Clips

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Today’s Clips Contents

FROM THE LA TIMES (Page 3)
- Angels’ Albert Pujols proud to have finished strong

FROM THE OC REGISTER (Page 4)
- Daniel Wright pitches his best game as Angels defeat Astros
- Angels Notes: Done for the season, Albert Pujols looks for a return to field in ‘17
- Miller: Arte Moreno didn’t get his money’s worth out of the 2016 Angels
- On deck: Astros at Angels, Saturday, 6 p.m.

FROM ANGELS.COM (Page 10)
- Trout 1 SB, 1 HR shy of MLB’s first 30-30 since ‘12
- Angels back Wright in first big league win
- Pujols shut down following impressive season
- Skaggs looks to grab momentum heading into offseason
- Angels draw 3M fans for 14th straight season

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS (Page 14)
- Marte homers to lead Angels over Astros

FROM FOX SPORTS (Page 16)
- Angels continue weekend series without Pujols
FROM THE LA TIMES

Angels’ Albert Pujols proud to have finished strong

Pedro Moura

Shut down for this season’s final weekend, Albert Pujols reflected Friday on his fifth year as an Angel. He was proud to finish with a .268 average, 31 home runs and 119 runs batted in despite plantar fasciitis in his right foot.

“Obviously I wish I could’ve played in the last five games, but with my foot injury, I also understand that I want to have a healthy off-season,” Pujols said. “I don’t want to do something where I have to have surgery again and not get myself ready for spring training. I played for the last month the way I’m feeling right now, but they really don’t want me to, and I don’t want to fight that. And let’s face it: What does it mean for us?”

Pujols spoke before the Angels’ 7-1 victory over Houston on Friday at Angel Stadium, their 73rd of 2016 in 160 tries. They have not been in playoff contention for months; on Wednesday, after he sat out two starts in pain, they decided to hold Pujols out through the weekend finale.

So, on Thursday, Pujols underwent shock wave therapy on his right arch. The same issue in his left foot forced him to miss the final two months of 2013, and Pujols underwent surgery last off-season on his right foot that made his opening-day readiness uncertain.

“I’m blessed that I was able to be ready on opening day when I was supposed to miss the first two months of the season,” Pujols said. “From that standpoint, this was a great year overall. I wasn’t able to train the way that I wanted to in the off-season. I wasn’t sure if I was gonna be ready for spring training. But I was, and it was a little bit of a challenge. But I was able to finish strong.”

He hit .293 with a .322 on-base percentage and .510 slugging percentage in the second half while the foot pain flared up because of an issue with brand-new orthotics.

“I didn’t walk as much because I was getting a lot of hits,” Pujols said. “To go from hitting .239 at the All-Star break to finish the season .268, that’s a lot of hits. I feel like I got in a groove right after the All-Star break. I’ll be expecting that out of myself all next year.”

Pujols will be 37 when he reports to spring training. He is owed $140 million for the next five seasons. Conventional wisdom says he will only decline from here. But Pujols thinks both he and the team can improve. He said they did not contend this season primarily because of the season-ending elbow injuries suffered by pitchers Garrett Richards, Andrew Heaney and Nick Tropeano.

“Let’s face it, bro: Look at the top of our rotation,” Pujols said. “When you lose three guys in your rotation, that’s hard, because those are the guys you count on. Those are tough guys to replace. To be able to overcome that, you have to have, like, a freakin’ All-Star team. But I think we have the core here. We’re gonna have a better year next year, hopefully.”

Pujols made a career-low 28 starts at first base this season. He envisions playing more first base next year, but acknowledged he has little control over whether he will be capable.
“You listen to your body. Well, sometimes I don’t listen too much,” he said. “I want to be out there. When I can take a day off to help me out, I don’t really listen.”

Asked whether he anticipated ever learning to heed his aging frame’s desires, Pujols said he cannot imagine doing so. During his rise to fame in St. Louis, he played with so many veterans who regularly fought through injuries that it became his own predilection.

“It’s hard for me now to try to switch that, because that’s how I grew up,” he said. “It’s just hard for me, because I feel like when my team needs me I want to be out there.”

But, now, the prospect of a fully healthy season is impossible to imagine. He can only learn to cope with the future pain that is virtually guaranteed.

“Maybe if I would’ve taken care of my body back then,” he said Friday, as his voice trailed off.

Short hops

Rookie right-hander Daniel Wright recorded the victory Friday for the Angels with six innings of one-run baseball. He received the win, and the Angels set a new American League record with 24 winning pitchers in one season. … Left-hander Tyler Skaggs will start Saturday for the Angels and conclude his season. He missed three starts because of soreness in his forearm that was eventually diagnosed as a flexor-pronator strain. Skaggs returned in July after August 2014 Tommy John surgery.

FROM OC REGISTER

Daniel Wright pitches his best game as Angels defeat Astros

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

ANAHEIM – In this era of advanced stats trumping old school numbers, don’t try to tell a pitcher like Daniel Wright that wins don’t matter.

“I’m excited,” Wright said after picking up his first major league victory in the Angels’ 7-1 win over the Houston Astros on Friday night. “I don’t think it’s completely sunk in yet. It’s been a long time coming.”

Wright, a 25-year-old right-hander who was claimed on waivers from the Cincinnati Reds earlier this month, made his major league debut back in May. Since then he had pitched in eight big league games, including six starts, with the goose egg in his win column.

He said it didn’t shake his confidence, though.
“Fake it till you make it,” he said. “You go out with a little chip on your shoulder. You think you’re better than the guy in the box. That’s the way you have to think or you’re going to get pushed around in this game.”

Wright had been pushed around a bit in his first three Angels starts this month, but he gradually improved. Last time out, also against the Astros, he gave up three runs in six innings.

This time, he gave up one run in six innings, easily the best outing of his seven big league starts.

“He showed what he can do tonight when he executes his pitches and is pitching ahead in the count,” Manager Mike Scioscia said. “He has a good arm. He stayed on top of things tonight.”

Wright finished with a 5.40 ERA in five starts, although the last two will give him and the club something positive to take into the winter as they see where he may fit in next year’s plans.

Wright led the way as the Angels won for the eighth time in their last nine games for the Angels, a late hot streak despite the fact they have been out of the race for months.

Another player who is vying for a spot on next year’s team, Jefry Marte, continued his nice week. Marte hit his second homer of the week – the other was a grand slam – to go along with two doubles.

The Angels acquired Marte last winter as a third baseman, but he’s barely played that position because of the presence of Yunel Escobar.

With Escobar out with a sore shoulder, Marte started just his 13th game of the season at third. Mostly he’s played left field, a position he had not played until this season. He has also played first.

The Angels could have an opening at third next season if they don’t pick up Escobar’s $7 million option. More likely, the Angels will hope that Marte can play enough left field in winter ball to get more comfortable at that spot.

His bat seems to be the least of his issues. He has hit 14 homers in about half a season’s worth of at-bats, with a .790 OPS.

“Jefry in spring training was maybe a little slow getting started,” Scioscia said. “He got off to a really rough start at Triple-A. He’s always hit left-handed pitching, but he’s made some adjustments. We talked all year this guy can hit the ball hard and hit it a long way. He’s doing it against lefties and righties. He’s confident right now.”

Before Marte’s homer, the first big hit of the night for the Angels belonged to Kaleb Cowart, who had a three-run double in the second to put the Angels ahead, 3-1.

Cowart is also a natural third baseman, but the Angels have been trying him out at second. While he’s been fine on defense, he still hasn’t hit. After hitting .174 in 52 plate appearances last year, this year he’s hitting .185 in 83 plate appearances.
Mike Trout also stole two bases, bringing his season total to 29. With two games left, Trout is on the precipice of several milestones. He also has 29 homers and 99 RBIs, with an OPS of .993.

**Angels Notes: Done for the season, Albert Pujols looks for a return to field in ‘17**

BY JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

ANAHEIM – With his 2016 season over, Albert Pujols is looking forward to turning back the clock in 2017.

Pujols, who played his last game of the season on Monday, underwent what Manager Mike Scioscia called a “shockwave” treatment for his plantar fasciitis on Thursday.

The idea was to get the healing started as soon as possible. Pujols, who said he does not need any other procedures, is hoping a normal winter can help him return to being a regular first baseman in 2017.

“I’m going to be ready to play first base,” Pujols said Friday. “Hopefully I’ll get to train the way I want and I’ll come back as a first baseman. I want to get back on the field.”

Pujols, 36, underwent foot surgery last November, which interrupted his workout routine leading into this season. As a result of that – as well, obviously, the toll of age – Pujols played just 28 games at first, and 123 at designated hitter.

Pujols had said in previous years that he didn’t like to DH, but he accepted it this season.

“It was alright,” he said. “I’m not going to be doing that next year.”

Scioscia wasn’t willing to commit to Pujols playing more first, though.

“We’re a better team when he plays first base,” Scioscia said. “He’s a terrific first baseman, but not at the expense of losing what he needs to do in the batter’s box.”

**WEAVER QUESTIONABLE, SKAGGS IN**

Jered Weaver, who came out of his last start with tightness in his back, is still questionable to start the season finale on Sunday.

Although Weaver said after Monday’s start that he was confident he would be able to start, on Friday afternoon he said it hinged on how he came out of his bullpen session later in the afternoon.

If Weaver is unable to take the ball – for a game many suspect would be his final with the Angels after 11 years – Jhoulys Chacin is expected to start.
Tyler Skaggs will start on Saturday after missing most of the month with a mild flexor pronator strain. Skaggs said he’s scheduled to throw about 50 pitches, an outing that is intended simply to prove he’s healthy heading into the winter.

**ALSO**

Heading into Friday’s game, the Angels were in position for the 10th pick in 2017 draft, two games “ahead” of the No. 11 Colorado Rockies. If the Angels and Rockies finish tied, the Rockies would pick 10th and the Angels 11th, by virtue of the Rockies having a worse record in 2015. That could be significant, because under the current system the top 10 picks can’t be forfeited for signing a free agent who declines a qualifying offer. A new collective bargaining agreement is currently being negotiated, so that could be changed...

Yunel Escobar was out of the lineup for a third straight game with a sore shoulder. Scioscia said he’s not sure if Escobar will be able to play this weekend...

The Angels announced that they have sold 3 million tickets for the 14th consecutive season. The only active streak belongs to the New York Yankees, at 18 seasons.

**Miller: Arte Moreno didn’t get his money’s worth out of the 2016 Angels**

By JEFF MILLER / STAFF COLUMNIST

ANAHEIM – If you work in this business long enough, you’re going to write obituaries.

The same is true if you cover the Angels long enough.

Although, with the Angels recently, long enough hasn’t really been long at all.

So there I was Friday night, at Angel Stadium, with baseball set to usher in another October and all the possibilities that month annually brings, to bury a season that ran out of possibilities long ago.

This is hardly news, of course, unless you consider it news to point out something as obvious as an optic-yellow foul pole. And let the record show that it took only five paragraphs to work the word “foul” into a story on this baseball team.

The Angels are so buried that their games have been happening underground, or at least off the radar, for four months, since the early days of June when their deficit in the American League West reached double figures for good.

It is remarkable how a team with the sport’s seventh-highest payroll can spend nearly an entire season being irrelevant, no more a factor than the Tampa Bay Rays, whose whole payroll wouldn’t buy three seasons of Albert Pujols.
For all the millions he just spent, Angels owner Arte Moreno didn’t even buy himself a fleeting chance. Then again, the guy is still paying Josh Hamilton. So how much could Arte really have expected this summer?

Among the top 14 payrolls, the Angels were the only club that entered the season’s final week with no possibility of advancing to the playoffs. Even the Yankees were still in contention as late as Thursday, and they traded away their best players weeks ago.

There was an offense that, going back to the opening day of spring training, never was going to be good enough and a pitching staff that was Swiss-cheesed by injuries.

In this game against Houston, the Angels’ starting pitcher was someone named Daniel Wright. His anonymity actually made him the more unlikely sounding starter on a night when the Astros gave the ball to the colorfully named Brad Peacock.

Like the Angels, the NL West-conquering Dodgers also suffered an absurd number of strains, sprains and fractures, the difference being they had the organizational depth to flourish anyway.

History will show that the 2016 Angels spent precisely two days above .500, and one of those days was a given since they didn’t play.

In other words, one of the Angels’ most productive days all season happened only because they were idle.

On April 13, the Angels won at Oakland to improve to 5-4. Two days later, they lost at Minnesota to fall back to 5-5. That was it, officially, for their time spent as a “winning” team.

In reflection, that early series against the Twins set the season’s tone – if the sound made by a flushing toilet can be considered a tone.

Minnesota opened the year with nine consecutive defeats before sweeping the Angels over the third weekend of April.

From that point, both teams – as if infected by one another – wobbled woozily down the path toward mathematical elimination.

So it has been five seasons of Pujols and Mike Trout and still not a single playoff game won. Among the remarkably sad facts surrounding this franchise at the moment, that has to be the most stunning.

It sounds even worse when adding in the reality that Pujols will finish the season with 119 RBI, his highest total since 2009, and that Trout again has performed like the AL’s most valuable player.

Wouldn’t you think that combined production alone would be worth one meaningful game in September? Just one?
Trout will end up first in Wins Above Replacement for the fifth season in a row, a feat last achieved by Babe Ruth, who played at a time when WAR had only one meaning and it had nothing to do with baseball.

The problem with WAR is that it measures an individual’s performance in a game that requires a team to succeed. You don’t have to be an expert in analytics to understand that nine is greater than one.

Although it’s like comparing baseballs to basketballs – and the two sports really are that different when it comes to this topic – just for fun think about the possibility of LeBron James’ team never winning a playoff game.

Ridiculous, right? I’m guessing the NBA would change the entire qualification process just to ensure that its best player appeared in its biggest event.

Baseball, however, is stuck with its best player toiling away in a distant time zone on a team that looks miles away from mattering.

After this weekend, mercifully, the Angels’ season will be allowed to rest in pieces, another year done too soon and yet still not soon enough.

On deck: Astros at Angels, Saturday, 6 p.m.

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

Where: Angel Stadium
TV: Fox Sports West, 6 p.m.
Did you know? Earlier this week the Angels had back-to-back games with seven-run innings for the first time since 1997.

THE PITCHERS
ANGELS LHP TYLER SKAGGS (5-5, 4.30)
Vs. Astros: 2-1, 2.25
At Angel Stadium: 1-3, 4.67
Hates to face: None
Loves to face: None

ASTROS RHP COLLIN McHUGH (12-10, 4.53)
Vs. Angels: 5-2, 2.86
At Angel Stadium: 1-2, 2.78
Hates to face: Mike Trout, 6 for 19 (.316), 2 HRs
Loves to face: Carlos Perez, 1 for 8 (.125)
FROM ANGELS.COM

Trout 1 SB, 1 HR shy of MLB’s first 30-30 since ‘12

By Austin Laymance / MLB.com |

ANAHEIM -- Mike Trout is on the verge of Major League Baseball’s first 30-home run, 30-steal season since 2012, when he and Milwaukee’s Ryan Braun each accomplished the feat.

Trout stole two bases in the first inning of Friday night’s 7-1 win over the Astros, increasing his season total to 29. The American League MVP candidate has 29 homers and 99 RBIs.

With two games remaining, Trout has an opportunity to become the first Angels player with 30 homers, 30 steals and 100 RBIs in a single season. Braun was the last player in baseball with such a season, doing so in ’12.

Trout walked in his first plate appearance on Friday, setting the franchise record for a single season with 114. He then stole second and third.

Trout’s 29 steals are his most since ’13, when he swiped 33 bases. He’s been caught stealing seven times for an 80.5 percent success rate this year.

"I think he's doing a great job of picking his spots," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "I think he's been a very high-percentage basestealer this year. He's obviously picking his spots and he's getting good jumps and he's on the verge of stealing 30 bases."

Friday was the first time Trout has stolen multiple bases in a game since June 16, 2014, against the Indians. He’s stolen two bases in a single inning six times in his career, but had not done so since that same game against the Tribe.

Trout’s career high for steals is 49 in ’12, his second year in the Majors. He had 33 stolen bases in ’13, but missed 30-30 by three homers. Then, though he hit 36 homers in ’14 and 41 in '15, his stolen-base totals dipped to 16 and 11, respectively.

For a stretch of 26 seasons, from 1987-2012, MLB produced at least one 30-30 player every season but one in a non-strike year. This is the first multi-season drought since 1984-86.

Angels back Wright in first big league win

By Austin Laymance and Brian McTaggart / MLB.com |

ANAHEIM -- Kaleb Cowart ripped a three-run double in the second and Jefry Marte banged a solo homer an inning later to send the Angels off and running to to a 7-1 win over the Astros on Friday night at Angel Stadium.
Angels right-hander Daniel Wright picked up his first Major League win by allowing one run, no walks and six hits in six innings. The run he allowed came in the second, when Carlos Correa walked, advanced to third on a pair of groundouts and scored on a Teoscar Hernandez ground-rule double.

"I don't think it's completely sunk in yet that it's my first win, but it's a long time coming," said Wright, who helped the Angels set an American League record with 24 pitchers recording wins this season. "It's kind of a weight off my shoulders, and we'll go from here into the offseason."

Cowart's bases-loaded double was the big blow in a four-run second inning that put the Angels ahead 4-1 against Astros righty Brad Peacock, and Andrelton Simmons added a two-run single in the fifth inning to push the lead to 7-1.

"I don't think he executed quite as well," Astros A.J. Hinch said of Peacock. "His fastball command was a little off. His breaking ball was a little bit loose. They won a couple of critical at-bats. There was a few walks in there, a few extra-base hits, and his night was over. Unfortunately it caps a September for him where he was pretty good when we needed him. It's going to leave a bad taste in his mouth at the end of the year."

The Angels have won four in a row, eight of their last nine and 10 of their last 13.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED
Trout sets record: Mike Trout walked in his first plate appearance to set the Angels' single-season record with 114. He then stole second and third, leaving him one stolen base and one home run a way from his second 30-30 season.

"I think he's doing a great job of picking his spots," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "I think he's been a very high-percentage basestealer this year. He's obviously picking his spots and he's getting good jumps and he's on the verge of stealing 30 bases."

Peacock rocked: Making his fifth start of the season, Peacock's run of success came to an end when he was hit for seven runs (five earned) on five hits in 4 2/3 innings. He had posted a 2.21 ERA in his first four starts in September after taking the rotation spot that came open when Dallas Keuchel was lost for the season with left shoulder inflammation.

"I fell behind guys and they just took advantage of it," Peacock said. "I didn't have my fastball location tonight, and that was pretty much it."

Mashing Marte: Marte has 14 homers in 86 games in his first season with the Angels. He has two homers, including a grand slam, and three doubles over his last three games. Marte's solo shot traveled a Statcast-projected 427 feet and had an exit velocity of 105 mph.

"This guy can hit the ball hard and hit it a long way," Scioscia said. "He's confident right now."

Paulino shines: Rookie right-hander David Paulino threw three scoreless innings in relief for the Astros, allowing one hit in just the third outing of his career. After starting and throwing three innings on Sept. 9 at Cleveland, he pitched a scoreless inning Sept. 18 at Seattle. Paulino will head to the Arizona Fall League and could be an option in the rotation next year.
"That was clearly the highlight of the day for us in a night where we didn't have a lot of highlights," Hinch said. "Really good breaking ball. I thought he loosened up a little bit and got a little bit more aggressive with his fastball. We saw him get to the mid-90s, which is not something we've seen a ton. Just really good to see him relax, get in an extended outing and have some success before he gets to the Fall League."

QUOTABLE
"I don't like playing games that don't matter, and obviously it's a little bit of a lull for us. It's no excuse to come out and not play well. We'll come out tomorrow ready to play." -- Hinch, on the Astros' first game after being eliminated from the postseason race

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS
With the victory, the Angels are assured of finishing with fewer than 90 losses. The franchise's most recent 90-loss season occurred in 1999, the club's last season before Scioscia became the manager.

WHAT'S NEXT
Astros: Right-hander Collin McHugh (12-10, 4.53 ERA) will take the mound for the Astros in Saturday's 8:05 p.m. CT game against the Angels. The Astros have won seven of the last eight games started by McHugh, who's 5-0 with a 2.93 ERA in eight starts since Aug. 24.

Angels: Left-hander Tyler Skaggs (3-3, 4.13 ERA) starts on Saturday in his first action since Sept. 9. He's missed time with a strained left forearm. First pitch is scheduled for 6:05 p.m. PT.

Pujols shut down following impressive season
By Austin Laymance / MLB.com |

ANAHEIM -- Albert Pujols and the Angels have decided to shut down the slugger for the final three games of the season. Pujols has been playing through plantar fasciitis in his right foot for an extended period.

"I think it's in his best interests not to push this thing anymore, and I think it's the right decision," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said before Friday night's series opener against the Astros.

Pujols had tests on his right foot this week and had a "shock wave procedure" on the arch in the foot on Thursday, according to Scioscia. The Angels don't anticipate Pujols needing offseason surgery.

"It's just a process to try and promote healing; that's it," Scioscia said.

Pujols entered Friday fourth in the Majors with 119 RBIs. The 36-year-old played in 152 games, hitting .268/.323/.457 with 19 doubles and 31 home runs.

How much pain has Pujols been dealing with?
"A lot," Scioscia said. "That's what's special about Albert. Not only has he, historically through his whole career, played through things like this, he's performed with them. His ability to perform when he's banged up is as good as it gets. He's been banged up a lot this year and he had a terrific season for us."

Pujols has said he would like to play more first base next season. He was primarily a designated hitter this year and logged a career-low 233 2/3 innings in the field.

"We're a better team when he plays first base," Scioscia said. "He's a terrific first baseman, but not at the expense of losing what he needs to do in the batter's box. We'll have conversations, see how he feels and see how much he mixes in down there."

Worth Noting

- Left-hander Tyler Skaggs will start on Saturday, his first action since Sept. 9. He's been sidelined by a mild left forearm strain. In his first season back from Tommy John surgery, Skaggs is 3-3 with a 4.13 ERA in nine starts.

- Right-hander Jered Weaver hopes to start the season finale on Sunday. Weaver, approaching his first offseason as a free agent, threw a bullpen session on Friday. He was removed from his start on Monday with tightness in his lower back. The Angels should know more about his status on Saturday.

"We're going to see how Jered feels moving into it, and if he feels good and he can take the ball, he would like to start Sunday. We would like to have him start Sunday," Scioscia said. "We hope it's not his last game."

Skaggs looks to grab momentum heading into offseason

By Austin Laymance / MLB.com |

Tyler Skaggs will make his first start for the Angels in three weeks and the Astros will counter with Collin McHugh as the teams square off at Angel Stadium on Saturday in the penultimate game of the 2016 season.

The Astros want to finish the season on a high note after being eliminated from the American League Wild Card race during their off-day on Thursday.

"We've really had to fight and claw to get to where we're at," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "The fact that it's not enough is not because of effort, it's not because of preparation, it's not because of an attention or a will to win. It's just not winning enough games. We've got a ton to learn and a ton to get better at, and lessons learned about our players and the areas of the game we can improve."

The Astros have won seven of the last eight games started by McHugh. The right-hander is 5-0 with a 2.93 ERA in eight starts since Aug. 24.

Skaggs (3-3, 4.13 ERA) has been sidelined since Sept. 9 because of a strained left forearm. He's in his first season back from Tommy John surgery, so the Angels wanted their young left-hander to go into the
offseason with peace of mind after making one final start. Skaggs won't throw more than 80 pitches, according to Angels manager Mike Scioscia.

**Things to know about this game**

- Astros second baseman Jose Altuve is heading toward his second batting title in three seasons. Altuve is leading the AL with a .337 average, 15 points ahead of the Red Sox's Dustin Pedroia (.322). Hinch said Altuve would play in two of three games in this series. He started on Friday and went 1-for-3.

- After stealing two bases in the series opener, Angels center fielder Mike Trout is one stolen base and one home run shy of his second 30-30 season.

- Astros rookie infielder Alex Bregman won't play this weekend after dealing with a hamstring injury in September. He returned from the injury to play three games this week, but the Astros don't want to risk further injury now that the team is out of contention.

**Angels draw 3M fans for 14th straight season**

By Austin Laymance / MLB.com |

ANAHEIM -- The Angels' home attendance has passed 3 million for the 14th consecutive season, the club announced on Friday.

The Angels' streak of drawing at least 3 million fans is the second longest in baseball, behind only the Yankees, who have done so for 18 straight. The Halos are one of seven clubs to draw over 3 million fans to their home games in 2016, joining the Blue Jays, Cardinals, Cubs, Dodgers, Giants and Yankees.

The Angels' average attendance per home game is 37,506, which ranks third in the American League behind the Blue Jays (41,878) and Yankees (37,978).

Since joining the AL in 1961, the Angels have drawn over 117 million fans to their home games, behind only the Yankees (133 million) and Red Sox (120 million).

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**FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**Marte homers to lead Angels over Astros**

ANAHEIM, Calif. -- Daniel Wright didn't think getting his first major league win would take quite as long as it did, but it was worth the wait.

Jefry Marte homered and scored twice and Wright earned his first victory to help the Los Angeles Angels beat the Houston Astros 7-1 on Friday night.
In Wright's ninth big league appearance and his seventh start, he limited the Astros to one run and six hits while striking out five.

It took two teams and a few stints in the minor leagues this season before Wright was finally able to earn a win and breathe a sigh of relief.

"I don't think it's really sunk in yet," Wright said. "It's been a long time coming, it's been since May since I've been starting in the bigs. It's a weight off my shoulders and I'll go from here into the offseason."

Wright (1-5), who was claimed off waivers from Cincinnati on Sept. 4, became the 24th pitcher to get a win for the Angels this season, setting an American League record. The Texas Rangers previously held the mark with 23 winning pitchers in 2014.

"Daniel has been on the verge of doing what he did tonight," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "He had good fastball command, definitely brought his secondary pitches into the game and I thought he was a little more aggressive tonight than when he pitched in Houston against these guys (last weekend)."

Mike Trout set a club record with his 114th walk of the season, breaking Tony Phillips' previous Angels record set in 1995. Trout stole two bases, bringing his season total to 29.

The Angels broke the game open with a four-run second inning. Brad Peacock (0-1) loaded the bases with no outs for Kaleb Cowart, who doubled to empty them. Kowart took third on the throw, allowing him to score while Ji-Man Choi was caught in a rundown two batters later.

Marte led off the third inning with his 14th home run. The Angels scored twice in the fifth inning when Andrelton Simmons' two-run single chased Peacock.

"I don't think he executed quite as well," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "His fastball command was a little off, his breaking ball was a little loose. They won a couple critical at-bats. There was a few walks in there, a few extra-base hits and hit night was over."

Making just his fifth start this season, Peacock was charged with seven runs -- five earned -- and five hits in 4 2/3 innings. He walked four and struck out five.

"Unfortunately, it caps a September for him where he was pretty good where we needed him," Hinch said. "It's going to leave a bad taste in his mouth at the end of the year."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Astros: 3B Alex Bregman has been shut down for the remaining three games. Astros manager A.J. Hinch said the team decided not to risk further irritation of his recent hamstring injury.

Angels: RHP Jered Weaver is questionable for his Sunday start, which could be his final with the Angels. Weaver left his last start with tightness in his back and Jhoulys Chacin will likely start in his place.

UP NEXT
Astros: RHP Collin McHugh will try to remain undefeated in the month of September when he starts the second game of the series. McHugh is 3-0 this month but his September win streak dates to 2014, as he's gone 11-0 over the last three seasons, the longest active streak of any its kind for any major league pitcher. In three starts against Los Angeles this season, McHugh is 1-0 with a 2.84 ERA.

Angels: LHP Tyler Skaggs will make his first start since Sept. 9, when he was removed from the rotation with a mild flexor pronator strain in his pitching arm. Skaggs will face the Astros for the first time since June 5, 2014. He's 3-3 with a 4.13 ERA in 10 starts since returning from Tommy John surgery this season.

**FROM FOX SPORTS**

**Angels continue weekend series without Pujols**

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ANAHEIM, Calif. -- The Los Angeles Angels' Tyler Skaggs and the Houston Astros' Collin McHugh are the scheduled starters for Saturday's game, but more notable is who won't be there.

The Angels made it official Friday when they shut down Albert Pujols for the rest of the season. He will wind up missing the final five games because of plantar fasciitis in his right foot, something that has bothered him for the past month.

Many criticized the Angels for signing Pujols to a 10-year contract prior to the 2012 season, knowing Pujols would be 41 by the end of the contract. Injuries would surely slow him down, it was said.

And while Pujols has suffered a number of injuries primarily to his legs and feet since joining the Angels, he has managed to stay in the lineup and put up numbers. He is exactly halfway through his contract at five years, and has played in at least 152 games in four of them, including this season.

He has hit 28 home runs or more in four of the five seasons, including 40 as recently as last year. And his 119 RBIs this season were the most since he had 135 in 2009 with the Cardinals, when he won the last of his three MVP awards.

And while Angels manager Mike Scioscia has made Pujols more of a designated hitter than first baseman in order to keep him off his feet as much as possible and keep him healthy, Pujols said Friday he wants that to change.

"I'm going to be ready to play first base," Pujols told reporters Friday. "Hopefully I'll get to train the way I want and I'll come back as a first baseman. I want to get back on the field."

Pujols accepted Scioscia's decision to DH him this season -- he started 28 games at first base and 123 as the DH -- but it wasn't like he loved it.

"It was all right," he said. "(But) I'm not going to be doing that next year."
That, of course, is up to Scioscia, who wasn't willing to make any decisions just yet.

"We're a better team when he plays first base," Scioscia said. "He's a terrific first baseman, but not at the expense of losing what he needs to do in the batter's box."

The Astros' George Springer will be in the lineup Saturday as Astros manager A.J. Hinch wants to give his right fielder the opportunity to play in all 162 games. No Astro has played in all 162 since Carlos Lee in 2007.

Springer also is one home run away from 30 for the season, and second baseman Jose Altuve and shortstop Carlos Correa are four RBIs shy of 100.

With the club eliminated from playoff contention, those individual milestones are something Hinch is paying attention to.

"There's a couple of guys that are chasing some individual plateaus that are important to them, and if it's important to them, it's important to me," Hinch said. "A hundred RBIs for Altuve and Correa would be a great cap to their personal seasons. George is one homer shy of 30 and he's played in (160). So I'll pay attention to a little bit of that."