All clubs will wear non-traditional alternate uniforms, and each player is allowed to wear his nickname of choice on the back of his jersey, and a patch on his sleeve to pay tribute to a person or persons who aided their career.

**Why are players wearing colorful uniforms?**

The non-traditional alternate uniforms, designed by Majestic, were inspired by uniforms you would typically see in Little League, tying into the theme of the youth involvement that Commissioner Rob Manfred has invested in since taking office ahead of the 2015 season. Players are also allowed to wear and use uniquely colored and designed spikes, batting gloves, wristbands, compression sleeves, catcher's masks, and bats. New Era is also providing specially-designed hats, and colorful socks are being provided by Stance.

**What do the patches on the players' sleeves symbolize?**

On each player's right sleeve is a blank patch which he can fill with the name (or names) of a person, organization, league or value that was instrumental in his development. A modified Major League Baseball "Evolution" logo will be perched at the top of the patch, showing the evolutionary progression of a player to demonstrate their path to the big leagues. Under the logo is the phrase 'Thank You,' which sits just above the blank space for each player to inscribe the name of their respective influential figure(s). Many players are selecting members of their families.

**What are some notable nicknames to be donned on the back of jerseys?**

Perhaps the most fun aspect of Players Weekend will be the throng of nicknames -- one of the game's cornerstones of individuality, more unique in baseball than any other sport -- donning the back of each jersey. The usual suspects will go with their mainstream monikers, such as Jose Bautista ("Joey Bats"), Andrew McCutchen("Cutch") and Carlos Gonzalez ("CarGo"). But others are capitalizing on the creative capacity.

Mariners third baseman Kyle Seager is going with "Corey's Brother" as a humorous quip alluding to the stratospheric launch of his younger brother's career with the Dodgers. Eric Thames will wear "Sang Namja", a Korean phrase, to pay homage to his three-year tenure playing overseas. Hunter Pence will wear 'Wawindaji,' the direct translation of his first name in Swahili.

All players have been encouraged, but are not required, to wear nicknames.

**Will this be an annual event?**

MLB and the MLBPA haven't formally announced any plans for Players Weekend beyond 2017, though it did align with last Sunday's Little League Classic, which Manfred has said he hopes will develop into an annual event. The Pirates and Cardinals each gave audiences a preview of their Players Weekend garb in the nationally telecasted game at historic Bowman Field in Williamsport, Pa.
What are the best avenues for fans to follow the action?

Fans can follow and take part in the conversation by using the hashtag #PlayersWeekend on all social media platforms.

Will there be any charitable proceeds from Players Weekend?

Game-worn jerseys from Players Weekend will be auctioned at MLB.com/auctions, with 100 percent of proceeds to be donated to the MLB-MLBPA Youth Development Foundation, an establishment focused on improving the caliber, effectiveness and ability of amateur baseball and softball across the U.S. and Canada.

Players will also have the opportunity to wear T-shirts highlighting a charity or cause of their choice during pregame workouts and postgame interviews.

Trout's throw not enough as Halos fall in 10

By Maria Guardado and Ryan Posner / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- Mike Trout denied the Rangers the go-ahead run with an incredible throw to the plate in the ninth inning, but he couldn't save the Angels in the 10th. Rougned Odor's tie-breaking sacrifice fly off Eduardo Paredes sparked a three-run rally for the Rangers, lifting them to a 7-5 win over the Angels in the third game of their four-game series on Wednesday night at Angel Stadium.

With the game tied at 4 in the ninth, Trout ("KIIIIID" for Players Weekend) unleashed a 250-foot throw from center field to nail Robinson Chirinos at the plate and force extra innings, but the Rangers quickly struck back in the 10th after loading the bases with one out. Odor ("El Tipo") put Texas ahead, 5-4, and Chirinos and Drew Robinson added some cushion with back-to-back RBI singles.

"Look, they don't ever give in," Rangers manager Jeff Banister said of his team. "There's a lot of greatness, we know that, in this club. They continue to grind out the entire game. They play all the way until the end -- that's their DNA. ... A lot of feel-good coming out of this game."

The Rangers (63-63) are now within two games of the Twins for the second American League Wild Card spot. The loss dropped the Angels (65-62) a half-game behind Minnesota in the standings.

Adrian Beltre went 3-for-5 with two homers, while Chirinos finished 3-for-4 with two RBIs. Beltre's first home run of the night, a solo shot off Angels left-hander Andrew Heaney in the second inning, marked the 460th home run of his career and allowed him to pass Miguel Cabrera for sole possession of 37th place on the all-time list.

"You want to talk about this game, big players come through in big moments and Beltre ("El Koja") came through," Banister said. "Their guy in center field came through, too, and that was about as good of a ball as you can throw to home plate."
Luis Valbuena ("Mono") crushed a three-run homer off Rangers starter Andrew Cashner to briefly tie the game, 3-3, in the fourth and tallied four RBIs for the Angels. He is now batting .370 with two doubles, five home runs and 12 RBIs in his last 10 games.

Heaney yielded four runs on eight hits while walking none and striking out four over five-plus innings in his second start since coming back from Tommy John surgery. Heaney struck out the side in the first, but he then allowed three consecutive leadoff home runs between the second and fourth innings, including two to Beltre.

"Physically, I felt good," Heaney said. "I didn't make good pitches to get hitters. I think everybody knows this game is hard. When it gets tough, you don't roll over. You keep fighting. I think this team has proved that at every single step. Every single time we're faced with adversity, I think our guys have stepped up and done what it takes to win games, and I'm going to do the exact same."

**MOMENTS THAT MATTERED**

**Chirinos' wild night:** Chirinos endured a bit of an emotional rollercoaster on Wednesday, as he launched a solo home run to give the Rangers a 2-0 lead in the third before being thrown out at the plate by Trout in the ninth. Still, Chirinos ultimately redeemed himself by delivering an RBI single in the 10th to help fuel the Rangers' big three-run outburst.

"It was huge for him," Banister said. "Tough moment getting thrown out at the plate. However, he maintained his focus and that's why he stayed in the game ... We want his decision-making behind the plate in games like this."

**Angels threaten in the 10th:** After falling behind, 7-4, the Angels mounted a last-ditch rally in the bottom of the 10th. After Jose Leclerc issued back-to-back walks to Cameron Maybin and Trout to start the inning, the Rangers brought in Tony Barnette, who induced a double play from Albert Pujols to slow the Angels' momentum. Kole Calhoun subsequently singled to knock in Maybin ("Slim") from third, cutting the deficit to 7-5, but Andrelton Simmons then flied out to end the game.

"Nothing to hang our heads about tonight," Maybin said. "Everybody came to play, came with that intensity and energy. Just a tough one to drop."

**QUOTABLE**

"Add it the resume, you know. It's a stat. I'm not out here chasing records or anything. I'm just here to win every single day and that's the mentality I want to carry through -- do what it takes to win today," -- Barnette on recording his first career save after debuting last season at 32 years old

**SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS**

Chirinos' solo shot in the third was his 15th homer of the season, giving the Rangers nine players with at least 15 home runs. That ties a Major League record and is the second time the Rangers have reached that mark (2005). The 2012 Yankees were the last team to accomplish the feat.

Right-hander Yusmeiro Petit, who worked two scoreless innings for the Angels, has now stranded all 16 of his inherited runners this season.
UNDER REVIEW
The Rangers were unable to tally the go-ahead run in the ninth following a two-out single from Shin-Soo Choo and a challenge from Banister. Chirinos was called out after Trout's throw, as the call stood, keeping the game tied at 4-4 heading into the bottom of the ninth.

"Obviously, it was a big play in the game," Trout said. "I saw him going around the bases and I knew I had a shot. Just put it right on the money."

WHAT'S NEXT
Rangers: Martin Perez will take the mound for the finale of the four-game series at 9:07 p.m. CT at Angel Stadium. Perez has won his last three starts but also needed 40 pitches in a five-run first inning last Saturday against the White Sox.

Angels: Angels rookie Troy Scribner (2-0, 3.46 ERA) will be called up from Triple-A Salt Lake to make a spot start against the Rangers in Thursday's finale at 7:07 p.m. PT at Angel Stadium. Scribner, who will fill in for the injured JC Ramirez, will make his first career start against Texas.

Revere temporarily sidelined with sore knee
Angels outfielder fouled ball off leg in Tuesday's victory
By Maria Guardado / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- Ben Revere walked into the Angels clubhouse on Wednesday afternoon sporting a large welt above his left knee, marking the spot where he fouled a ball off his leg during the Halos' 10-1 win over the Rangers on Tuesday night.

Revere said he's still dealing with some soreness, but he expects to be ready to return to action after the inflammationsubsides in a couple days. Manager Mike Scioscia said he believes the Angels dodged a bullet with Revere's injury.

"I think it could have been a lot worse if it obviously hit his knee cap," Scioscia said. "We're just going to go day to day with him. He's a little stiff, but he's hanging in there."

Revere initially tried to play through the ailment on Tuesday, but he felt his leg begin to swell when he returned to play left field in the fifth inning and was eventually replaced by Cameron Maybin.

"I got to the outfield, and it just got bigger and bigger and more stiff," Revere said. "I tried to run. It was like, 'No shot.'"

Angels hoping for a normal off-season for Pujols
Albert Pujols became the all-time home run leader among foreign-born players after crushing his 610th home run on Tuesday, but the 37-year-old slugger has not delivered his usual level of production for the Angels this season, batting .231 with a .277 on-base percentage and a .661 OPS, all of which are career-lows.
Still, the Angels are hopeful that Pujols will be able to recapture his form with the help of a normal offseason this year. Pujols has undergone surgery in three of his five offseasons with the Halos, restricting his usual winter regimen.

"There's always been things that he's dealt with, so the training is not what he's been used to," Scioscia said. "But this guy works extraordinarily [hard] on keeping his strength where it needs to be. He does as much as he can, but sometimes the timing of it has truncated some things he likes to do. When our season ends, he'll get right into the swing of what he needs to do. I think it'll have a positive effect on him for next year."

**Worth noting**

- Yunel Escobar (right oblique strain) took grounders, performed agility drills and hit in the batting cages on Tuesday. Scioscia said Escobar could be ready to begin a rehab assignment in a few days.

- Troy Scribner will be recalled from Triple-A Salt Lake on Thursday to start against the Rangers, filling the void in the rotation left by the injured JC Ramirez.

**Halos to add Scribner for finale vs. Texas**

By Ryan Posner / Special to MLB.com

Rangers left-hander Martin Perez will look to curb his first-inning woes Thursday against the Angels as the two American League Wild Card contenders finish out a four-game set at Angel Stadium.

The Angels are expected to recall right-hander Troy Scribner to make the start in place of JC Ramirez, who was placed on the 10-day disabled list Monday.

Texas enters play Thursday two games back of the second AL Wild Card. The Angels dropped a half-game back of the Twins for the second wild card.

Perez surrendered five runs in a 40-pitch first inning on Saturday against the White Sox, but was able to pick up a win his third straight start in the Rangers' 17-7 victory. The 26-year-old, who will be making his team-high 25th start, has allowed 24 runs in the first inning, five more than any other inning this season.

"I think if something happens so many times in a row you have to make adjustments and show your teammates you can support them," Perez said. "We've got a good [offense]. They can score whenever we need, so my job is to just to not open the game with so many runs."

Scribner is set to begin his second stint with the Angels this season. He last pitched for them on Aug. 9, allowing a run on two hits through five innings against the Orioles to pick up his second-career win. Scribner, 26, is 2-0 with a 3.46 ERA through his first his first four Major League outings (two starts).
Things to know about this game

• Perez has gotten hitters to swing and miss on only 4.5 percent time on the first pitch of an at-bat, tied for the seventh-lowest rate of any pitcher who’s faced at least 500 batters this year. Still, Perez has allowed only seven extra-base hits off first-pitch swings all season.

• This will be Scribner's first career appearance against the Rangers. Perez allowed four runs on eight hits in 5 2/3 innings to take a loss against the Angels on April 30. He's 2-4 with a 3.53 ERA in 10 career outings (nine starts) against the American League West rival and owns a 5.47 ERA in four starts at Angel Stadium.

• Mike Trout's 28 career plate appearances against Perez are third-most of any player in the Majors. Perez has been extra cautious against Trout, walking him seven times, but has held him to a .238 average without a home run.

Wednesday's best: Staumont unhittable for NW Arkansas

By Mike Rosenbuam / MLB.com

An effectively wild Josh Staumont proved too much for opposing hitters on Wednesday in his longest outing of the season for Double-A Northwest Arkansas.

Staumont, the Royals' No. 9 prospect, permitted one run over seven innings without giving up a hit as he led the Naturals past Springfield, 5-1. He threw 54 of his 100 pitches for strikes in the performance, striking out eight and issuing five walks. "I wasn't overjoyed with today's outcome," Staumont told MiLB.com. "Although it was a good one, I still walked a bunch of guys and was behind and made good pitches in order to get those outs," Staumont told MiLB.com. "Sticking by that process, I like the upward trend of success. I think that's the key. If you're taking two steps forward here, you better not be taking three steps back."

Staumont, 23, put two runners on base to begin his outing, the first of which would ultimately score on a sacrifice fly after drawing a leadoff walk. He opened the third inning in the same manner, but escaped further damage in the frame by inducing a pair of swinging strikeouts. The right-hander was more efficient the rest of the way, as he retired the side in order in the fourth and fifth innings en route to retiring nine of the final 11 batters he faced.

His eight strikeouts, meanwhile, were all of the swinging variety and tied his second highest single-game total this season.

"You have to, as a pitcher, adjust accordingly," he said. "A lot of times, adjustments come pitch to pitch. They come inning to inning and batter to batter. I think a lot of the time, our adjustments are really being made seeing how the innings are projecting and seeing specific counts. We threw primarily fast-curve today. They both play like completely different pitches, although it's the same pitch. So a curveball
down is a completely different pitch than for a strike and vice-versa for a fastball. I think we just got into a groove and just let it play."

Staumont has struggled to make progress this season after his breakout 2016 campaign and strong showing in the Arizona Fall League. He was demoted in early July to Northwest Arkansas from Triple-A Omaha, where he had posted a 6.28 ERA with 63 walks and 93 strikeouts in 76 innings. While Staumont hasn't fared much better back in the Texas League, the hard-throwing righty has thrown the ball better of late, allowing two or fewer earned runs in four of his last five starts.

"This season's been a little bit of a maelstrom when it comes to success," Staumont said. "I can't by any means say that I've been happy with my performance recently, but trending upwards is something I think everyone wants to hear when it comes to success."

Overall, Staumont is 5-11 with a 6.05 ERA in 24 games (23 starts) this season. He's struck out 124 while issuing 93 walks over 113 innings between the two levels.

The rest of the best performances from top prospects Wednesday

• No. 9 overall prospect Ronald Acuna (Braves' No. 1) went 2-for-5 and scored the go-ahead run in the top of the ninth inning to help Triple-A Gwinnett edge Durham, 6-5. The 19-year-old outfielder also swiped a pair of bags for a second straight game, giving him 41 stolen bases on the season, and he extended his hitting streak to 11 games with the multihit performance. He's been red hot during that stretch, hitting .412 with eight extra-base hits, 10 runs scored and nine stolen bases.

• No. 10 overall prospect Kyle Tucker (Astros' No. 1) homered for the second time in as many games, though it wasn't enough to keep Double-A Corpus Christi from falling to Midland, 8-4. The 20-year-old outfielder's homer, a solo shot, was his 13th with the Hooks and 22nd of the season. Also going deep for in the loss was Ramon Laureano (No. 16), who connected on a pair of solo homers before finishing 2-for-4. He's up to nine home runs this season after hitting a trio of blasts in his last two contests.

• No. 20 overall prospect Austin Meadows (Pirates' No. 1) went 3-for-5 with two doubles and two runs scored for Triple-A Indianapolis in his fifth game since being activated from the disabled list. He spent more than a month on the shelf as a result of the strained right hamstring he suffered on June 22. Prior to the injury, the 22-year-old outfielder had slashed .248/.313/.358 with four home runs over 68 games in the International League.

• Angels No. 9 prospect Grayson Long yielded three hits over seven scoreless innings in a dominant showing for Double-A Mobile. He posted seven strikeouts against one walk, while finding the zone with 65 of his 98 offerings. The 6-foot-5 right-hander has given up two or fewer earned runs in five straight starts, going 3-0 with a 0.93 ERA over 29 innings during that stretch.

• Nationals No. 8 prospect Yasel Antuna and Luis Garcia (No. 9), both 17, combined to collect seven hits for the Washington's affiliate in the Gulf Coast League. Garcia paced his team in the hit column by going 4-for-5 with a double, while Antuna improved his average to .320 with a 3-for-5 performance that included two triples, two runs scored and two RBIs.
• Padres No. 8 prospect Joey Lucchesi allowed two earned runs on five hits over eight innings, tying his career high, as he won for the fourth time in nine outings with Double-A San Antonio. He compiled four strikeouts and one walk, throwing 65 of his 87 pitches for strikes. The 24-year-old lefty owns a 1.99 ERA over 54 1/3 innings in the Texas League.

• Padres No. 11 prospect Jorge Ona homered in both games of Class A Fort Wayne's doubleheader sweep of Lake County, as he finished the day 3-for-7 with five RBIs. Hudson Potts (No. 23) also homered in the opener for the TinCaps, his fourth homer in his last nine games and 17th of the season. The home runs supported a strong effort on the mound from right-hander Reggie Lawson (No. 27), who allowed one earned run over six innings with seven strikeouts to record the win in game one.

• Yankees No. 14 prospect Dillon Tate retired the final eight batters he faced en route to completing 7 2/3 innings and recording his first win for Double-A Trenton. He allowed one earned run on five hits in the outing while striking out six and generating another 12 outs via ground balls. The 23-year-old righty has posted a 3.66 ERA in three starts for the Thunder, giving him a 2.88 ERA in 78 innings (12 starts) on the season, including his time with Class A Advanced Tampa.

FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beltre hits 2 HRs, Rangers beat Angels 7-5 in 10 innings

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. -- The Texas Rangers are back at .500 again. Next up, they'll try to break something of a troublesome rut.

Adrian Beltre hit two early homers and the Rangers pushed three runs across in the 10th inning to beat the Los Angeles Angels 7-5 Wednesday night.

The Rangers' seventh win in 10 games put them at 63-63. It's the fourth time in seven days they've been at the break-even point, but they haven't been over the .500 mark since June 27.

For a team still holding playoff ambitions -- the victory left them two games behind Minnesota for the second AL wild-card spot -- it's proving a distasteful challenge.

"Five hundred is just a marker for us that you get to for where you want to go," manager Jeff Banister said. "It is a stepping stone. It would be nice to put a little run together to get a little closer to where we want to go."

Luis Valbuena homered and drove in four runs for the Angels, who remained a half-game back of the Twins.

Rougned Odor hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the 10th and Robinson Chirinosand Drew Robinson followed with RBI singles off Eduardo Paredes (0-1), runs that would prove the difference.
"Where we were going to go through (Mike) Trout and (Albert) Pujols again (in the 10th), we really
needed an opportunity to tack on," Banister said. "That was huge."

After Jose Leclerc walked the first two batters in the Angels 10th, Tony Barnette relieved. He got Pujols
to ground into a double play, gave up an RBI single to Kole Calhoun and then got the last out for his first
major league save.

Alex Claudio (3-1) pitched two innings for the win.

The Rangers scored single runs in the second, third, fourth and fifth innings. Their first three runs came
via the solo homer -- two by Beltre and one from Chirinos.

"I got lucky a couple of times," Beltre said.

Beltre has 16 home runs this season. He also contributed a smaller but significant play in the 10th after a
rare throwing error by Andrelton Simmons on an infield hit left Elvis Andrus at second.

Beltre grounded out to second, allowing Andrus to advance to third. The Angels intentionally walked
Nomar Maraza, but Parades could not get Mike Napoli and walked him to load the bases and set the
stage for Odor's sacrifice fly.

"He got bases loaded and tried to get the strikeout on Rougned and he got the bat on the ball to get the
sacrifice," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Then from there, he just had some pitches those guys hit
hard. It was a tough inning for him."

TROUT LASER

The Rangers had a chance to go ahead in the ninth when Shin-Soo Choo singled and Chirinos tried to
score from second. Instead, Trout fielded the ball in center field and threw a bullet to the plate to nip
him. The throw came in on a line and never touched the ground.

"That was about as good a ball as you can throw to home plate," Banister said. "You have to credit the
center fielder more than anything else. It took a strike to throw him out."

CLAUDIO DELIVERS

Claudio has emerged as the Rangers' closer, but remains extremely versatile. He retired all six batters he
faced in the eighth and ninth to allow Texas to mount its rally.

"He's been our MVP," Beltre said. "He throws pitches where he wants to. He's economic. The guy is
unbelievable."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Rangers: INF/OF Joey Gallo (concussion) has rejoined the team and begun working out. He is eligible to
come off the disabled list Tuesday. ... OF Carlos Gomez (back cyst) is eligible to come off the disabled list
Saturday. The only concern appears to be the stitches breaking apart.
Angels: 3B Yunel Escobar (oblique) worked out for a second day and could next be headed for a rehab assignment. ... RHP Garrett Richards (biceps strain) is scheduled to pitch a second simulated game Friday at the team’s Arizona facility.

UP NEXT

Rangers: LHP Martin Perez (8-10) is scheduled to start the four-game series finale against the Angels. Has gone 4-2 with a 2.38 ERA over his last seven starts.

Angels: RHP Troy Scribner (2-0) was recalled from Triple-A Salt Lake and is scheduled to start in place of injured RHP JC Ramirez (elbow strain). He last made a spot start Aug. 8, holding Baltimore to one run on two hits in five innings.

FROM ESPN.COM

Stop everything you're doing and watch Andrelton Simmons

By Sam Miller / ESPN.com

On Monday, after Robinson Chirinos singled toward the left-field corner and took a big turn around first base, and Cameron Maybin threw the ball to his cutoff man and Chirinos began to retreat to first base, and the baseball game began to retreat to around 75 sleepy seconds of nothing happening, Andrelton Simmons abruptly made a highlight:

That's the Los Angeles Angels' shortstop catching the cutoff throw barehanded. He wouldn't end up throwing the ball -- he spun and saw no play -- but, unlike almost every other cutoff/no-play event in baseball history, this one will be documented. This one was a highlight.

That's the 38th Andrelton Simmons defensive highlight MLB.com has posted this year, not counting routine double plays. Simmons is the best defensive shortstop in baseball, and he might be the best in history. There's a way to express his genius in numbers -- at 156 defensive runs saved, Simmons is *almost 100 runs better* than the No. 2 shortstop since 2012 -- and I expect some writers will cite those numbers when casting their MVP ballots this fall.

But there's also a way to express his genius in time spent not working because you've fallen into an Andrelton Simmons Highlights rabbit hole. I bet you could watch all 38 of them right now and your boss wouldn't even notice. Why, I've even collected all the links and ranked each highlight for your convenience!

But if 38 is too many, let's just do five. Five acts of baseball that I believe Simmons, and only Simmons, is capable of.
His clock

Wait, don't leave! I consulted with a bunch of very nice people on these highlights, and I had a hard time convincing them how impressive this one was, but it fits into my overarching theory of Simmons: His signature skill is awareness. The best Simmons highlights all capture some part of that awareness: Awareness of his body, of the ball's physics, of the game's state, of the baserunner or of the unseen clock that will determine each play's outcome.

In this play, he makes a pretty good play ranging to his left, gets up quickly, but then takes an uncharacteristically long time before throwing an uncharacteristically soft throw to first. In a sense this is a "highlight" of Simmons erring (if not literally committing an error) by taking a long time and throwing inaccurately -- it's honestly a little frustrating. But it's also an example of Simmons knowing exactly, exactly how fast every part of that play was going to go, like one of those "if a train leaves Buffalo at 5:45 p.m., going 60 mph ..." algebra problems but with more complicated variables and with nobody feeding him the figures. He took control of the speed of that play, took the time he needed, made the throw he needed, and the margin he left himself with was so small that it literally couldn't be captured by the human eye; he required a slow-motion replay to overturn the umpire's call on the field and get him the out.

But he got the out. His math was right. His throw beat Xander Bogaerts to the bag by this much, because that's all a throw needs to beat a runner by.

His tags

A fun game with Simmons highlights is to find the moment where it looks least like an out is possible. For this highlight, I think that moment is this one.

If Simmons were a superhero who was just landing at third base, it is easy to see this play being made. But since he's actually taking off away from third base, it's hard to imagine any next frames other than Simmons sailing off screen to the left as the runner dives in unimpeded.

A second fun game with Simmons highlights is to stand up and act out the situation he's in, and try to imagine your body doing what he does. When I act this out, my instinct is to catch the ball, try helplessly to reach back across the front of my body and apply a tag, miss the runner by about four feet as I tumble away, strain a muscle in my neck and go on the disabled list. What happens instead is that Simmons redirects all that energy into a kind of a lower-body spin. He starts to crank his right leg around, and he extends the left one all the way out so that when he lands on it he won't fall over that leg but stick into it like a bad pole vault. He plants into that left foot, carries the momentum of the right leg around, and drops a tag on Jean Segura's rump.

A third fun game with Simmons highlights is to find the frame that would look, out of context, the least like the way baseball is normally played. The rump tag is it:
His range

This, of course, is more than a highlight about his range. It's really a highlight about a decision, a gamble, about a guy who treats defense as if it's the offense, and the game is measured in outs.

You've seen a ball hit roughly like this to roughly this location with a runner on second and two outs about a million times, and one of two things always happens: the ball gets through, the run scores, and the announcer talks about how important it is to at least knock the ball down so that the runner has to hold at third; or the fielder dives, knocks the ball down, the runner holds at third, and the announcer talks about how important it was to knock the ball down so that the runner had to hold at third.

Simmons could have easily dived and knocked this ball down. He would have held the runner at third. He would have been praised.

Instead, he just goes for it. He knows to the inch what his range is, and he knows if he gets to it he's going to be in a position where he can spin and get an actual throw off in case the runner has rounded the bag. Which the runner has done. Because the runner looked at the play, played Fun Simmons Game No. 1, and knew there was no way Simmons was going to make this play:

For that matter, check out the third baseman on this play, who is eight feet away from the bag when Simmons turns to make his throw, which, by the way, was perfectly on target even though the third baseman was too surprised to be in position.

It's just a phenomenally aggressive play by Simmons. I tend to think of defense as if it's a fishing net, where the fielders are trying to catch as much stuff as they can and let as little get through as possible. Simmons is more like a spear gun, out there just hunting down outs and impaling their guts.

Also, check out that range!

His bare hand

Note the faint voice in the background, mid-play: "What a play."

For your average great defensive shortstop, you'd say something like "this really showcases everything that makes him great in the field" -- the quick jump on the ball, the smooth adjustment when the ball gets diverted by the mound, the barehanded pickup, the strong and accurate throw. But this play captures maybe a quarter of what makes Simmons great in the field. He is probably also the best jump-thrower in the game right now, probably better than any shortstop at going back on pop-ups, perhaps the quickest to get to his feet from a diving or sliding stop. This throw home on a relay was, at 95.4 mph, the third-hardest throw by a shortstop in the Statcast era. I think he might be as quick on tags as Javier Baez. He can outsmart umpires. He can throw from his butt. He's good.

If you do Fun Simmons Game No. 2 for this play, you'll notice that you try to throw the ball off your left foot, not your right. Try it. See? You reach down, you plant off your left foot, and you kind of throw from a leap across your body. Simmons doesn't do that. He uses that quick step off the left foot to balance
and square his body, then drives hard off the right foot to get power on the throw. I think that's the difference between you and Simmons.

**His body**

Glove flips are always good highlights -- using a glove for a throw is as cute as using a throwing hand as a glove -- but the key here is really the way he lands before the flip. From the moment he takes off in his dive for the ball, he's already thinking about how to position his body to get a throw off when he lands. To do that, and to do it in time for a double play, he needs to keep his body from doing what bodies always do on extension dives. He needs to keep his upper half off the ground.

One suspects it takes incredible strength to do that. I just did Fun Simmons Game No. 2 for that play, and even at the one-quarter speed required for me to mimic it at all, my arms and elbows crumpled into my torso, burying any chance of a glove flip. But there's a frame in that highlight clip, between 0:10 and 0:11, where you see Simmons' arms and wrists bear all the weight of his dive and lock up, brand new brakes on brand new tires stopping everything with a thick snarl. It's the difference between a strong, accurate flip and a desperation one, between the double play and a simple fielder's choice.

Here's an advanced defensive stat about Simmons: Since 2013, his first full season, he has the four best years by a shortstop, according to defensive runs saved. His lone season that isn't at the top of the leaderboard ranks 10th. If the stats are right, he's every bit as dominant with the glove as Clayton Kershaw is on the mound, and as Mike Trout is overall.

Most of the time, we need stats to reassure us that our eyes don't deceive us. With Simmons, it's flipped: The defensive stats are so sensational, so extreme, that we really shouldn't believe them. Until we watch, and the numbers make perfect sense.

**Best tools in MLB: Top gloves and arms in 2017**

By Keith Law / ESPN Senior Writer

It's "best tools" week! For the third straight year, Keith Law lays out his rankings (and reasoning) for the players with the best tools in baseball. To complete this year's rankings, he evaluates the best fielders and the best arms behind the plate, in the infield and in the outfield (see last year's rankings here). See this year's hitting tools rankings here, and pitching tools rankings here.

**Catcher glove**

1. Austin Hedges, San Diego Padres
2. Yadier Molina, St. Louis Cardinals
3. Tyler Flowers, Atlanta Braves
4. Martin Maldonado, Los Angeles Angels
5. Buster Posey, San Francisco Giants

Hedges has always had the reputation as an elite receiver, both with his glove and his arm, and now he has had the regular playing time to prove it. He's third in Baseball Prospectus's pitcher-framing metric and in its overall fielding runs metric for catchers, but he's a better receiver and blocker than the two guys ahead of him in that metric -- Flowers, who has become an elite framer, and Yasmani Grandal, who frames well but catches poorly. I do consider framing in this category, because teams do too, but it's worth noting that performance in that category might be ephemeral -- Jonathan Lucroy, among the best framers in the game the last few years, rather suddenly became the worst in 2017.

**Catcher arm**

1. Willson Contreras, Chicago Cubs
2. Jorge Alfaro, Philadelphia Phillies
3. Yadier Molina, St. Louis Cardinals
4. Gary Sanchez, New York Yankees
5. J.T. Realmuto, Miami Marlins

Contreras' caught-stealing numbers might not reflect it, in part because Cubs pitchers don't do a lot of that whole "holding runners on" thing, but he has a cannon and it's very accurate. So while Alfaro or Sanchez might have the edge in pure arm strength, I give Contreras the nod for best arm overall. Of course, Molina's arm strength and accuracy are so good that teams run on him less frequently -- although I wonder if there's a lag between any physical decline in his skills and when teams will try to test him. Alfaro has one of the strongest catcher arms I've ever seen and loves to show it off, but his receiving is still iffy enough that I think there's some chance he ends up at another position. Austin Hedges just missed the cut.

**Infield glove**

1. Andrelton Simmons, SS, Los Angeles Angels
2. Manny Machado, 3B, Baltimore Orioles
3. Nolan Arenado, 3B, Colorado Rockies
4. Jose Iglesias, SS, Detroit Tigers
5. Anthony Rendon, 3B, Washington Nationals

Simmons is having an MVP-caliber year across the board, generating 4.5 WAR (via FanGraphs' blend) already, boosted by a career year at the plate and his usual Hall of Fame-level defense. Simmons already ranks 40th all time in defensive WAR on Baseball-Reference.com despite only six seasons and 741 games; no one else in the top 150 has under 800 games career. Arenado is actually 155th on that list.
and the next-highest ranked player under that games played mark; he and Machado are separated by about half a win. I'd entertain either of those guys as the best third baseman in baseball but give a slight edge to Machado because he's rangier and could easily play shortstop, though that's no slight to Arenado.

**Infield arm**

1. Andrelton Simmons, SS, Los Angeles Angels
2. Manny Machado, 3B, Baltimore Orioles
3. Nolan Arenado, 3B, Colorado Rockies
4. Carlos Correa, SS, Houston Astros
5. Anthony Rendon, 3B, Washington Nationals

Simmons is going to own this category for a very long time, unless Hunter Greene, the Reds' first pick in this June's draft, reaches the majors as a shortstop instead of on the mound. Machado was probably the hardest-throwing amateur infielder I'd seen before Greene -- I never saw Simmons in junior college. All of these guys have cannons, which is why they're all found on the left side of the infield; among players on the right side, just-recalled Mets first baseman Dominic Smith might have the best arm, as he pitched some in high school, and I saw him hit 91 mph while starting a game against Conner Greene, now in the Blue Jays' system.

**Outfield glove**

1. Billy Hamilton, Cincinnati Reds
2. Mookie Betts, Boston Red Sox
3. Byron Buxton, Minnesota Twins
4. Kevin Kiermaier, Tampa Bay Rays
5. Ender Inciarte, Atlanta Braves

I don't think there are any surprises here either. Kiermaier was a somewhat tough call since he's just coming back from both a hairline fracture in his hip and a back issue that has bothered him while he has been rehabbing, so there's at least some small chance he loses a little range in the aftermath. Buxton has the potential to pull a Simmons and take over the top of this list for the next decade, depending on his improving his reads in the field and, of course, continuing to hit well enough to ensure that he plays every day.

**Outfield arm**

2. Aaron Hicks, New York Yankees
3. Byron Buxton, Minnesota Twins
4. Adam Jones, Baltimore Orioles
5. Brad Zimmer, Cleveland Indians

The first four guys on this list all pitched as amateurs, enough that they were at least considered in their draft years as possible pitchers before they were drafted as position players. Zimmer is the exception, but his brother, Kyle, was drafted fifth overall as a pitcher and is still in the Royals' system in Triple-A. Hicks holds the current StatCast record for the hardest recorded throw from the outfield at 105.5 mph. All are guys I'd like to see on the mound at some point later in their careers when their teams need some mop-up work, although you couldn't risk any of their arms right now given what they do at the plate.

FROM FOX SPORTS

Angels recall Scribner for start vs. Rangers

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Los Angeles Angels will call up Troy Scribner from Triple-A Salt Lake to start Thursday against the Texas Rangers, and he will have some big shoes to fill.

Scribner will replace JC Ramirez, who felt pain in his right elbow after his start Saturday at Baltimore. Ramirez, who could miss the rest of the season, leads the Angels in wins (11) and innings pitched.

Ramirez's innings total — 147 1/3 — is more than he had pitched in his entire major league career (126 1/3) going into this season. Ramirez, who broke into the majors in 2013, had been a reliever until this season.

“You never know where a guy is and if there's an endpoint somewhere,” Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. “He had rebounded from every start very well and really had no issues along these lines.

“We monitored him very closely. He's been doing his routine, doing his work. His bullpens have been good. So it's hard to say exactly what the cause is. Right now we’re just going to have to deal with it.”

The team will deal with it by turning to Scribner, who was up with the big club earlier this season and pitched well.

Scribner, 26, is a 6-foot-3, 190-pound right-hander who had pitched in the minors since he signed as an undrafted free agent with the Houston Astros in 2013. He was called up for the first time late last month and made two relief appearances before getting his first start on Aug. 4 against the Oakland A’s.
His best performance came in his second start, Aug. 9 against Baltimore, when he gave up one run and two hits in five innings to get the win. Overall, he is 2-0 with a 3.46 ERA for Los Angeles. In 20 games (19 starts) for Salt Lake, he is 11-4 with a 4.35 ERA.

Scribner is matched up against the Rangers’ Martin Perez, who is 8-10 with a bloated 5.26 ERA in a team-leading 24 starts. Perez, though, may have figured some things out.

After he was tagged for seven runs in a loss to the Minnesota Twins on Aug. 4, Perez had lost four straight starts and was 5-10 overall. But he came to the conclusion that he was tipping his pitches.

After watching video of himself, Perez said his hand was positioned differently when he threw a fastball compared to when he threw an off-speed pitch.

“It’s a big difference,” Perez told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. “They’re supposed to be the same spot every time. I think it’s been happening a lot.”

Rangers pitching coach Doug Brocail wasn’t necessarily buying it.

“I don’t want anybody making excuses,” Brocail told the Star-Telegram. “I don’t want that to be a cop-out that makes us not work hard in our next side session.”

Whether or not it was an issue, Perez has turned things around since his discovery, going 3-0 with a 4.05 ERA in three starts.

Perez is 2-4 with a 3.53 ERA in 10 career games (nine starts) against the Angels. He took a loss on April 30 (four runs, 5 2/3 innings) in his only start against Los Angeles this year.

The Rangers would take three of four from the Angels if they get the win Thursday. Texas earned a 7-5, 10-inning victory Wednesday, getting two homers from Adrian Beltre.

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**FROM SB NATION**

**Mike Trout is coming for you**

After being out for weeks with an injury, Mike Trout has Mike Trouted his way back into the MVP race.

By Anthony Rescan

In late May, the baseball world came to a halt. Mike Trout slid into second base on a steal attempt and came up with an apparent thumb injury. Though he stayed in the game defensively the next inning, things were clearly not right and he would not finish the game. Later, it became clear that Trout would have to miss 6 to 8 weeks with a torn ligament in his thumb.
Up to that point, Trout was lapping the field in the MVP race. His performance put him on pace to have what could have been the best season of his career, which is insane because he’s Mike Trout, and has had a pretty good career.

Prior to his injury, Trout boasted a 208 wRC+ with a .474 wOBA, a 20.4 percent K rate, and a 17.5 percent walk rate. Even with Aaron Judge wowing the baseball world with his ungodly power, Trout was still atop the leaderboards in many statistics that are commonly used to evaluate hitters.

After he got hurt, the wind was taken out of the sails. Many decried that Trout’s slam-dunk MVP candidacy was now off the table, and that we had been robbed of what could have truly been a historic season.

But this is Mike Trout we’re talking about. People forget that.

As of today, he’s at or near the top of the leaderboards in just about everything. His 197 wRC+ and .459 wOBA puts him ahead of Freddie Freeman for the MLB lead by 32 points and 19 points, respectively. He is also tops in on-base percentage, slugging percentage, and OPS.

The natural reaction to all of this is that Trout hasn’t played enough, so of course he’s at the top of all of the rate based statistics. It’s true that he doesn’t even qualify yet, though he is very much on pace to by the end of the season. But, thankfully, WAR incorporates questions of usage, allowing us to consider questions like these.

As far as WAR goes, Trout places strongly among the competition in the AL. Chris Sale leads both WARP and fWAR marks in the AL. He currently sits at 6.87 and 7.4 in each respective statistic and, as I said last week, is the presumptive favorite to win the AL MVP. Aaron Judge and Jose Altuve are the two most prolific hitters in the AL this season, and are the closest hitters, aside from Trout, to Sale’s high marks. Both sit at 6 fWAR; however, Altuve has a slight lead on Judge in bWARP at 5.52 to 5.03. Currently, Trout sits at 5.67 bWARP and 5.7 fWAR, which would place him second in the AL in bWARP and fourth in fWAR. After missing all that time, Trout could defend his title as King of WAR once again this season.

Meanwhile, Trout is keeping his MVP campaign alive while performing somewhat worse than he was playing in the first half. His wOBA fell from that .474 to .438 and his wRC+ dropped down to 184, which would still top the league by a wide margin. However, his walk rate has stayed roughly steady and his K rate has fallen to 18.5 percent.

With the Angels in the playoff race, Trout shouldn’t have to worry about the team dragging his candidacy through the mud. Even though the team playing well through his injury may emerge as a counter-narrative to his candidacy, there shouldn’t be the familiar MVP damnation that comes with being a great player on a bad team.

Though Sale’s value may prove tough to match, it’s easy to imagine a Trout who is in the playoffs and is clearly the most valuable hitter the American League has to offer, even with a deficiency in games played, walking away with the award. We’ve seen in seasons past that it can be tough for pitchers to
ward off legitimate MVP candidates who are hitters. A downright historic Trout coming back from the
dead and wreaking havoc on American League pitching seems like the hardest kind of hitter to ward off.