Clips

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Angels drop series to Rangers after 3-0 shutout

By Pedro Moura

This week in Orange County, the Angels are playing more meaningful games than they have in two years. They have withstood injuries to remain around .500 and relevant in the American League wild-card chase. But to secure a playoff spot, they’ll have to surge at some point.

In a 3-0 loss to the Texas Rangers on Thursday at Angel Stadium, they did not perform well amid the added pressure. They had more hits than the Rangers yet failed to produce an impactful single in 11 opportunities with runners in scoring position.

“Gosh,” manager Mike Scioscia said, “it was one of those nights. We just didn’t square up a ball.”

In the modern major leagues, Troy Scribner is an anomaly, a 6-foot-3 right-hander who can not reach 90 mph with his fastball. His average offering clocks in at 88 mph, a territory now reserved for left-handers, knuckleballers, those far past their prime, or those returning from major surgery.

To get here despite that, the 26-year-old has benefited from the cavalcade of arm issues afflicting the Angels’ intended starting rotation. And he has demonstrated an ability to place his pitches where he wants more often than most.

Still, he makes mistakes, and the men he’ll face in the major leagues are wont to punish them. With a runner on second base and one out in the third inning, the Angels spot starter left an 86-mph fastball over the middle. Drew Robinson redirected it 431 feet to center for a two-run homer. After a walk, a hit batsman and a flyout, Scribner served up another 86-mph fastball, this one to Adrian Beltre, and Beltre swung and missed.

Scribner began by issuing a six-pitch walk, then fell behind 3-and-1 to Shin-Soo Choo and lucked into a double-play lineout. The Angels forced similarly sudden action in their half of the first inning. Both Cameron Maybin and Mike Trout swung at first pitches from Texas left-hander Martin Perez. Maybin’s swing went for a single into left. Trout’s, a little to the left, produced a double play.

Texas crushed another homer in the fourth inning, a Mike Napoli solo shot against another mislocated fastball from Scribner. Scribner gave up no other hits, and neither did reliever Jesse Chavez, who handled the sixth and seventh.

In 11 relief innings since Scribner replaced him in the rotation this month, Chavez has struck out 15, walked none and given up only one run.

He had given up at least two runs in his last 10 starts before being banished to the bullpen.

In the eighth, Bud Norris withstood a double and a trainer’s visit to post a scoreless inning. In the ninth, Jose Alvarez traversed a single, stolen base, error and an extended replay review to do the same.
In the second and third innings, the Angels got four singles but no runs. With two on and no outs in the third, Trout opted against swinging at an 0-and-2 fastball. Though the pitch appeared located near the top of the strike zone and along its inside edge, Trout could not believe umpire Adrian Johnson’s strike call, placing his hand atop his helmet as he walked back to the dugout.

In the fourth and fifth innings, the Angels generated no hits and no runs. In each of the next three innings, they squandered a hit, and in the eighth they stranded two no-out walks.

Texas batted only four times with runners in scoring position, but logged one more hit than the Angels in such situations — one. The Rangers now trail the Angels by only half a game, and are out of playoff position by one. Four teams in front of them lost Thursday.

**Short hops**

The Angels optioned right-handed reliever Eduardo Paredes to triple-A Salt Lake to make room for Scribner on their active roster. Paredes will be back with the team Sept. 1, if not sooner. ...

Right-hander Huston Street started throwing this week after being sidelined for more than a month because of a rotator cuff strain. He headed to Arizona to rehab on Thursday, planning to return to Anaheim on Sept. 16. He hopes to be activated soon after that. The 34-year-old reliever has pitched only four innings this season because of an array of injuries. He will become a free agent at year’s end, when the Angels decline their $10-million option for his 2018 services. ...

Catcher Martin Maldonado was excluded from Thursday’s lineup for only the sixth time in 46 games since the All-Star break. His statistics have declined dramatically since then as he soars past his previous career high in games played. Maldonado, 31, did distribute donuts inside the Angels clubhouse before the game.

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**FROM THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER**

**Angels can’t convert opportunities in 3-0 loss to Rangers**

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — Needing a victory to salvage a split against a division rival, the Angels came up frustratingly empty on Thursday night.

The Angels were shut down by Martin Perez for seven innings in a 3-0 loss to the Texas Rangers, despite having a steady flow of traffic on the bases against him.

The Angels lost three of four to the Rangers, a disappointing series on the heels of a 7-2 trip.
“Those guys, they beat us,” Manager Mike Scioscia said. “We didn’t swing the bats consistently. On the mound we did OK. It comes down to getting a game on our terms and holding a lead, and we were only able to do that one game this series.”

They had plenty of chances to get this game going in the right direction, but they couldn’t convert. In four of Perez’s innings, the Angels had a leadoff hit. In the third, they started the inning with back-to-back singles, bringing Mike Trout and the heart of the order up. Trout struck out. Albert Pujols fouled out on the first pitch. C.J. Cron grounded out.

In the seventh, Jefry Marte led off with a double, but three straight hitters couldn’t so much as move him to third, let alone drive him in.

“We just didn’t square up a ball,” Scioscia said. “Give Perez some credit. he made some pitches when he had to. We had a couple guys on with Mike, Albert and Crony up, and he pitched out of that jam.”

After Perez departed, the Angels wasted a promising rally against reliever Jason Grilli. Cameron Maybin and Trout walked to lead off the eighth, but Pujols popped out, Cron hit a flyout and Andrelton Simmons hit a dribbler back to Grilli.

The Angels’ were hitless in 11 at-bats with runners in scoring position.

Lacking support, Angels starter Troy Scribner had no room for error, and he made a few mistakes in his five innings.

Scribner allowed three runs on a pair of homers. No. 9 hitter Drew Robinson blasted a two-run homer in the third and Mike Napoli his his customary homer against the Angels in the fourth. Napoli has hit 21 homers in 74 games against the Angels, who traded him for Vernon Wells in one of the franchise’s most costly trades.

“I was kind of all over the place tonight,” Scribner said. “The first couple innings my delivery was off a little bit. My timing was off enough to flatten my fastball. ... That’s what happens with big league guys. You miss your location a little bit and they rip it.”

Scribner nonetheless held his own against a powerful lineup, which is saying something for a guy who brings an 86-88 mph fastball to the mound most of the time. After the Napoli homer, he retired the final five hitters he faced.

“Right about that inning is where I started to get my timing back and started to locate my pitches a little better,” he said.

After Scribner left, the Angels got a look at one of the night’s few bright spots. Jesse Chavez, who came out of the rotation earlier this month, worked two scoreless innings of relief. He’s now allowed one run in 11 relief innings since being sent to the bullpen, with 15 strikeouts and no walks.

“I think he kind of caught his breath a little bit,” Scioscia said. “He looks good. Crisp and refreshed. He’ll be a big part of our ’pen.”
Angels Notes: Mike Trout demonstrates improved technique with strike to plate

By Jeff Fletcher

ANAHEIM — During his first few years in the big leagues, one of the questions about Mike Trout was his arm strength, so he worked diligently to improve that.

Now, the development of his arm has been mostly about technique and accuracy, which he showed off by temporarily saving the game for the Angels with a strike to the plate in the ninth inning on Wednesday night.

“As he’s modified and refined his technique, you are seeing a much more functional thrower,” Manager Mike Scioscia said Thursday. “I think he’s turned out to be a good thrower. When he first came up, he had to work very hard to get to this level, and he’s maintained it.”

Trout fielded the ball in the ninth inning on Wednesday after two hops, in medium deep center field. He then uncorked a throw that sailed all the way to catcher Martin Maldonado on the fly. He tagged out Robinson Chirinos, ending the inning.

 Asked afterward if it was the best throw of his career, Trout said: “It’s one of them, for sure. When I saw him go around, I knew I had a shot, just put it right on the money.”

Scioscia said much of the improvement in Trout’s arm shows up in the plays he doesn’t have to make. He said runners are taking fewer chances against Trout now.

“He does a great job of turning doubles into singles out there by cutting balls off and making good throws to second,” Scioscia said.

This season 44.3 percent of runners have declined to try for the extra base against Trout: going from first to third on a single, first to home on a double. It is the second highest rate of his career, and just about the major league average.

STREET’S PLAN

Huston Street, who has been out with a mild rotator cuff strain since early July, resumed throwing this week and is now headed to continue his rehab in Arizona.

Street said he has mapped out a plan that would get him back to pitch for the final two weeks.

“It was a longer process than I think we anticipated,” Street said, “but it feels good now. We can just kind of build up to something to try to finish the season healthy. That’s a goal.”
**ALSO**

Yunel Escobar (strained oblique) had a recovery day in his rehab on Thursday. He is scheduled to work out on the field on Friday, and then the Angels will determine if he’s ready for a rehab assignment. ...

Alex Meyer (shoulder inflammation) continues to do some light throwing, but he has not progressed to long toss. Scioscia said he still believes the Angels have time to rehab Meyer as a starter, instead of a reliever. ...

Ben Revere (bruised knee) was out of the lineup again on Thursday, although he might not have played anyway because the Angels were facing a lefty. Scioscia said Revere would work out during the game, and could be ready soon.

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**FROM ANGELS.COM**

**Angels blanked by Rangers in series finale**

By Maria Guardado and Ryan Posner / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- Left-hander Martin Perez fired seven scoreless innings as the Rangers shut out the Angels, 3-0, in Thursday's finale at Angel Stadium to clinch a series victory and pull within one game of the Twins for the second American League Wild Card spot.

Perez (aka "El De Guanare" for Players Weekend) scattered seven hits, while walking none, striking out three and throwing 73 of his 99 pitches for strikes. It marked his longest scoreless outing since returning from Tommy John surgery in 2015. "El De Guanare" is a reference to the lefty's hometown in Venezuela.

"I've got to believe [tonight] was a huge building step for Martin in how he pitched," Rangers manager Jeff Banister said. "It wasn't, 'Step on the gas for every single fastball.' There was some intent to back off at some periods and let the sinker play more, and let it move to get them on the ground."

Drew Robinson crushed a two-run home run off Angels rookie Troy Scribner in the third, and Mike Napoli added a solo shot in the fourth to back Perez’s stellar effort. Texas, which has won eight of its last 11 games, now has 200 home runs this season, the most in the Majors.

Scribner, who was recalled from Triple-A Salt Lake on Thursday to make a spot start in place of the injured JC Ramirez, yielded three runs on three hits, walking two and striking out six, over five innings.

"I was kind of all over the place tonight," Scribner said. "In the first couple innings, my delivery was off a little bit. My timing was off enough to kind of flatten out my fastball. I wasn’t as sharp with my fastball control as I usually am. That's how it goes when you're facing big league guys. You miss location, and even if it's a little bit, they rip it."
Cameron Maybin and Jefry Marte had two hits apiece, but the Angels went 0-for-11 with runners in scoring position and left eight men on base. They remain a half-game out of a Wild Card spot as a result of the Twins' 5-1 loss to the White Sox on Thursday.

"It was one of those nights where we just didn't square up the ball," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Give Perez some credit. He made some pitches when he had to. ... Sometimes, you just have to tip your cap. We'll rebound tomorrow."

**MOMENTS THAT MATTERED**

**Robinson goes deep:** Scribner faced the minimum through the first two innings and struck out Rougned Odor to start the third, but his night then hit a snag. Brett Nicholas doubled to give the Rangers their first hit, and Robinson followed by sending an 86-mph fastball to center field for a two-run homer, giving Texas a 2-0 lead. Robinson's fourth home run of the season had an exit velocity of 104 mph and traveled a projected 431 feet, according to Statcast™.

"Big home run in that situation," Banister said. "He had a big hit for us last night, too. He had the hometown crowd, being in front of his family -- special night for him." More >

**Perez navigates trouble:** The Angels generated their best scoring chance against Perez in the third, when Cliff Pennington and Maybin led off with consecutive singles to put runners on first and second. But Perez struck out Mike Trout, induced a foul out from Albert Pujols and coaxed a groundout from C.J. Cron to escape the jam and preserve the Rangers' 2-0 lead.

"I just tried to focus and throw the pitch where I wanted, and wanted to pitch for ground balls," Perez said of the at-bat against Trout. "I know we're close and we still have a chance for the Wild Card, and I think this is the game you have to fight and compete for."

**QUOTABLE**

"To record a save in this setting -- a playoff-type atmosphere, in a ballpark he's never been in -- and to go 1-2-3, it's just one of those magic moments you get in baseball from time to time," -- Banister, on Ricardo Rodriguez recording his first career save

**SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS**

Napoli has been a tough out for the Angels, one of his former clubs, hitting .328 with 13 home runs and 21 RBIs as an opponent at Angel Stadium. The home runs are the most by a visiting player at Angel Stadium since 2011, behind teammate Adrian Beltre (15) and Seattle's Nelson Cruz (14).

**UPON FURTHER REVIEW**

Banister extended the top of the top of the ninth with a challenge following a ground ball hit by Napoli. Angels third baseman Marte fired to Pennington to get Nomar Mazara out at second, and Napoli was called out at first to complete what appeared to be an inning-ending double play. But the call was overturned after a review, extending the frame.

**WHAT'S NEXT**

**Rangers:** Nick Martinez is set to be recalled to open a three-game series -- and Players Weekend --
against the A’s at 9:05 p.m. CT on Friday in Oakland. Martinez has thrown 14 scoreless innings in two starts for Triple-A Round Rock since being optioned on Aug. 9.

**Angels:** The Angels continue their 10-game homestand on Friday by kicking off a three-game series -- and Players Weekend -- against the Astros at 7:07 p.m. PT at Angel Stadium. Rookie Parker Bridwell (7-1, 2.92 ERA) will take the mound for the Angels in the opener.

*Flaco' rejuvenated since move to 'pen for Halos*

Righty throws two perfect innings vs. Rangers on Thursday

By Maria Guardado / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- Jesse Chavez (aka "Flaco" for Players Weekend) recorded a 5.43 ERA over 21 starts this season before the Angels decided to bump the right-hander from their rotation at the beginning of August.

While the veteran was initially disappointed to shift to the bullpen, the transition has seemingly given Chavez a chance to reset.

After tossing two perfect innings in the Angels' 3-0 loss to the Rangers on Thursday night, Chavez has now allowed just one run over 11 innings, with 15 strikeouts and no walks, in his last six relief outings. Chavez was summoned in the sixth to replace rookie Troy Scribner, and promptly retired all six batters he faced.

"I think he kind of caught his breath a little bit," manager Mike Scioscia said. "He's been in the bullpen before, so he's comfortable with it. In just this series alone, he gave us five good innings out of the 'pen."

Chavez pitched exclusively out of the bullpen for the Blue Jays and Dodgers in 2016, but the Angels signed him during the offseason with the hope of using him as a starter. Chavez made the Halos' rotation out of Spring Training, but his ERA steadily rose each month. He logged a 6.94 ERA in five July starts, then lost his spot in the rotation when left-hander Tyler Skaggs came off the disabled list in early August.

Part of the Angels' rationale for moving Chavez to the bullpen was that he tended to lose effectiveness as he faced hitters more than once in a game. At the time of his demotion, Chavez had held opponents to a .743 OPS the first time through the order, but that figure jumped to .856 the second time and to .973 the third time.

While Chavez has been used in multi-inning stints out of the bullpen, he rarely faces hitters more than twice in relief outings, ameliorating the issue.

"I think he looks good," Scioscia said. "He looks crisp and refreshed. He'll be a big part of our 'pen."
Explaining Angels Players Weekend nicknames

By Maria Guardado / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- The Angels will sport a slightly different look when they take on the Astros on Friday night, opening the inaugural Players Weekend at Angel Stadium.

The event, which MLB and the MLB Players Association have teamed up to launch this season, will allow players to wear colorful, non-traditional uniforms featuring alternate designs. They will also have the opportunity to show more personality by wearing nicknames on the back of their jerseys. Players will also wear special tribute patches on their sleeves, where they have the option of thanking a person who has helped them over the course of their career.

Here's a breakdown of the Angels' nicknames and tribute patches for Players Weekend:

**Andrelton Simmons:** "Simón"
He couldn't use his well-known nickname "Simba" due to copyright concerns, so he decided to use "Simón," which he was called as a kid in his native Curacao.

**Tribute patch:** "Mom and Dad"
"They're my biggest fans," Simmons said.

**Parker Bridwell:** "PBrid"
His nickname started with friends in high school and eventually just stuck.

**Tribute patch:** "Hereford"
Bridwell will pay tribute to the small town in Texas where he grew up.

**Mike Trout:** "Kiiiiid"
Trout's nickname sprang from clubhouse banter. Teammates tend to elongate the middle of the word when they use it.

**Kole Calhoun:** "Koleman"
One of Calhoun's coaches at Yavapai Junior College (Prescott, Ariz.) called him "Koleman," a nickname that's occasionally been picked up by teammates.

**Tribute patch:** "West End Little League"
Calhoun will commemorate the organization where he grew up playing baseball in Tolleson, Ariz.

**Luis Valbuena:** "Mono"
Teammates have always called Valbuena "Mono," which means monkey in Spanish. He said the nickname brings back fond memories of the beginning of his career.

**Tribute patch:** "Family"
Valbuena will thank all the relatives that have supported him throughout his career, especially his kids and his grandparents.
Albert Pujols: "The Machine"
He earned the nickname from fans because of his consistent offensive production during his prime in St. Louis. "The Machine" even appeared in a popular SportsCenter commercial.

C.J. Cron: "Crony"
Like many players, Cron's nickname is a variation of his last name.

Ben Revere: "Revy"
After being drafted by the Twins in 2007, Revere's teammates called him "Rev" -- short for reverend -- because he was always reading the Bible. The organization's Minor League director eventually modified it to "Revy."

Tribute patch: "Jesus"
"If it wasn't for Jesus, I wouldn't be here," Revere said.

Jefry Marte: "El Bley"
Marte's family in the Dominican Republic has called him "El Bley" since he was a little boy.

Ricky Nolasco: "Tricky"
His moniker is a play off his first name and used by some of his friends. Nolasco admitted it wasn't his first choice, but he decided to go with it at the suggestion of equipment manager Keith Tarter.

Blake Parker: "B-Easy"
Parker's nickname dates back to his high school football days in Fayetteville, Ark. "It's kind of a back home thing," Parker said.

Tribute patch: "Jesus and Mom and Dad"
Echoing Revere, Parker said, "Without them, I wouldn't be here."

Keynan Middleton: "Major Key"
A fan of rap music, Middleton's nickname is the title of one of DJ Khaled's albums. Middleton decided to use it as his Twitter handle, prompting many supporters to refer to him as "Major Key" at ballparks.

Tribute patch: "Milwaukie"
Like Bridwell, Middleton will pay tribute to his hometown in Oregon.

Kaleb Cowart: "Pal"
Cowart credits former Angels catcher Jett Bandy for giving him his nickname when the two played together in rookie ball in 2011.

Tribute patch: "Mom and Dad"
Cowart will thank his parents for their unwavering support during his career.

Yusmeiro Petit: "Yus"
When he came to the United States from Venezuela, people started calling him "Yus," because it was easier to pronounce than his full first name.

Tribute patch: "Alberto"
Petit will thank his father, who he said gave him the strength and support to continue to chase his baseball dream in the United States.

**Cam Bedrosian: "Bedrock"**
The nickname originally belonged to his father, Cy Young Award-winning closer Steve Bedrosian, but it was passed on to the younger Bedrosian when he started playing baseball.

**Tribute patch: "Jesus and family"**
Bedrosian will honor his faith and his family for helping guide him throughout his career.

**Matt Shoemaker: "Shoe"**
Like many players, his nickname is a variation of his last name that is frequently used by teammates and coaches.

**Martin Maldonado: "Cascajo"**
He wasn't allowed to use "Machete," so Maldonado decided to honor his father's side of the family by putting "Cascajo" on the back of his jersey. The nickname was given to both his father and grandfather in his native Puerto Rico.

**Tribute patch: "Mom and Edgar Perez"**
Maldonado will thank his mom and Perez, a scout who helped get him signed and continued to support him throughout his career.

**Andrew Heaney: "Heandog"**
His college roommates gave him the nickname during his freshman year at Oklahoma State, and it stuck, eventually becoming a part of his Twitter handle.

**Tyler Skaggs: "Swaggy"**
Skaggs is a fan of the Lakers, so his teammates based his nickname on former Los Angeles guard Nick Young's "Swaggy P" moniker.

**Tribute patch: "Parents and grandfathers"** Skaggs will pay tribute to his family, particularly his grandfathers, who have both passed away in the last three months.

**Cliff Pennington: "Penny"**
Like many players, his nickname is a variation of his last name that is used by many teammates and coaches.

**Tribute patch: "Family"**
Pennington will thank his family for supporting him throughout his career.

**Huston Street: "Larry"**
Street said he has coincidentally been let down by several Larrys in his life, so when he started missing lunches with his friend, Hanford Francis Farrell III, in Austin, Farrell advised him to "not be a Larry." It became a bit of a running joke between the two and came to mean someone who is unreliable in an ironic way.
Jesse Chavez: "Flaco"
Dave Chavarria, Chavez's former pitching coach in the Rangers' organization, gave him his nickname because of his lean frame. "Flaco" means skinny in Spanish.

Tribute patch: "Fontana"
Chavez is a graduate of A.B. Miller High School in Fontana, Calif., which is located 45 miles from Angel Stadium.

JC Ramirez: "Cubanito"
A coach in Nicaragua gave Ramirez his nickname in reference to his Cuban father.

Juan Graterol: "El Grate"
Like many players, his nickname is a variation of his last name.

Mike Scioscia: "Sosh"
Like many coaches and players, his nickname is a variation of his last name.

Tribute patch: "Mom and Dad"
"That's where it starts," he said. Scioscia's mother was a teacher, so during his childhood summers, she would often drive him all over Pennsylvania so he could play baseball.

Astros, Angels set to begin Players Weekend

By Richard Dean / Special to MLB.com

When Marwin Gonzalez takes the field this weekend in Anaheim, the versatile Astros utility man will be wearing "Margo" on the back of his jersey as part of MLB's inaugural Players Weekend, designed for Major League players to showcase their personalities.

It's an opportunity for fans to see another side of players. Players will wear baseball jerseys with nicknames inspired by youth league designs. All 30 clubs will participate Friday through Sunday.

Players Weekend comes as the first-place Astros open a three-game series against the Angels at Angel Stadium, with Houston's Collin McHugh ("Snap Dragon 2") squaring off against rookie Parker Bridwell ("PBrig"). The Astros hold a 12 1/2-game lead over the Angels and Mariners, both of whom are tied for second place in the American League West.

"It's a fun day, everybody has an opportunity to show our personality and fans get to know you a little bit better," Gonzalez said. "So it's a good day for the fans and a fun day for us, too."

A lot of the names on jerseys to be worn by the Astros are quite original. Among the best are Jake Marisnick ("Big Fudge"), Josh Reddick ("Red Dawg"), Yuli Gurriel ("El Yuli") and Carlos Beltran ("Ivan"). Some cool Angels nicknames will be featured by Albert Pujols ("The Machine"), Cam Bedrosian ("Bedrock") and Luis Valbuena ("Mono").

Major Leaguers know that youth players try to emulate them.
"There are kids everywhere trying to follow us everywhere, like watching the games," Gonzalez said. "They come here and have a special day, too, watching us play. It's an encouragement for them. They will see baseball as a fun sport."

There will also be a tribute patch sewn on sleeves to allow the players to write the name or names of important people who helped direct or inspire their careers.

The game-worn jerseys will be auctioned at MLB.com/auction, with all proceeds donated to the MLB-MLBPA youth development foundation.

**Things to know about this game**

- McHugh has gotten a swing and miss on 28.6 percent of the four-seam fastballs he has thrown in the upper third of the strike zone this season. That ranks fourth among pitchers with at least 50 four-seamers thrown in that area.

- Houston backup catcher/designated hitter Evan Gattis could be activated on Friday or over the weekend. He has a clean bill of health after playing two Minor League games in his rehab. Gattis suffered a concussion when Tampa Bay's Corey Dickerson's backswing caught him in the mask on Aug. 3.

- Bridwell has little experience against Houston, facing only four Astros. Marisnick is the only Astro with a hit off Bridwell.

**Thursday's best: Burger cycles in big game for Kannapolis**

By William Boor / MLB.com

Everything went right for Jake Burger on Thursday as he hit for the cycle and matched his career high with five hits in Class A Kannapolis' 6-5 win over Greensboro in 11 innings.

The White Sox No. 12 prospect singled in the second, homered in the third, tripled in the fifth and, after drawing a walk in the seventh, completed the fourth cycle in the history of the Kannapolis franchise with a ninth-inning double.

"He left a fastball belt-high and I took it to right," Burger told MiLB.com. "It was one of those that was kind of in between, could I have got a triple? I don't know. I don't think so, but it was placed perfectly and I was happy I was standing on second because it was the first time I hit for the cycle. Everyone was pumped up. There were a lot of hugs going around and a lot of congratulations, from both our guys and the Greensboro players."

Then, just for good measure, Burger added on another hit, a single, in the 11th when he reached on what was intended to be a sacrifice bunt.

"I can't even recall the last time I bunted for a base hit," Burger said. "It was just my night. It was supposed to be a sacrifice bunt, but I placed it in the right spot. It's funny how the baseball gods work sometimes."
When it was all said and done, Burger, whom the White Sox selected out of Missouri State with the 11th overall pick in the 2017 Draft, had reached base in all six of his plate appearances and was 5-for-5 with three RBIs and a run scored.

The 21-year-old has already put together two 5-for-5 games in his brief career and is batting .293 with three homers and 24 RBIs through 39 games with Kannapolis.

**Other top prospect performances from Thursday's action:**

- No. 26 overall prospect Luis Robert (White Sox No. 4) drove in a pair of runs and collected a couple of extra-base hits in his second game back from the disabled list with the DSL White Sox. Robert, who finished 2-for-4 with a double and a triple, is hitting .280 through the first 26 games of his professional career.

- D-backs No. 2 prospect Jon Duplantier matched his career high with nine strikeouts over five dominant innings for Class A Advanced Visalia. Duplantier lowered his ERA to 1.69 through 10 starts with the Rawhide after posting a 1.34 ERA in 13 games with Class A Kane County. Duplantier walked three but gave up just one hit in the scoreless outing.

- Angels No. 3 prospect Matt Thaiss put Double-A Mobile on the board with a solo homer in the first inning of the club's win over Biloxi. The homer was Thaiss' ninth this season, but his first at the Double-A level. After finishing 2-for-3, Thaiss is batting .324 through 38 games with Mobile.

- Marlins No. 7 prospect Brian Miller has multiple hits in four of his past five games after going 3-for-5 with two doubles for Class A Greensboro. Miller, who is 11-for-23 (.478) over the past five games, is hitting .337 through 47 games this season.

- Angels No. 8 prospect Jaime Barria picked up the win after firing five scoreless frames in his debut with Triple-A Salt Lake. Barria, 21, threw 38 of his 55 pitches for strikes, struck out two, gave up three hits and didn't issue a walk. The right-hander has had an impressive season thus far, pitching across three levels. Barria posted a 2.48 ERA (11 starts) with Class A Advanced Inland Empire and a 3.21 ERA in 12 starts with Double-A Mobile.

- Phillies No. 10 prospect Dylan Cozens put together his third two-homer game of the season in Triple-A Lehigh Valley's win over Syracuse. Cozens, who has 25 homers this season, hadn't homered since July 22nd before hitting a solo blast in the fourth. Cozens later added a two-run homer in the seventh before finishing 2-for-4.

- Red Sox No. 12 prospect Bobby Dalbec collected four hits for the first time this year and matched his season high with four RBIs for Class A Greenville. Dalbec, who finished 4-for-5 and is 6-for-10 over the past two games, highlighted a four-run third with a two-run homer, his 10th this season.

- Brewers No. 14 prospect Monte Harrison posted a season-high four hits in Class A Advanced Carolina's win over Winston-Salem. Harrison got off to a fast start as he hit a two-run homer, his 21st, in the first inning en route to a 4-for-6, three-RBI performance.
• Twins No. 14 prospect Brent Rooker hit his 16th homer of the season and his seventh blast of the month in Class A Advanced Fort Myers' loss to Clearwater. Rooker, the No. 35 overall pick from the 2017 Draft, doubled in a run in the first and then hit a two-run homer in the third as he finished 2-for-4 with three RBIs.

• Pirates No. 19 prospect Clay Holmes fired 48 of his 76 pitches for strikes as he spun six scoreless innings for Triple-A Indianapolis. Holmes, who struck out five and gave up just two hits, hasn't allowed a run in three of his past five starts.

• Rangers No. 19 prospect A.J. Alexy kept his opponent scoreless for the second time in his past three starts with Class A Hickory. The 19-year-old, whom the Rangers acquired in the Yu Darvish trade, yielded two hits over six innings while walking one and striking out eight.

• Orioles No. 25 prospect Gabriel Ynoa led Triple-A Norfolk to a win with six scoreless innings on the mound. Ynoa, who gave up just two hits and fired 57 of his 87 pitches for strikes, has a 5.38 ERA through 20 starts with the Tides, but he has thrown the ball well lately. The righty has a 2.67 ERA through five starts in August and has posted a quality start in four of his past five outings.

• Rockies No. 29 prospect Chad Spanberger extended his hitting streak to eight games with the first two-homer game of his career in Rookie-level Grand Junction's win over Orem. Spanberger, hitting .303 through the first 46 games of his career, went deep in both the second and fourth innings in his 2-for-4, three-RBI performance.

FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS

Perez gets through 7, Rangers beat Angels 3-0

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. -- It was supposed to be over, all those early season hopes of a playoff spot, when the Texas Rangers sent ace Yu Darvish to the Dodgers and starting catcher Jonathan Lucroy to the Rockies.

The Rangers were six games under .500 on Aug. 1, a team worth giving up on.

"That's not the way we look at it," said Texas rookie Drew Robinson. "We believe in the guys we have here."

Robinson hit a two-run homer as the Rangers continued an improbable push for a wild-card spot Thursday night, riding seven strong innings from Martin Perez to a 3-0 win over the Los Angeles Angels.

Texas has won eight of 11, pulling within a game of the final AL wild card. Despite trading stars for prospects.
"We told ourselves we haven't played our best baseball yet, no matter who we had here," Robinson said. "It seems like it's finally starting to click and it's making the games a lot more fun."

Perez (9-10) won his fourth consecutive start. He had two runners aboard in each of the second and third innings, but escaped both situations and cruised from there. He allowed seven hits, struck out three and didn't walk a batter.

"They're an aggressive hitting team," Perez said. "I tried to throw pitches for groundballs. This is a game you have to fight and compete for."

The Angels opened the series as a hot team on the move. The opened the series having won nine of 11 and briefly held the second wild-card spot, but they lost three of four to the Rangers to fall a half-game behind.

"Nobody's looking back," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Nobody was going into this series thinking, `OK, we came off a good trip.' Those guys beat us.

"We need to swing the bats consistently. On the mound we did OK. We need to just get back at it tomorrow. Guys are playing hard, are playing well. This series they took from us."

Perez threw 73 strikes in his 99 pitches. Robinson's two-run homer in the third provided all the offense he would need, but Mike Napoli added a solo shot in the fourth. It was Napoli's 27th home run.

ROOKIE SAVE

One night after Tony Barnette eared his first career save for Texas, it was Ricardo Rodriguez's turn. The 24-year-old right-hander coolly retired the Angels in order in the ninth.

"I try to do my job in any situation they put me in -- five, six, seven, any inning," he said. "I'm trying to do the same. I don't try to be nervous and show emotions."

TROUT MINI-SLUMP

The Angels are built around superstar Mike Trout, and by his lofty standards, he is in a minor slump. Trout went hitless in three at-bats Thursday with a walk and is in a 3-for-23 skid.

"Mike is still having some good at-bats, but like anyone in this game, sometimes they're not going to fall in," Scioscia said. "He's taking his walks. They pitched him tough. Mike is fine."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Rangers: Struggling RHP Tyson Ross (3-3, 7.04 ERA) has lost his spot in the rotation and been moved to the bullpen. Ross missed the first 2 1/2 months of the season following surgery for thoracic outlet syndrome and then almost three weeks with a blister. RHP Nick Martinez is expected to take his spot in the rotation.
Angels: 3B Yunel Escobar (oblique) is scheduled for another workout day in Anaheim on Friday before likely going on a rehab assignment. ... OF Ben Revere fouled a ball off his left knee Tuesday, bruising it enough that he has yet to return. Scioscia said the foul did not hit the knee cap but the muscle directly above it.

UP NEXT

Rangers: Plan to call up Martinez (3-4, 5.38) from Triple-A Round Rock to start series opener Friday in Oakland. Martinez was scratched from his Thursday start for Round Rock, where he is unscored upon in his last four starts. RHP A.J. Griffin was scheduled to start Friday, but has been pushed back to Sunday.

Angels: RHP Parker Bridwell (7-1) will try to return to form Friday when he opens a three-game series at home against the Astros. He allowed four runs on six hits in five innings Sunday in Baltimore, but the Angels are 11-1 in games he’s started.

FROM FOX SPORTS

Angels need Trout to get on track vs. Astros

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.