

MLB

Mike Trout, Kris Bryant win MVP awards

By JAY COHEN
Associated Press

CHICAGO — While the Los Angeles Angels stumbled, Mike Trout soared again.

Just too good to ignore.

Trout won the AL MVP award Thursday for the second time in three years, and Chicago Cubs third baseman Kris Bryant was voted NL MVP in balloting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America.



Bryant

While the Angels finished fourth in the AL West, Trout was his usual brilliant self. The center fielder batted .315 with 29 homers, 100 RBIs and 30 steals. He scored 17 percent of Los Angeles' runs, the highest percentage for an AL player since Rickey Henderson with the 1985 New York Yankees.

Trout, who was a unanimous winner in 2014, had finished second in three of the past four years. He becomes the first MVP from a losing team since Alex Rodriguez for Texas in 2003 and just the fifth player ever to accomplish the feat,



In this Sept. 3, 2016, file photo, Los Angeles Angels' Mike Trout is congratulated by teammates after hitting a solo home run off Seattle Mariners starter Taijuan Walker during the first inning of a baseball game, in Seattle.

AP Photo/Stephen Brashear, File

joining Hall of Famers Ernie Banks (1958 and 1959), Andre Dawson (1987) and Cal Ripken (1991).

"It's an unbelievable feeling," Trout said. "Just trying to get better every year."

Bryant hit .292 with 39 homers and 102 RBIs in just his second year in the majors, helping the Cubs to their first World Series title since 1908. The No. 2 overall pick from the 2013 draft becomes just the sixth

player to win rookie of the year and MVP in one or consecutive seasons.

"Kris is just an impressive young man in every aspect," Cubs owner Tom Ricketts said. "(He) is very mature, professional, light-hearted, but serious at the same time. He's just kind of a dream player for any organization."

The Las Vegas native is the first NL MVP from the Cubs since Sammy Sosa in 1998 and the

seventh overall for the once-forlorn franchise enjoying its best run in decades. First baseman Anthony Rizzo and right fielder Jason Heyward each won a Gold Glove, and Rizzo finished fourth in the MVP balloting. Manager Joe Maddon and pitchers Kyle Hendricks and Jon Lester also were finalists for major awards this offseason.

Voting by BBWAA members

was completed by the start of the playoffs.

Bryant was a runaway winner, grabbing 29 of 30 first-place votes and 415 points. Nationals second baseman Daniel Murphy, who batted .347 for the NL East champions, was the runner-up with the other first-place vote and 245 points. Dodgers shortstop Corey Seager was third after he was the unanimous winner of the NL Rookie of the Year award on Monday.

Seager will look to follow in Bryant's footsteps next year.

Bryant was the unanimous NL Rookie of the Year after he hit .275 with 26 homers and 99 RBIs last season. Bryant joins Dustin Pedroia (2007-08), Ryan Howard (2005-06) and Cal Ripken (1982-83) as the only players to go Rookie of the Year-MVP in consecutive seasons. Ichiro Suzuki (2001) and Fred Lynn (1975) are the only players to win the awards in the same year.

Trout received 19 first-place votes and 356 points. Mookie Betts, who batted .318 with 31 homers, 113 RBIs and 26 steals in 158 games for the Boston Red Sox, was second with 311 points, and AL batting champion Jose Altuve of Houston was third. Retiring Red Sox slugger David Ortiz got one first-place vote finished sixth in his final year in the majors.

Houston Rockets guard James Harden (13) passes the ball as Portland Trail Blazers guard Evan Turner (1) and forward Mason Plumlee (24) defend in the second half of an NBA basketball game on Thursday, Nov. 17, 2016, in Houston.



AP Photo/Bob Levey

NBA

Harden's triple-double leads Rockets past Blazers

Associated Press

HOUSTON — In the postgame locker room after the Houston Rockets' 126-109 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers on Thursday night, James Harden teased teammates, laughed about excess shower water caught in his beard and joked with reporters.

It was a stark contrast from the more solemn and stern version of Harden from last season.

"I've been having fun all year, even in games we lose," Harden said. "This is a special group of guys, coaching staff included, and

this locker room is definitely enjoying this ride right now."

Harden had 26 points, 14 assists and 12 rebounds for his third triple-double of the season to help the Rockets overwhelm the Trail Blazers in their highest-scoring game of the season.

Harden completed the triple-double in the third quarter. The Rockets rebounded a night after scoring just three points in the final 6 minutes of a 105-103 loss in Oklahoma City.



"It's the chemistry," Rockets coach Mike D'Antoni said.

"Everybody is feeling good about themselves. We're going to make mistakes, and we still have some improving to do, but as long as they come with that attitude every day and work at it and fix their mistakes, good things will happen."

C.J. McCollum led Portland with 26 points, Maurice Harkless had 19, and Damian Lillard 18, his second-lowest output of the season.

"We kind of suck right now — it's that simple," Lillard said. "We're usually a pretty good offensive team. We've been bad on offense and bad on defense. We're trying hard, but we're not making the smartest plays -- just not good enough. We're not very good right now."

Portland outscored Houston by a combined 12 points in the second and fourth quarters but was ultimately doomed by a 29-point deficit in the first and third quarters.

The game was tied at 62 at halftime, but Houston took a 100-83 lead into the fourth quarter.

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