



Armed & Dangerous

With an improved fastball,
Los Angeles Angels ace
JERED WEAVER is
striking fear in hitters

By Ryan Hatch

Jered Weaver always had talent. At Simi Valley (California) High School, he was a naturally gifted athlete who starred in baseball and basketball. While playing for Long Beach State University, the 6'7" righthander received the Golden Spikes Award as the best amateur baseball player in the country.

At the time, Weaver didn't have to do much more than show up to dominate. But when Weaver was selected in the first round of the 2004 amateur draft by the Los Angeles Angels franchise, success didn't come as easily. He struggled with inconsistency during his first three seasons in the majors. He won the first seven starts of his career in 2006, but by 2008 he was having a tough time stringing wins together and his ERA swelled. His struggles forced Weaver to realize that it would take more than sheer talent to succeed.

Over the past two seasons Weaver's hard work has resulted in spectacular results. After leading the majors in 2010 with 233 strikeouts, he has been even better this season, with a 6-4 record and 2.35 ERA through May 23. Earlier this year, he became the first pitcher in major league history to earn six wins by April 25.



Family Affair

Growing up, Weaver saw firsthand what it meant to have a strong work ethic. His dad, Dave, would wake up each morning at 4:30 a.m. for his job as an electrical contractor, digging trenches under the Southern California sun. But while older brother Jeff, who pitched in the majors for 11 seasons and won a World Series with the St. Louis Cardinals in 2006, often worked with his dad at the job site, Jered was more laid back. He preferred surfing to ditch digging.

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Despite his casual approach, a teenage Jered had few peers when it came to sports. "Jered has always been good at everything," his dad told *ESPN The Magazine* after his younger son broke into the big leagues. "It's given him an unshakable confidence."

Jered may be self-assured, but he has never hesitated to take advice from his father or his brother, both of whom he keeps in close contact with during the season. "He knows my game better than anyone," Jered says of his

dad. "He's coached me since I was really young." When Weaver struggles, Dave and Jeff are usually the first people he calls. "My brother is pretty much just like me, so [Jeff] will call and we'll end up talking a lot."

Workhorse

Weaver has mowed down hitters this year, striking out 70 through May 23. "He's just picked up where he left off from last year," says Los Angeles pitching coach Mike Butcher. "He's continued to stay within himself and carry it into this season."



Standing Tall
The 6'7" Weaver, who led the AL in strikeouts last year, often calls his dad, Dave, (inset, right), and brother, Jeff (inset, left), a World Series champ, for baseball advice.

A big part of Weaver's success has come from increasing the training routine he adopted two seasons ago. He has especially stepped up his cardio workouts, regularly pounding the treadmill. "He has been the lead dog in the weight room," says Butcher, who's worked with Weaver nearly every year since his arrival in the big leagues. "It certainly has helped him become a better pitcher."

Since his first year in the majors, in 2006, Weaver has increased his workload each season. He threw 123 innings as a rookie. Last season he tied for third in the AL with 224½ innings pitched. When asked about the secret to his dominance, Weaver deflects the attention to his teammates. "When you get [run] support, when you get timely hitting and good defense behind you, you're going to win some games," he says.

Weaver is being too humble if he ignores the impact that his wicked two-seam fastball has had on the outcome of games. Weaver worked hard to develop the new pitch the last two seasons. When he throws it well, it has more movement than a traditional four-seam pitch,

ducking and diving at the very last moment before it reaches home plate.

For Weaver, whose fastball averages about 90 miles per hour, it took some time to get control of a pitch that can easily dance out of the strike zone. "I had been a four-seam guy forever," he says. Now that Weaver has mastered the two-seamer, he has five pitches that he can use to baffle batters: a two-seam and a four-seam fastball, a slider, a changeup, and a curveball. "He has a great mix of pitches," Butcher says. "He can throw them whenever in the count at any time."

That collection of pitches has made Weaver the ace on an Angels team that expects to make the playoffs every season. After the Angels finished under .500 last season for the first time since 2003, the team is thankful for Weaver's hot start, which has it back in the mix to win the American League West.

On a late afternoon in May, with the Angels visiting the Boston Red Sox, Weaver was getting dressed at his locker. He was running late, thanks to an afternoon workout and time in the trainer's room. But Weaver put that out of his mind as he quickly tied his shoes. He rose from his chair, walked slowly through the clubhouse tunnel into the dugout and then trotted onto the field with a businesslike manner. It was time for Jered Weaver to go to work.

JERED'S FAVORITE STUFF



ANIMAL
Dog

CARTOON CHARACTERS
Tom and Jerry



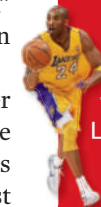
SPORT TO PLAY (OTHER THAN BASEBALL)
Golf

ACTRESS
Angelina Jolie



COLOR
White

TEAM TO WATCH
Los Angeles Lakers



VIDEO GAME
Tiger Woods PGA Tour

BOOK
Of Mice and Men



FOOD
Mom's goulash

CAR
Aston Martin



CHECK OUT JERED'S POSTER!

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