

= Nick Adenhardt =

Nicholas James " Nick " Adenhardt (August 24 , 1986 ? April 9 , 2009) was an American right @-@ handed baseball starting pitcher who played two seasons in Major League Baseball (MLB) for the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim . In four career games , Adenhardt pitched 18 innings and posted a win @-@ loss record of 1 ? 0 , with nine strikeouts and a 6 @.@ 00 earned run average (ERA) .

A graduate of Williamsport High School , Adenhardt was highly touted as a high school prospect until an injury in his final game required Tommy John surgery . He was drafted by the Angels in the 14th round of the 2004 Major League Baseball draft , and began playing in their minor league system after the surgery was a success . He spent three full seasons in the minor leagues before making his major league debut on May 1 , 2008 . After appearing in three games , Adenhardt spent the rest of 2008 in the minor leagues developing his skills , and in 2009 he earned a spot in the Angels ' starting rotation .

Just after pitching his first start of 2009 , Adenhardt was killed in a collision with a drunk driver . Both the Angels and the Salt Lake Bees , for whom Adenhardt played in 2008 , suspended their next games . There were many tributes to him over the course of the season , including his former teammates celebrating with him by spraying champagne and beer on one of his jerseys after they clinched the 2009 American League West division championship .

= = Early years = =

Nicholas James Adenhardt was born in Silver Spring , Maryland , the only son of Janet and Jim Adenhardt , a former United States Secret Service officer . His parents divorced and Janet later remarried Duane Gigeous , with whom she had a son named Henry , who is a pitcher at the University of Oregon . Adenhardt played Halfway Little League Baseball for Gehr Construction and attended Springfield Middle School in Williamsport , Maryland . He pitched for the Hagerstown PONY League for six years , and was a member of the 1999 team that won the Maryland District 1 title .

After graduating from middle school , Adenhardt attended Saint Maria Goretti High School in Hagerstown , Maryland . He played shortstop and outfield , in addition to pitching . While attending Saint Maria Goretti , Adenhardt was a guard on the basketball team that won the Baltimore Catholic League championship . At the age of 14 , Adenhardt joined the Oriolelanders , a showcase team composed of Maryland amateur players and sponsored by the Baltimore Orioles , where he would stay for four years . In 2003 , at the age of 16 , Adenhardt pitched for the Youse 's Maryland Orioles , who went on to win the All American Amateur Baseball Association Tournament for that year .

Adenhardt transferred to Williamsport High School after his sophomore year , where he gave up basketball to focus solely on baseball , as a pitcher . Scouts began closely following him when he was named the top junior prospect by Baseball America . Adenhardt had a 6 ? 0 record with a 1 @.@ 04 earned run average during the regular season in his junior year , and as a result was named the Gatorade Player of the Year in Maryland . In a 1 ? 0 loss during the playoff quarterfinal matchup , he threw a no @-@ hitter and had 14 strikeouts . Entering his final high school season , Baseball America dubbed Adenhardt the top high school prospect in the country . In his senior year , Adenhardt threw a perfect game in his very first outing , striking out 15 of the 21 batters faced . Entering the final regular season game of his high school career , he had a 5 ? 1 record , a 0 @.@ 73 ERA and an average of 2 @.@ 2 strikeouts per inning . During November of his senior year , Adenhardt signed a letter of intent to play with the North Carolina Tar Heels baseball team at the University of North Carolina , although his chances of being drafted high continued to climb and the North Carolina coaching staff saw their chances of acquiring Adenhardt to be slim .

= = Baseball career = =

In his final high school game , in front of two dozen scouts , Adenhardt felt a pop in his elbow after throwing a curveball to the third batter . The injury , which abruptly ended his season , was a partial

ligament tear in his elbow that required Tommy John surgery . Though he had originally been projected as a first @-@ round draft pick , the injury caused his stock to plummet two weeks before the 2004 Major League Baseball draft . He fell to the 413th overall pick in the 14th round , selected by the Anaheim Angels . Angels scout Dan Radcliff and director of scouting Eddie Bane convinced Adenhardt to forego a scholarship offer from the University of North Carolina and signed him to a \$ 710 @,@ 000 bonus (\$ 820 @,@ 000 in 2010) on July 26 , 2004 . After having Dr. James Andrews perform the Tommy John surgery , Adenhardt spent the next year rehabilitating his elbow at the Angels ' rehab facility in Tempe , Arizona . During that time , Adenhardt also attended classes at Arizona State University .

Adenhardt made his professional debut on June 25 , 2005 with the Pioneer League 's Orem Owlz , the Angels ' Rookie League affiliate . In his lone appearance for the Owlz , he pitched six innings , allowed one unearned run , struck out seven , and earned the win . He spent the rest of the 2005 season with the Angels of the Arizona League that summer . In 13 games for the Angels , he had a 2 ? 3 record , a 3 @.@ 68 ERA , and 52 strikeouts . The following spring , at the age of 19 , Adenhardt was one of twelve pitchers who earned a non @-@ roster invitation to the Angels ' big league camp . As the 2006 season began , he was also considered the Angels ' sixth best prospect and the 90th @-@ best overall by Baseball America . Adenhardt was assigned to the Cedar Rapids Kernels , the Angels ' Low @-@ A affiliate , after spring training . He pitched well for the Kernels . In 16 games , Adenhardt had 10 wins , a 1 @.@ 95 ERA , and 99 strikeouts in 106 innings pitched . His performance earned him a starting assignment in the 2006 All @-@ Star Futures Game on June 21 and a promotion to the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes , the organization 's High @-@ A affiliate , soon after . He continued his efforts with the Quakes , winning five games and losing two in nine starts . Adenhardt was a member of the United States Olympic Qualifying team in 2006 , along with fellow Angels prospect Brandon Wood .

In 2007 , Adenhardt became a top @-@ ranked prospect in the Angels organization . Baseball America ranked him as the 34th @-@ best prospect in baseball and second in the Angels organization . He was called up to the Double @-@ A Arkansas Travelers for which he played the 2007 season . In 26 appearances , he had a record of 10 ? 8 with a 3 @.@ 65 ERA . The following year , Adenhardt was called up to the Triple @-@ A Salt Lake Bees , where he spent the majority of the 2008 season . He was declared the 24th @-@ best prospect in the majors that season . In the month of April , Adenhardt had a 4 ? 0 record with a 0 @.@ 87 ERA and 21 strikeouts in 31 innings . As a result , he was brought up to the Angels ' major league roster , and was scheduled to make his debut on May 1 , pitching on three days ' rest . Shortstop Maicer Izturis was placed on the disabled list when Adenhardt was brought up .

Adenhardt made his Major League debut as the starting pitcher against the Oakland Athletics at home in Angel Stadium of Anaheim . At the time , he was the youngest active @-@ roster pitcher in the major leagues . In his debut , he gave up five earned runs and walked five in two innings , earning a no @-@ decision in a 15 ? 8 loss . Adenhardt was disappointed in his first appearance , saying , " I let down the team first . You always want to go out and prove yourself to your teammates and your manager and your coaches . I was a disappointment to myself also . " His second start was against the Kansas City Royals , where he earned another no @-@ decision , allowing three earned runs and striking out three over 4 ? innings in a 5 ? 3 win by the Angels . The reaction to his second start was more positive , with manager Mike Scioscia saying that " it was definitely a start in the right direction . " Adenhardt earned his only career decision , a victory , on May 12 , 2008 , against the Chicago White Sox in Anaheim , giving up four earned runs in 5 ? innings en route to a 10 ? 7 Angels victory . After the win against the White Sox , Adenhardt was sent back down to the Salt Lake Bees . He spent the rest of the 2008 season at Salt Lake , amassing a 9 ? 13 record with a 5 @.@ 76 ERA in 26 games .

Adenhardt was declared the best prospect in the Angels organization going into 2009 , and was ranked 68th overall on Baseball America 's 2009 Top 100 Prospects list , citing his 158 innings pitched per year over the past three seasons . Adenhardt earned his spot in the Angels ' 2009 starting rotation during spring training . He appeared in six starts and had a 3 ? 0 record with a 3 @.@ 12 ERA over 26 innings pitched . He allowed only nine earned runs and five walks , while striking out

18 . Adenhardt opened the 2009 season as the third starter in the Angels ' rotation . In his season debut on April 8 , 2009 , he earned a no @-@ decision , giving up seven hits and no runs while striking out five batters and walking three in six innings against the Oakland Athletics at Angel Stadium of Anaheim .

= = Death = =

Shortly after midnight on April 9 , 2009 , Adenhardt was involved in a car crash in Fullerton , California , just hours after being the starting pitcher in the previous night 's game . Police reported that an individual driving a red Toyota Sienna minivan ran a red light and broadsided a gray Mitsubishi Eclipse in which Adenhardt was a passenger , sending it crashing into a telephone pole . Courtney Stewart and Henry Pearson , the driver and another passenger in the Mitsubishi respectively , were pronounced dead at the scene . Adenhardt and Jon Wilhite , a third passenger in the Mitsubishi , were taken to University of California , Irvine Medical Center , where Adenhardt died as a result of his injuries . Wilhite suffered internal decapitation and survived after undergoing five hours of surgery to reattach his skull to his spine six days after the crash .

The minivan driver fled the scene on foot , but was later arrested and identified as Andrew Thomas Gallo . On May 27 , 2009 , Gallo was indicted by the Orange County grand jury on three counts of murder , one count each of felony hit @-@ and @-@ run , driving under the influence and causing injury , and driving with a .08 percent blood alcohol or higher and causing injury and death . Gallo had a blood alcohol content of .19 percent two hours after the crash , and was also driving with a suspended license . On June 8 , 2009 , Gallo entered a not guilty plea at his arraignment . After a two @-@ week jury trial held in September 2010 , Gallo was convicted on three counts of second @-@ degree murder , two counts of driving under the influence causing great bodily injury , and one felony count of hit @-@ and @-@ run . A bench trial found Gallo guilty of driving on a suspended license . On December 22 , 2010 , Gallo was sentenced to 51 @-@ years @-@ to @-@ life in jail .

= = = Memorials = = =

Adenhardt 's family released this statement , following his death :

Nick 's family expresses sincere gratitude for all the help the Angels have provided . He lived his dream and was blessed to be part of an organization comprised of such warm , caring , and compassionate people . The Angels were his extended family . Thanks to all of Nick 's loyal supporters and fans throughout his career . He will always be in everyone 's hearts forever .

Angels General Manager Tony Reagins released a statement as well :

The Angels family has suffered a tremendous loss today . We are deeply saddened and shocked by this tragic loss . Our thoughts and prayers go out to Nick 's family , friends , loved ones and fans .

The Angels postponed the game against the Athletics for the day immediately after Adenhardt 's death . In remembrance of Adenhardt , for the rest of the 2009 season , a black number 34 patch was placed above the heart on the Angels ' uniforms , his locker in the Angel Stadium of Anaheim clubhouse remained as it was , and a locker was assigned to him on road games . The team hung one of Adenhardt 's jerseys in their dugout during games . A black @-@ and @-@ white photo of Adenhardt along with his name and number was added to the center field fence at Angel Stadium . A makeshift shrine , dedicated to Adenhardt , was established outside the home plate gates to Angel Stadium . The makeshift shrine was maintained by Angels personnel until its removal in December 2009 . The Angels do not have any plans to create a permanent memorial .

The Salt Lake Bees , the Angels ' AAA affiliate , also postponed their game on April 9 against the Reno Aces . The team also wore a number 32 patch through the season representing Adenhardt 's jersey number during his time with the Bees . A number 32 was also painted on the grass in front of the Bees dugout .

On September 28 , 2009 , when the Angels celebrated winning the American League West division , they honored Adenhardt by spraying champagne and beer on one of his jerseys , and then gathered

in front of the outfield wall memorial for a team picture . The appropriateness of celebrating with alcohol in respect to Adenhardt 's death being alcohol @-@ related was questioned , but family members were supportive of the celebrations . Adenhardt 's father Jim stated , " That 's baseball . If Nick were there , he 'd have been throwing a few back as well . " Adenhardt 's teammates voted to give his family a full playoff share for the 2009 playoffs worth \$ 138 @,@ 038 @.@ 57 . Angels manager Mike Scioscia dedicated his 2009 American League Manager of the Year Award to Adenhardt .

The Angels established the Nick Adenhardt Pitcher of the Year award given to an Angels pitcher for outstanding performance throughout the regular season . The team commissioned Harry Weber to create a bronze statue of Adenhardt , which will be on display in the Angel Stadium trophy case . Smaller versions of the statue will be presented to all honorees of the Nick Adenhardt award .

The Adenhardt family created the Nick Adenhardt Memorial Fund , which is designed to provide financial support to youth baseball organizations . The goal is to lend a helping hand to struggling leagues around the country to buy equipment and cover expenses to keep youth baseball functioning . The first presentation from the fund was for \$ 5000 to the Halfway Little League in Halfway , Maryland . Two annual events , the Nick Adenhardt 5K Run and Walk and the Nick Adenhardt Baseball Camp , have been established to benefit the foundation .

Adenhardt 's number 21 jersey was retired by the Cedar Rapids Kernels , the Angels ' Class A affiliate , on June 20 , 2010 . The Kernels , the Kernels Foundation , and the Adenhardt family also established the Nick Adenhardt Memorial Scholarship , a yearly \$ 1 @,@ 000 scholarship . The Orem Owlz , for whom Adenhardt briefly played in 2005 , have worn special jerseys , which bear the likeness of a screen @-@ printed picture of Adenhardt , along with his number 34 . The Little League Baseball field where Adenhardt played in Halfway , Maryland , was rededicated as the Nicholas James Adenhardt Memorial Field . The Hagerstown Suns , the Minor League Baseball affiliate in Hagerstown , Maryland , held a fundraiser for the Nick Adenhardt Memorial Fund and added Adenhardt to their Wall of Fame at Municipal Stadium . The city of Manhattan Beach , Wilhite 's home town , erected the Pearson @-@ Wilhite @-@ Stewart @-@ Adenhardt Commemorative Wall at Marine Avenue Park honoring all four victims of the crash .

In an ongoing memorial , Angels pitcher Jered Weaver writes the initials " NA " in the dirt on the back of the pitcher 's mound before each start in honor of Adenhardt . Weaver also named his son Aden in memory of Adenhardt . Mike Napoli , who caught Adenhardt 's final game , goes out to center field before every game , and writes Adenhardt 's name in the warning track dirt . Darren O 'Day , who came up through the Angels minor system with Adenhardt , writes Adenhardt 's number and initials on the brim of every new cap he wears . Baltimore Orioles pitcher Miguel González paid tribute to Adenhardt , his former minor league teammate , by wearing one of his gloves in his first major league start , which was against the Angels on July 6 , 2012 .

Adenhardt is buried at Greenlawn Cemetery , in Williamsport , Maryland , just across the street from Springfield Middle School , where he attended and played baseball as a child . A public memorial service was held at Williamsport High School the day after his burial .

Subsequent to Adenhardt 's death , his former high school teammate and close friend , David Warrenfeltz , was hired as the Williamsport High School baseball coach . In a crash described as " eerily similar to Adenhardt 's " , the school 's star pitcher and girlfriend were both killed in collision in 2012 .