



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
Tuesday, May 15, 2018

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Late miscue wastes Odorizzi's start in makeup

Jarrid Denney | MLB.com | May 15, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- Jake Odorizzi battled inclement weather and a gritty Mariners offense to turn in one of his best outings of the season on Monday night. But it ended as a no-decision and a 1-0 Twins loss at Target Field.

Odorizzi tossed six scoreless innings and struck out seven batters to lower his ERA to 3.35, but Seattle prevailed after tallying a late run off of Minnesota's bullpen. The game was played as a makeup of the April 8 matchup between the two clubs that was wiped out by snow. With its victory, Seattle clinched a 2-1 series win.

Originally slated to begin at 6:10 p.m. CT, Monday's game was delayed by one hour and 42 minutes due to rain. Odorizzi came out strong, though, and struck out three of the first seven batters he faced. He has now surrendered three earned runs or fewer in each of his last four outings.

"He's been throwing the ball well," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "There's no doubt about that. We just couldn't give him any run support."

Odorizzi worked his way out of numerous jams on the night, stranding Ben Gamel at second after he smashed a leadoff double in the third. In the fifth, he allowed another leadoff double, this time to Ryon Healy, but escaped the jam when Ehire Adrianza made a tremendous running catch while ranging back into shallow center field.

"Had a lot of great defensive plays behind me," Odorizzi said. "Adrianza made that great play to end the fifth inning. Just had one of those days where guys were making plays and I was just doing my best to do my job."

Mariners starter Wade LeBlanc matched Odorizzi pitch-for-pitch and didn't allow a Minnesota batter to get farther than first base over six innings. He ended the night with four strikeouts and no walks, limiting Minnesota's hard contact; only Joe Mauer and Logan Morrison hit balls with an exit velocity greater than 100 mph, according to Statcast™, off LeBlanc.

"The story for us was we just couldn't find a way to get anything going off LeBlanc," Molitor said. "He had us off-balance and his cutter was giving us a lot of trouble, both lefties and righties. ... Tough way to lose a game."

The Mariners finally broke the scoreless standoff when Dee Gordon cracked a leadoff double against Trevor Hildenberger in the eighth. Gordon scored soon after when Jean Segura laid down a sacrifice bunt and Morrison's throw to first sailed down the right-field line.

"[Segura] was showing early, so I was trying to get in there and get the out at third," Morrison said. "Dee's obviously really fast and I didn't have a chance there. [Catcher Mitch] Garver said 'one,' and I went to reset my feet and just threw it away. Obviously a routine play that you've got to make, and I didn't make it."

Hildenberger fought his way out of the jam to keep the score at 1-0, but the Mariners' bullpen ensured that a Twins comeback was not in the cards. James Pazos, Nick Vincent and Edwin Diaz each threw an inning to finish off the game.

In the ninth, Diaz struck out Brian Dozier, Max Kepler and Eduardo Escobar to sit down the heart of Minnesota's lineup in order and notch his American League-leading 14th save of the season.

HE SAID IT

"It got me right in the backside. That's good aim by him; I don't have a very big target back there, but he managed to get me." -- Odorizzi, on Kyle Seager's liner that struck him in the fifth inning

Airing grievances

Robbie Grossman was ejected after the fifth inning for arguing balls and strikes with home-plate umpire D.J. Reyburn. Reyburn called Grossman out looking for the second out, and Grossman was later ejected from the game and replaced in left field by Eddie Rosario in the sixth.

"[Grossman] was letting him know he wasn't happy with the calls," Molitor said.

UP NEXT

The Twins will begin a two-game home set with the Cardinals at 7:10 p.m. CT on Tuesday. Jose Berrios will get the start for Minnesota, hoping to break out of a recent skid. He owns an ERA of 8.84 over his last four starts and has been struggling with curveball command. Berrios will face off with St. Louis' Jack Flaherty (0-1, 3.60 ERA).

Molitor: Sano not very close to 100 percent **Jarrid Denney | MLB.com | May 15, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS -- Miguel Sano took batting practice and ground balls prior to Monday's 1-0 loss to the Mariners, but it may still be a bit before the Twins' slugger returns to game action.

Sano has been on the 10-day disabled list since May 1 (retroactive to April 28) with a left hamstring strain, and Twins manager Paul Molitor said that while Sano is making progress, he still isn't 100 percent healthy.

"I think he still is a little tentative, for me, and how he's going about it," Molitor said. "I don't know how you would judge the level of effort he's giving on some of the running he's doing, but to me, it's not very close to 100 percent. The swing's fine and he looks pretty good taking grounders and those type of things. But those hamstrings, like I've said -- to practice and try to get ready to where you can go compete in a game and then be able to sustain for nine innings, multiple days consecutively -- that's a challenge with that type of injury."

Molitor said the Twins hope to get Sano into a game "sooner than later" and that it helps that the team is in the midst of a strong stretch of play. But the ultimate deciding factor will be whether they believe he is fully healthy.

"Mostly, it's about doing the right thing for the right player at the right time," Molitor said.

Castro to undergo surgery

Twins catcher Jason Castro will have surgery to repair a meniscus in his right knee, Molitor said on Monday.

The 30-year-old backstop, who was Minnesota's starting catcher to begin the year, went on the 10-day DL on May 5.

Molitor said Castro will undergo a partial meniscectomy.

"He went out to Colorado. The opinion there is that surgery was recommended," Molitor said. "It's disappointing. Hopefully we'll get a little better feel on the length of rehab once the procedure is completed tomorrow morning."

Castro has been battling the knee injury for much of the season. Molitor said he has been told that the recovery length could be 4-6 weeks.

"It's one of those things where you know he has a history, and then he tweaks it," Molitor said. "Then he feels good. Eventually, it starts flaring up again, so you try to find out what's going on. Finally, between different people talking it over and analyzing his history and himself, and the images they were able to get through testing, this is probably the right thing to do."

Worth noting

- Ervin Santana threw to batters on Monday for the first time this season. It was a big step in his recovery from a Feb. 6 surgery in which a calcium deposit was removed from his right middle finger.

"He threw all of his pitches, had a good day," Molitor said. "He'll do that again on Thursday, with the idea of pitching an extended game next Monday."

- Twins right-hander Trevor May will head to Triple-A Rochester on Thursday to make a rehab start, Molitor confirmed. In his first start back since he underwent Tommy John surgery last spring, May threw three scoreless innings at Class A Advanced Fort Myers on Saturday.

"We've tweaked his schedule a couple of times as far as an extra start at extended before we start the rehab clock and those sorts of things," Molitor said. "But once we got him to Fort Myers, our goal was for him to have just one appearance there before moving him to higher competition."

Twins mourn loss of former INF, skipper Quilici

Jarrid Denney | MLB.com | May 14, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Twins mourned the loss of one of their own after it was announced that former Minnesota player and manager Frank Quilici passed away at the age of 79 after a lengthy illness.

The club released the following statement: "The Minnesota Twins today mourn the passing of Frank Quilici. Frank not only exemplified professionalism as a player, coach, manager and broadcaster for the Twins, he also served as a community leader in the Twin Cities working to make sure youth had recreational opportunities and contributed to many other charitable causes. The club, like many of his friends throughout the game, is thinking of the Quilici family during this difficult time."

@Twins

We take a break from the action: The entire #MNTwins organization is saddened by the death of former manager Frank Quilici, who passed away today at the age of 79.

The Twins signed Quilici as an amateur free agent prior to the 1961 season as an infielder. He made his Major League debut in '65, eventually appearing in 405 games for the Twins over five seasons

Quilici managed parts of four seasons for the Twins from 1972-75, going 280-287 as the team's skipper. He then joined the WCCO radio broadcast crew and worked alongside Herb Carneal from '76-77 and 1980-82.

Quilici was honored as the recipient of the Kirby Puckett Award for Alumni Community Service in 2013 for his passion in promoting organ donorship, as well as a number of other charitable causes.

Monday's top prospect performers

Mike Rosenbaum | MLB.com | May 15, 2018

- Twins' No. 7 prospect Brusdar Graterol used his triple-digit fastball to rack up a career-high 10 strikeouts as he recorded his first win of the year for Class A Cedar Rapids. The 19-year-old flamethrower has been excellent to begin his first full season, pitching to a 0.63 ERA (and 0.63 WHIP) with 21 strikeouts and one walk in 14 1/3 innings (three starts).

Sloppy defense costs Twins in makeup 1-0 loss to Mariners
Phil Miller | Star Tribune | May 15, 2018

Giving the Seattle Mariners a two-base head start eventually caught up to the Twins.

Jake Odorizzi started three of the six innings he pitched Monday by giving up a double, yet he never surrendered a run. But when Trevor Hildenberger did the same in the eighth inning, the Mariners finally cashed in their opportunity — with the help of some shaky Twins defense.

Logan Morrison fielded a bunt and threw the ball into right field, enabling the game's lone run to score, and the Twins handed the Mariners a thoughtful gift for stopping by Target Field on their way home: a 1-0 victory.

“Obviously, it’s a routine play I’ve got to make, but I didn’t make it,” said Morrison, who hadn’t committed an error in any of his previous 11 starts at first base. “I don’t have an excuse. I just threw it away.”

The play was magnified by the final score, the Twins’ first 1-0 loss since a 10-inning defeat at Cleveland Aug. 29, 2016. “But it’s certainly not why we lost the game,” manager Paul Molitor said. “The story for me was, we just couldn’t figure out a way to barrel up any balls off [Seattle starter Wade] LeBlanc.”

Yes, the game, originally scheduled for April 8 but postponed because temperatures never rose above 30 degrees that day, featured offenses that appeared just as frozen on a soggy 70-degree night — Monday’s start was delayed 1 hour, 42 minutes by rain. A day after Shohei Ohtani’s high-90s fastball held the Twins to one run in Anaheim, LeBlanc’s high-80s fastball was even tougher.

The journeyman lefthander retired 18 of the 21 hitters he faced in six innings, gave up harmless singles to the other three, and walked nobody. The weak contact produced by the Twins resulted in one popup after another; they didn’t even hit a ground ball until the fourth inning. Coming off a 10-game road trip, the Twins simply looked tired.

“He’s [got] a sneaky 88 if there ever is one. He cuts the ball, throws changeups to lefties,” Morrison said. “There were a lot of pitches that stayed on the corners pretty well.”

Relievers James Pazos, Nick Vincent and Edwin Diaz finished off the Twins, with only one hiccup: Mitch Garver doubled off Pazos with one out in the seventh inning. But Morrison grounded out and Eddie Rosario, who entered the game after Robbie Grossman was ejected, popped up, ending the brief “threat.”

Odorizzi’s night wasn’t quite so quiet, but it ultimately was just as effective. The righthander gave up four hits, and a walk and hit a batter over six innings, while striking out seven. But he had to work twice as hard as LeBlanc, because while the Mariners lefty retired the first hitter he faced in all six innings, Odorizzi kept giving up leadoff doubles — to Ben Gamel in the third inning, Ryon Healy in the fifth and Jean Segura in the sixth.

Still, Odorizzi pitched around all of them, posting the fourth qualify start of his nine-game Twins career, and his first scoreless outing since Opening Day — when he also threw six shutout innings in a Twins loss.

“I felt like I had pretty good stuff, got some strikeouts when I really needed them,” he said. “I had a lot of great defensive plays behind me.”

Hildenberger wasn’t so lucky. Dee Brown whistled his first pitch off the left-field wall. Two pitches later, Segura bunted in front of the plate, and Morrison came charging in to field it. After briefly looking at third, he turned to first — and threw well wide of Brian Dozier. The speedy Gordon trotted home.

“They were showing [bunt] early, so I’m trying to get the out at third. Dee’s obviously really fast, I didn’t have a chance there,” Morrison said. “Garver said [first base], I went to reset my feet and just threw it away. It was me looking at [Dozier] still running to the bag, vs. just throwing it to the bag.”

Frank Quilici, former Twins player, manager, broadcaster, dead at 79
Staff Report | Star Tribune | May 15, 2018

Frank Quilici, a player, coach, manager and broadcaster for the Twins over three decades, died Monday because of kidney disease at his home in Burnsville. He turned 79 on Friday, and had been in hospice care.

The Twins released a statement during Monday night’s 1-0 loss to the Mariners that read, in part, “Frank not only exemplified professionalism ... he also served as a community leader in the Twin Cities working to make sure youth had recreational opportunities and contributed to many other

charitable causes. The club, like many of his friends throughout the game, is thinking of the Quilici family during this difficult time.”

Quilici had a 280-287 record as Twins manager from 1972 to '75. He played on the Twins' World Series team in 1965, and was also with them from 1967 to '70 as an infielder. After retiring as a player, he became a coach on Bill Rigney's staff in 1971, and was promoted to manager at age 33 when Rigney was fired in July 1972. Quilici was fired after the 1975 season and later worked as a commentator on the team's radio broadcasts.

In 405 major league games, all with the Twins, Quilici hit .214 with five home runs.

“Few individuals have impacted the Twins organization more — or in as many ways — as the great Frank Quilici,” Twins President Dave St. Peter wrote on Twitter. “As a player, coach, manager and broadcaster, Frank's love for the Twins and this community was always on display. RIP Frank.”

Said manager Paul Molitor: “He's been around Twins alumni events forever. I know he's had his battles. He did a lot for this organization, he was a good ambassador.”

Quilici was born May 11, 1939, in Chicago. He played baseball at Western Michigan, where he was an All-America shortstop and played on two College World Series teams. He signed with the Twins for a \$15,000 bonus in 1961 and worked his way through the organization before his major league debut in July 1965 at age 26. In the World Series against the Dodgers, he started every game at second base for an injured Jerry Kindall, getting two hits in a six-run third inning against future Hall of Famer Don Drysdale in Game 1. Quilici finished the seven-game Series with four hits in 20 at-bats.

Quilici spent the 1966 season at Class AAA Denver before making the Twins again in 1967 as a backup at second base to rookie Rod Carew. The Twins won the AL West with Quilici on the team in 1969 and 1970, but were beaten in the playoffs both seasons by Baltimore.

When Rigney was fired by owner Calvin Griffith on July 5, 1972, Quilici took over, finishing the 1972 season 41-43. He managed through 1975, when he was replaced by Gene Mauch.

Quilici worked on the Twins radio broadcasts with Herb Carneal in 1976-77, 1980-82 and 1987. Following that, he worked at Western Diversified, a company that works with car dealers.

Quilici, who had a kidney transplant in 2012, was honored with the Kirby Puckett Award for Alumni Community Service in 2013 for his passion in promoting organ donorship among being involved in a number of other charitable causes. He was a former member of the board of directors of the Twins Community Fund and former President of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation.

He is survived by his second wife, Lila, and four children. Funeral arrangements were pending.

Twins' Jason Castro will have knee surgery, miss 4-6 weeks **Phil Miller | Star Tribune | May 15, 2018**

Jason Castro has played despite minor knee pain before, and he sounded determined, when he went on the disabled list May 5, to do it again. But after consulting with knee specialists, he has decided to seek a more permanent solution.

Castro will undergo surgery Tuesday in Vail, Colo., to have a small, torn part of the meniscus in his right knee removed. The arthroscopic procedure, called a partial meniscectomy, will keep the Twins catcher off the field for roughly four to six weeks, manager Paul Molitor said Monday.

Castro has been on the disabled list since the pain worsened during an at-bat in Chicago on May 4, but the latest flareup began several days before that. It's the same knee in which he tore the medial collateral ligament and meniscus in 2011, an injury that required major surgery that kept him sidelined for the entire 2011. Minor recurrences have sidelined him a handful of times since then, and Castro was optimistic that with a week of rest, the pain would subside again.

But when it didn't, the Twins sent him to the Steadman Clinic in Colorado for a second opinion. “The opinion there is that surgery was recommended,” Molitor said. “It's disappointing.”

But by taking care of Castro's knee now, Molitor said, the Twins hope to halt the cycle of minor recurring pain.

“He tweaks it, then he feels good, and eventually it starts flaring up again,” Molitor said. “[After] analyzing his history, images they were able to get from testing, [doctors decided] this is the right thing to do.”

Mitch Garver, who had big late-inning RBI hits back-to-back nights in victories Friday and Saturday over the Angels, will remain the starting

catcher during Castro's absence, with veteran Bobby Wilson serving as the backup.

"I'm comfortable with both him and Bobby. They're both going to get a chance to get a fair amount of time back there," Molitor said. "For Mitch, he's starting to look more comfortable in the batter's box. And we're working on some things defensively that we think will help him, not only with our pitching, but how he handles the baseball."

Etc.

- Righthander Trevor May, on track for a return from Tommy John elbow ligament replacement surgery by early June, will report to Class AAA Rochester this week and start Thursday against Syracuse. May, who pitched three innings for Class A Fort Myers on Saturday, is in the midst of a 30-day rehab assignment.

- Ervin Santana faced hitters for the first time Monday, throwing all his pitches during a session of live batting practice in Fort Myers, Fla. "He had a good day," Molitor said of the All-Star righthander, who is recovering from February finger surgery. "He's going to do that again Thursday, with the idea of pitching an extended [spring training] game next Monday." Santana becomes eligible to return May 26.

Miguel Sano runs in outfield, but Molitor says a return isn't imminent

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | May 15, 2018

Another occupant of the Twins' disabled list worked out before batting practice at Target Field on Monday, and his status is still cloudy.

Miguel Sano, who hasn't played since April 27 after straining his left hamstring, ran in the outfield and then took ground balls while Molitor watched. The hamstring is better, Molitor said, but he added that the Twins, wary of making this a recurring injury, are in no hurry to activate the All-Star third baseman.

"He's still a little tentative, for me, in how he's going about it. I don't know how you would judge the level of effort he's giving on some of the running he's doing. But to me, it's not very close to 100 percent," Molitor said. "The swing's fine, he looks pretty good taking grounders, but those hamstrings, to practice and try to get ready to compete in a game and then be able to sustain for nine innings for multiple days consecutive, that's a challenge with that type of injury."

Sano will continue to work daily, and Molitor hinted that Sano will require a rehab assignment in order to assure his team that the injury is completely healed.

"I'm hoping we have a good week here and we can think about getting him into a game sometime, sooner than later, somewhere," Molitor said. "But I'll watch him today, tomorrow, and hopefully we get a little bit more. We're trying to decide what's best for him and the club."

Etc.

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Monday's Twins-Seattle game recap

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | May 15, 2018

IMPACT PLAYER

Wade LeBlanc, Seattle

The journeyman lefthander hadn't won a start since 2016, but he held the Twins to three singles over six scoreless innings.

BY THE NUMBERS

7 Losses in 10 one-run games this season by the Twins.

1 Ejections of Twins players in 2018; Robbie Grossman was tossed when he complained too loudly after a called third strike.

Twins-St. Louis series preview

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | May 15, 2018

TWO-GAME SERIES AT TARGET FIELD

Tuesday, 7:10 p.m. • FS1, 830-AM: RHP Jose Berrios (3-4, 4.50 ERA) vs. RHP Jack Flahery (0-1, 3.60)

Wednesday, 12:10 p.m. • FSN, 830-AM: RHP Lance Lynn (1-3, 7.34) vs. RHP Miles Mikolas (5-0, 2.51)

TWINS UPDATE

The Twins are 4-3 in interleague play this year after winning 6-0 and 7-1 at St. Louis last week, when Twins relievers retired 21 of 22 Cardinals hitters they faced. Lynn, who went 72-47 over six seasons with the Cardinals, did not pitch in that series but will face his former teammates for the first time Wednesday. ... Berrios, who posted a 1.63 ERA in his first four starts of the season, has given up at least four runs in his four starts since. He has given up 18 runs in 18½ innings in that time, an ERA of 8.84. But he is 3-4 with a 3.08 ERA in seven career interleague starts, and he is 10-8 with a 4.23 ERA all-time at home. ... Fernando Rodney is 7-for-10 in save situations this season, and he has converted five in a row since April 28.

CARDINALS UPDATE

After opening May 5-0, the Cardinals have lost four of six, splitting a four-game series at San Diego over the weekend. They are 10-9 on the road but have lost five of their past seven. ... This is their second visit to Target Field, not counting two exhibition games when the ballpark opened in 2010. St. Louis was swept in a two-game series here in 2015. ... C Yadier Molina (groin surgery) is still out, but CF Tommy Pham, who sat out the Twins series last week, returned vs. the Padres, going 5-for-17 with two home runs. He is batting .319 with seven homers in 2018. ... LF Marcell Ozuna, the Cards' biggest offseason acquisition, went 0-for-6 vs. the Twins, but is batting .265 with three homers. ... Bud Norris is 8-for-8 in save opportunities.

Twins lose 1-0 to Mariners on Logan Morrison's throwing error

Brian Murphy | Pioneer Press | May 15, 2018

It was so quiet at Target Field Monday night, you could almost hear Seattle.

Rain delayed the early 6:05 p.m. start by 1 hour, 42 minutes, threatening a makeup game that forced the Mariners to squeeze in a one-day stop in Minneapolis after the original April 8 contest was frozen out.

The team announced 16,581 paid to see the rescheduled one-off, although there might have been 5,000 in the stadium as the pregame showers lingered for the start before dwindling to a drizzle on a soggy night.

Soggier was Minnesota's offense, which managed only four hits against four Mariners pitchers on a forgettable night at the plate.

And sloppier was Logan Morrison's defense at first base, which yielded the game's only run in a 1-0 defeat that threw cold water on the Twins' return home from a 7-3 road trip.

Morrison's throwing error fielding a bunt in the eighth inning proved devastating as Minnesota failed to score despite starter Jake Odorizzi's excellent six-inning start and its bullpen's yeoman's work.

"Obviously a routine play I've got to make and didn't make it," Morrison said.

Reliever Trevor Hildenberger was victimized after allowing a leadoff double to Dee Gordon.

Jean Segura quickly laid down the sacrifice. Morrison charged, plucked the ball off the grass and promptly fired it into right field past diving second baseman Brian Dozier, allowing Gordon to score the game-winner.

Although the run was earned because Nelson Cruz answered with a two-out single that would have scored Gordon, Morrison dutifully fell on his sword.

"He was showing (bunt) early so I was trying to get in there and get the out at third," Morrison said. "Dee's obviously really fast and I didn't have

a chance there. Went to reset my feet and just threw it away.”

Mitch Garver’s seventh-inning double off reliever James Pazos was the Twins’ only extra-base hit. He moved to third with one out. But Eddie Rosario, in the game after left fielder Robbie Grossman was ejected, popped out to second base as the zeros kept piling up.

Seattle starter Wade LeBlanc was masterful. The left-hander allowed only singles to Adrianza in the third, Morrison in the fifth and Joe Mauer in the sixth. None advanced as LeBlanc struck out four and did not walk anybody.

LeBlanc so frustrated the Twins that Grossman was ejected in the fifth after being called out on strikes by home-plate umpire D.J. Reyburn.

Meanwhile, closer Edwin Diaz struck out Brian Dozier, Max Kepler and Eduardo Escobar in the ninth to silence Minnesota’s bats for good.

“We just couldn’t figure out a way to get the barrel on the ball off LeBlanc,” lamented Twins manager Paul Molitor. “He kept us off balance. Tough to lose a game like that when you get back home. We couldn’t score.”

Odorizzi labored at times but was especially nasty when he needed to be. Despite allowing leadoff doubles in three of his last four innings, the Mariners failed to push across a run, stranding six and making Odorizzi work for almost every out.

He struck out seven, including Ryon Healy with two runners aboard in the sixth — the last hitter Odorizzi faced.

The Mariners threatened in the fifth when Healy doubled and Ben Gamel drew a one-out walk. But Odorizzi sandwiched strikeouts around Zunino’s pass, and shortstop Ehire Adrianza made a fabulous running, over-the-shoulder catch to rob Gordon of a bloop single and sure RBI to keep the game scoreless.

In the sixth, Segura doubled and Odorizzi hit Cruz with a pitch to put two runners on with one out. Kyle Seager’s smash up the middle ricocheted off Odorizzi’s landing foot to Adrianza, who got the force at second but could not complete the double play.

The drive stung Odorizzi, who needed several warm-up pitches to stay in the game. But with the go-ahead run on third, he bore down and struck out Healy swinging to snuff the threat.

It was the right-hander’s second outing of six-plus shutout innings, his first coming Opening Day at Baltimore. Odorizzi did not win either star.

“He’s been throwing the ball well,” Molitor said.. “We just couldn’t get any runs.”

The Twins had played only 12 of their first 36 games at Target Field after cold, snowy weather canceled four contests in April before Minnesota played a pair of “home” games against Cleveland in Puerto Rico.

Monday’s quick visit by Seattle kicked off a nine-game homestand that continues Tuesday with interleague play against the St. Louis Cardinals.

Former Twins player, manager and broadcaster Frank Quilici dies **Brian Murphy | Pioneer Press | May 15, 2018**

Frank Quilici, the second baseman who played five seasons for the Twins in the 1960s and later served as coach, manager and broadcaster for the organization, died Monday after a lengthy illness, the team announced.

He was 79.

Quilici spent his entire baseball career with Minnesota after being signed as an amateur free agent in 1961. He made his big-league debut in 1965 and was part of the Twins’ American League championship team that lost to the Los Angeles Dodgers in a seven-game World Series.

“The Minnesota Twins today mourn the passing of Frank Quilici,” the club said in a statement released during the Twins-Mariners game.

“Frank not only exemplified professionalism as a player, coach, manager and broadcaster for the Twins, he also served as a community leader in the Twin Cities working to make sure youth had recreational opportunities and contributed to many other charitable causes.

“The club, like many of his friends throughout the game, is thinking of the Quilici family during this difficult time.”

Quilici played 405 games for the Twins over five seasons (1965, 1967-70). He was then hired by the Twins as a coach under manager Bill Rigney in 1971 and before taking over managerial duties for the final 84 games of the 1972 season.

He went 280-287 in parts of four seasons as Twins manager and joined the WCCO radio broadcast crew as an analyst working alongside Herb Carneal from 1976-77 and 1980-82.

Quilici was honored with the Kirby Puckett Award for Alumni Community Service in 2013 for promoting organ donor programs. He also was a former member of the board of directors of the Twins Community Fund and former president of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation.

Knee surgery will sideline Twins' catcher Jason Castro at least a month
Brian Murphy | Pioneer Press | May 14, 2018

Twins catcher Jason Castro was eligible to come off the 10-day disabled list Tuesday. Scratch that and add at least another month of recovery.

Castro will have surgery on his right knee in Vail, Colo., and is expected to miss four-to-six weeks, manager Paul Molitor said Monday. The third operation on Castro's troublesome knee is scheduled for Tuesday morning.

"It's disappointing," Molitor said. "Hopefully we'll get a better feel on length of rehab once the procedure is completed."

Injured May 5, Castro had hoped a cortisone injection would help him avoid surgery and prompt a quicker return, but his knee did not improve. On Monday, he visited knee specialist Dr. Robert LaPrade, who recommended surgery.

The veteran was hitting .143 with 26 strikeouts in 74 plate appearances this season. He missed all of 2011 with a torn anterior cruciate ligament. Castro also had arthroscopic surgery on that same knee in September 2013.

"You know he has a history and then tweaks it and then he feels good," Molitor said. "Eventually, it starts flaring up again and you try to find out what's going on. Between different people analyzing his history, and different images they were able to get through testing, this was probably the right thing to do."

Mitch Garver has stepped into the breach, contributing to a pair of late-inning victories over the weekend against the Angels. On Friday, he singled in the tying run during a three-run ninth-inning rally in Minnesota's 5-4 victory. The next day Garver drove in the go-ahead run with a double.

Garver also was hitting .316 at Target Field compared to .216 on the road entering Monday night's game against Seattle, the start of a nine-game Twins homestand.

"With him and Bobby (Wilson), we're trying to match up the best way we can," Molitor said. "They're both going to get a chance to get a fair amount of time back there. For Mitch, he's starting to get more comfortable in the batter's box ... just a good opportunity."

SANO APPEARS 'NOT VERY CLOSE'

Third baseman Miguel Sano returned to the field for pregame work after taking Sunday off in Anaheim as he tries to strengthen a strained left hamstring that sidelined him for the 16th time this season on Monday.

Gingerly, he ran the bases under the watchful eyes of Molitor and strength coach Perry Castellano. He fielded ground balls at third base but was mostly stationary. He also took about 30 swings in the batting cage.

The verdict?

"I think he's still a little tender, the way he's going about it," Molitor said. "I don't know how you judge the effort he's giving on some of the running he's doing. To me, it's not very close to 100 percent."

Given Sano's history of leg injuries, which include a left hamstring strain in 2016 and a shin injury that required surgery in 2017, the Twins are being cautious. They will continue simulating base-running situations for Sano during their nine-game homestand.

"I'm hoping we can have a good week here and think about getting him into a game sometime sooner than later, somewhere," Molitor said. "Those hamstrings — to practice and try to get ready to go into a game and then be able to sustain for nine innings multiple games consecutively, that's a challenge."

BRIEFLY

Left fielder Eddie Rosario, hitting .362 with seven doubles, seven home runs and 17 RBIs in his past 16 games, was kept out of the starting lineup against Seattle lefty Wade LeBlanc. "He's played a lot; he's played well," Molitor said. "Just seemed like the right guy to take out of the starting lineup today but he's doing fine." ... Ervin Santana (finger) threw to hitters using all his pitches for the first time Monday in Fort Myers, Fla., and

“had a good day,” according to Molitor. He’s scheduled to pitch an extended spring training game against live hitters again next Monday as his rehab assignment continues.

Two recent injuries will impact American League wild card race

Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | May 14, 2018

The Twins are playing in what currently looks like the worst division in baseball, the American League Central. And so even though the Twins share a division with the Cleveland Indians, there’s a chance that Minnesota will be the postseason representative in the Central.

If they don’t finish on top of the Tribe, the Twins will have their attention on the Wild Card standings come July. So we’re scoreboard watching a little earlier than usual this season. With the Twins recently playing the Angels and a one-game makeup against the Mariners, a pair of injuries are top of mind for their impact on the A.L. Wild card race.

A few teams to monitor in that race: the Angels, Mariners, Blue Jays and A’s.

Over the weekend, future Hall of Famer Robinson Cano was hit by a pitch and reportedly fractured his pinky finger. Even though he’s 35 years old, Cano might still be Seattle’s best player. His loss will be significant for that team, no matter how much time he misses. The Mariners have a middle infielder playing center field in Dee Gordon, but it appears as though he may stay put. On Monday against the Twins, former White Sox infielder Gordon Beckham filled in for Cano. As my colleague Patrick Reusse said Monday on 1500ESPN, about 8 or 9 years ago, some people thought Beckham looked like a future MVP candidate in Chicago. These days, if we’re being polite, he doesn’t look like a future MVP candidate.

Cano’s loss will no doubt hurt the M’s, who are 1 game out of the second Wild Card as of this writing.

The team they’re directly behind in the standings, the Angels, also got a bit of bad injury news Monday. Kenyan Middleton, the reliever that left mid-plate appearance against the Twins this weekend, now has an explanation.

@Angels

MEDICAL UPDATE: Keynan Middleton underwent an MRI earlier today that revealed damage to his ulnar collateral ligament. He will get a second opinion in the near future, and we will provide an update at an appropriate time.

UCL damage is an ominous diagnosis, and it’s possible that could mean Tommy John surgery for the hard-throwing, late-inning Angels reliever. Middleton has been added to the disabled list while the Angels sort out their options.

The Angels are currently in sole possession of that second Wild Card spot, as of this writing. My questions about them entering this season were simple. 1) How good is Shohei Ohtani going to be?; and 2) Will they have enough pitching to compete in the crowded A.L. Wild Card race? They’re off to a promising start to the season at 24-16, including a 2-2 split with the Twins over the weekend. But you never like to see a reliever go down, and that could have a chain impact in the bullpen in Anaheim.

Minnesota is not without injuries of its own. On the Twins’ side of things, Miguel Sano tested his hamstring on the field Monday but still is not close to 100 percent, according to manager Paul Molitor. And Jason Castro will have a partial meniscectomy (knee surgery) and could miss 4-6 weeks.

Frank Quilici, former Twins player, manager and broadcaster, passes away at 79

Staff Report | ESPN 1500 | May 14, 2018

Former Twins player, manager and broadcaster Frank Quilici died Monday at the age of 79 following a lengthy illness.

“The Minnesota Twins today mourn the passing of Frank Quilici,” the club said in a statement issued Monday evening. “Frank not only exemplified professionalism as a player, coach, manager and broadcaster for the Twins, he also served as a community leader in the Twin Cities working to make sure youth had recreational opportunities and contributed to many other charitable causes. The club, like many of his friends throughout the game, is thinking of the Quilici family during this difficult time.”

Signed by Minnesota as an amateur free agent before the 1961 season, Quilici spent his entire baseball career in the Twins’ organization.

A second baseman, Quilici made his major league debut in 1965 and appeared in 405 games for the Twins over five seasons (1965, 1967-70). He was then hired by the Twins as a coach under manager Bill Rigney in 1971 before taking over the managerial duties for the final 84 games of 1972. Quilici went 280-287 in parts of four seasons as the Twins’ manager and joined the club’s radio broadcast crew working alongside Herb Carneal in 1976 and ’77. He returned for a second stint in the booth from 1980 to 1982.

Quilici, a Chicago native who turned 79 last Friday, was honored with the Kirby Puckett Award for Alumni Community Service in 2013 for his

passion in promoting organ donorship among being involved in a number of other charitable causes. He was a former member of the board of directors of the Twins Community Fund and former President of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation.

Miguel Sano takes the field pregame, but he's still not at 100%

Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | May 14, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — Fans looking forward to Miguel Sano's return to the field received some good news and bad news Monday as the Twins returned to Target Field to kick off a long homestand.

The hulking third baseman ran, took ground balls and hit on the field before Monday's game. That's the good news, as he recovers from a strained hamstring that has kept him on the shelf since the end of April.

The bad news, then, is that manager Paul Molitor said that Sano is still not running at 100% intensity.

"I think he still is a little tentative," Molitor said of the pregame work Sano did Monday. "I don't know how you would judge the level of effort he's giving on some of the running he's doing, but to me it's not very close to 100 percent," he said.

In addition to the on-field baseball activities on full display for the gathered media and early ballpark arrivals, Sano continues to work behind the scenes to get back into the Twins' lineup.

"There's a lot of agility things that we can be doing inside, in the weight room. And doing some other different types of treadmills we have. ... You're seeing just a portion of the things that are ongoing trying to get him right," Molitor said.

Sano had offseason surgery to implant a metal rod in his shin as a way to alleviate the problem caused last year, when a foul ball off his leg led to a stress reaction that knocked him out for most of the final 6 weeks of the year. Sano missed the Twins' only playoff game last year and had the surgery over the winter. He continues to be listed publicly as 6-foot-4 and 260 pounds, but you don't have to be a carnival weight guesser to think that's a little light.

Still, when he's going right, Sano can do things at the plate and in the field that few players can. Eduardo Escobar has been strong as his fill-in at third base. But if Sano got back to full strength, it would allow Escobar to slot in at shortstop, and the Twins' lineup would be that much deeper.

Molitor continued: "Swing's fine and he looks good taking grounders. But like I've said, those hamstrings, to practice and go compete to where you can try to get in a game — and then be able to sustain for 9 innings consecutively, multiple days in a row, that's a challenge with that type of injury."

If Sano continues to progress and dial up the intensity, the Twins could look to find a rehab game for Sano "sooner than later," Molitor said. The indications are that could be by next week, if not sooner.

Twins catcher Jason Castro will have knee surgery, could miss at least a month

Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | May 14, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — Twins catcher Jason Castro will have knee surgery Tuesday in Colorado, manager Paul Molitor said. The timeline is not yet solidified, but Castro could miss 4-6 weeks after his partial meniscectomy, Molitor said.

"It's disappointing, and hopefully we'll get a better idea of the length of rehab after the procedure," Molitor said.

Castro tweaked his knee earlier this season and planned to give it a couple of days to heal. For a catcher, the knees are paramount. That rest didn't fix the issue right away, and so Castro required a DL stint. Over the weekend, the catcher flew to Colorado to get another opinion on his knee. And this was the recommended route, Molitor said.

Mitch Garver has handled the starting catching role in his stead, and veteran Bobby Wilson was recalled to take on the rest of the load.

Eighth-inning error costs Twins in 1-0 loss to Seattle

Associated Press | Fox Sports North | May 15, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — After spending much of the day feeling ill, James Pazos gave the Seattle Mariners a gritty performance against Minnesota.

Pitching through a nasty case of food poisoning, the Seattle reliever picked up the win when Twins first baseman Logan Morrison committed a throwing error in the eighth inning that sent the Mariners past the Twins 1-0 after a long rain delay Monday night.

After starter Wade LeBlanc threw six scoreless innings, Pazos (1-0) came on to work the seventh. According to manager Scott Servais, just being able to pitch was a victory in itself for Pazos.

“He was throwing up all day, didn’t know if he’d be available,” Servais said. “He went out and got us through the seventh and came right back in and went right back in the bathroom.”

Pazos gave up a one-out double to Mitch Garver but otherwise shut the door on the Twins, part of a dominant night by Mariners pitching. Nick Vincent worked a 1-2-3 eighth and Edwin Diaz struck out the side in the ninth for his AL-leading 14th save in 15 chances.

The four Seattle pitchers combined to allow just four hits and no walks. Garver was the only Twins runner to reach second base all night.

“Tough way to lose a game when you get back home and can’t find a way to score,” said manager Paul Molitor, whose team was coming off a 2-1 road loss to the Los Angeles Angels on Sunday.

The pitchers were matching each other until the Mariners finally broke through when Dee Gordon led off the eighth with a double against reliever Trevor Hildenberger (1-1). Jean Segura laid down a sacrifice bunt that was fielded by Morrison, who was charging hard from first base.

With Gordon racing to third, Morrison turned to throw to first but the ball sailed into right field, allowing Gordon to score.

“I went to reset my feet and just threw it away,” Morrison said. “Obviously a routine play I’ve got to make, and didn’t make it.”

Twins starter Jake Odorizzi threw six shutout innings, giving up four hits and one walk while striking out seven. He allowed leadoff doubles in the third, fifth and sixth but worked his way out of trouble.

Minnesota shortstop Ehire Adrianza ran down Gordon’s broken-bat blooper in short center to end the fifth with two runners on. Odorizzi stranded runners at the corners in the sixth when he struck out Ryon Healy on a diving splitter, his 97th and final pitch of the night.

“I felt like I had pretty good stuff for the most part, and got some strikeouts when I really needed,” Odorizzi said.

The story of the night, however, was Pazos. The lefty hasn’t given up a run in his last 12 outings dating to April 7 and has lowered his ERA to 1.17, solidifying his role in the Seattle bullpen on a night when he wasn’t at full strength.

“James Pazos has earned the right to start pitching in the back end. He’s been one of our most dominant guys,” Servais said. “I like how he’s wired. Tonight, giving us the effort he did, says a lot about him.”

DOUBLE DELAY

The game was originally scheduled for April 8 but got postponed because of inclement weather. Then the first pitch Monday was pushed back 1 hour, 42 minutes due to rain.

IN A GROOVE

LeBlanc made his third start since joining the Mariners’ rotation at the beginning of May and was sharp once again. He allowed just three runners, none of whom reached second base. He’s given up only one earned run in 15 innings as a starter this year.

After spending a month in the bullpen, LeBlanc also figures that as he gets back into the routine of a starting pitcher, bigger things are still to come.

“I wouldn’t necessarily say it’s all been building to this because there’s still a lot of things I can get better at,” he said. “Today, I got to a lot of two-strike counts and wasn’t great at putting guys away.”

TRAINER’S ROOM

Mariners: 2B Robinson Cano was placed on the disabled list with a broken bone in his right hand. He was replaced on the roster and in the starting lineup by nine-year veteran Gordon Beckham.

Twins: 3B Miguel Sano (hamstring) is “not very close to 100 percent” while running, according to Molitor. Sano has been on the DL since May 1. ... The team announced C Jason Castro will undergo surgery to remove damaged cartilage in his right knee. He’s expected to miss at least four to six weeks. ... RHP Ervin Santana (finger) threw to batters at the Twins’ minor league facility in Florida for the first time since having surgery in February. The club hopes he’ll be ready to pitch in an extended spring training game next Monday.

UP NEXT

Mariners: RHP Mike Leake (4-3, 5.72 ERA) will be looking for his third win in four outings when he faces the Texas Rangers on Tuesday in Seattle.

Twins: RHP Jose Berrios (3-4, 4.50) tries to get back on track against the Cardinals on Tuesday night at Target Field. Over his last four starts he's allowed 18 earned runs in 18 1/3 innings, going 1-3 in the process.

Preview: Twins vs. Cardinals
STATS | Fox Sports North | May 15, 2018

Just when the Minnesota Twins thought they might be catching a break and getting some of their injured players back, reality again reared its ugly head.

Catcher Jason Castro was eligible to come off the disabled list Tuesday but will now miss at least another month after undergoing surgery on his right knee.

Castro has been sidelined since May 5 and received a cortisone injection in order to avoid surgery. But it didn't work as hoped so the veteran backstop sought a second opinion from Dr. Robert LaPrade, who recommended surgery.

"It's disappointing," Molitor said. "Hopefully we'll get a better feel on length of rehab once the procedure is completed."

That leaves Mitch Garver as Minnesota's primary catcher when the team resumes its home stand Tuesday against the Cardinals at Target Field, where Garver is batting .316 this season.

"With him and Bobby (Wilson), we're trying to match up the best way we can," Molitor said. "They're both going to get a chance to get a fair amount of time back there. For Mitch, he's starting to get more comfortable in the batter's box ... just a good opportunity."

The Twins were also hoping to get third baseman Miguel Sano back this week but he, too, will need a little time. Sano worked out before Minnesota's game Monday against Seattle and wasn't close to 100 percent.

"I'm hoping we can have a good week here and think about getting him into a game sometime sooner than later, somewhere," Molitor said. "Those hamstrings — to practice and try to get ready to go into a game and then be able to sustain for nine innings multiple games consecutively, that's a challenge."

After dropping a pair of one-run decisions, the Twins turn to right-hander Jose Berrios to get the team back on track Tuesday.

Berrios, though, is battling through a rough patch. He has an 8.84 ERA through his last four outings and gave up five runs over 5 1/3 innings in his last outing.

He'll face Cardinals rookie Jack Flaherty, who returns to the big leagues for the first time since holding the Pirates to three runs over five innings on April 28.

Flaherty is 0-1 with 11 strikeouts over 10 innings in two starts for St Louis this season and 4-1 with a 2.27 ERA in five starts for Triple-A Memphis.

Flaherty struck out 13 in his last outing for the Redbirds. He's relied heavily on a sinker of late and as a result, has 19 groundouts compared to just eight fly balls with 12 hits allowed.

"Whatever it is about Jack's (sinker), it gets more swings and misses than anybody else," Cardinals manager Mike Matheny said. "He's got a nice idea when to use it in the zone. He gets chased with it. He just has this whole package that is pretty polished for as young as he is."

The Twins swept the Cardinals in a two-game interleague series last week in St. Louis. Minnesota pitchers allowed just one run in those contests while the Twins' offense scored a combined 13 runs.

Twins catcher Castro to have surgery on torn meniscus
Associated Press | Fox Sports North | May 14, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesota catcher Jason Castro will have surgery on Tuesday to repair a torn meniscus in his right knee.

Twins manager Paul Molitor said Monday he had been told Castro could miss four-to-six weeks. Dr. Richard Steadman is to operate in Vail, Colorado.

“We know he has a history, then he tweaks it, then it feels good, and eventually it starts flaring up again and you try to find out what’s going on,” Molitor said. “Finally, between different people talking over, analyzing his history and himself, and images that they were able to get through testing that this was probably the right thing to do.”

The 30-year-old Castro has been on the disabled list since May 5. Castro is hitting .143 with three RBIs in 19 games and tried to play through knee pain for the previous few weeks.

Twins pitching staff turns a corner
Staff Report | Fox Sports North | May 14, 2018

Despite splitting a four-game road series with the Los Angeles Angels, the Minnesota Twins have seemingly turned a corner after struggling out the gate.

The Twins are 7-2 since their loss to the lowly Chicago White Sox on May 3 thanks to some wildly improved pitching. Minnesota’s pitching staff has a combined 3.06 ERA over that span, fifth in the majors. The Twins posted a combined 6.40 ERA during their 3-13 slide in April, the worst mark in the league.

Minnesota Twins, 2018 Chronology

Dates	Record (Win %)	ERA
3/29 – 4/16	7-4 (.636)	3.18
4/17 – 5/03	3-13 (.188)	6.40
5/04 – Present	7-2 (.778)	3.06

They’ll turn to newcomer Jake Odorizzi for a makeup game against the Seattle Mariners on Monday. Odorizzi struggled alongside the rest of the Twins’ pitching staff in mid-April but pitched well in his most recent start, allowing just two hits and one run through five innings in a 7-1 win over the St. Louis Cardinals last week.

His career against the Mariners, however, has been a mixed bag.

Odorizzi had a 0.52 ERA, a 0.87 WHIP and .167 opponent batting average in his first three starts against Seattle, but has an 11.57 ERA, 2.74 WHIP and .364 opponent batting average in his three most recent starts.

Fortunately, Minnesota is primed for success against his counterpart, Seattle lefty Wade LeBlanc. The Twins are hitting .266 against left-handed pitching this season, 27 points better than their average against right-handed pitching.

Other notes:

— The Twins have played some of the longest nine-inning games in the majors this season. They’re averaging three hours and 14 minutes per nine-inning game, while Seattle is averaging just two hours and 56 minutes.

— The Mariners are coming off a 5-4 loss to the Detroit Tigers, but are 12-4 in the game immediately following a loss this season.

Jason Castro to miss 4-6 weeks after undergoing knee surgery
Bill Baer | NBC Sports | May 14, 2018

Twins catcher Jason Castro will undergo knee surgery on Tuesday to repair a small tear in his right meniscus, Phil Miller of the Star Tribune reports. Castro is expected to miss four to six weeks.

Castro, 30, felt pain in his knee at the beginning of this month. The Twins hoped rest would alleviate the problem, but Castro landed on the disabled list on May 5 after being diagnosed with a tear in his right meniscus. Castro has been battling knee problems on and off for the past few seasons, Miller notes.

Castro hit .143/.257/.238 with a home run and three RBI in 74 plate appearances this season. Mitch Garver and Bobby Wilson will continue to handle catching duties while Castro is absent.

Miguel Sano injury update: Twins slugger still 'not close to 100 percent'
Joe Rodgers | Sporting News | May 14, 2018

Twins third baseman Miguel Sano has been out of action since late April with a left hamstring strain and is still not fully recovered.

“He’s still a little tentative, for me, in how he’s going about it. I don’t know how you would judge the level of effort he’s giving on some of the running he’s doing. But to me, it’s not very close to 100 percent,” manager Paul Molitor said Monday, via the Star-Tribune.

“The swing’s fine, he looks pretty good taking grounders, but those hamstrings, to practice and try to get ready to compete in a game and then be able to sustain for nine innings for multiple days consecutive, that’s a challenge with that type of injury.”

Sano has played 20 games this season, batting .213 with five home runs and 14 RBIs but has been running and taking grounders, indicating a possible return or rehab assignment is near.

“I’m hoping we have a good week here and we can think about getting him into a game sometime, sooner than later, somewhere,” Molitor said. “But I’ll watch him today, tomorrow, and hopefully we get a little bit more. We’re trying to decide what’s best for him and the club.”

The Twins are two games below .500 entering Monday’s games but with Eduardo Escobar playing well at third base and batting .282 with seven homers and 20 RBIs, Minnesota has the luxury of not rushing Sano back into the lineup.

Back in the eagle’s den of Target Field, James Paxton reflects on his wild month
Nick Kelly | The Athletic | May 15, 2018

James Paxton strolled into the clubhouse with his Nike brown slip shoes shuffling at anything but a hurried pace.

Once he arrived at his locker in the visiting clubhouse at Target Field, Paxton plopped down in his black leather reclining chair. He took time to answer every question that any reporter had for him. He was in no hurry to ditch the black sweatshirt and faded blue jeans for a gray uniform.

But he didn’t need to be in any hurry. He was relaxed because he knew he would not be playing in Seattle’s makeup game against Minnesota on Monday, rescheduled from early April.

He could also relax because he knew there would not be another bald eagle encounter.

When Paxton and the Mariners last came to Minnesota for the Twins’ home opener, he experienced a National Anthem ceremony he likely won’t forget. Seattle’s starting pitcher that day, Paxton was warming up in center field before the start of the anthem, which featured a ceremonial flight from a bald eagle named Challenger. The bird took a detour at the end of his flight around Target Field and attempted to land on Paxton — not one of the eagle’s handlers on the pitcher’s mound as planned.

@fsnorth

The last time the Twins and Mariners faced off, this happened in the series opener...

Let's just say that James Paxton is one tough dude ☐

The attempted landing did not hurt Paxton. And if you’re the superstitious type, you might even say it helped him.

In seven starts since the April 5 encounter, Paxton has put together some dominant performances. He struck out 10 in six innings his next time out, then did it again three starts later, both matching a career high. On May 2 against Oakland, he obliterated that mark and fanned 16 batters. He’s 2-0 and the Mariners are 5-2 in those starts.

But the highlight was the Canadian’s 99-pitch, seven-strikeout no-hitter in Toronto on May 8.

@MLB

99 pitches but a hit ain’t one. #TipOfTheCap, @James_Paxton.

“It has kind of been a surreal start for Paxton,” Seattle manager Scott Servais said. “He’s off to a very good start, and it is fun to see him evolve and take the next step at the top of the rotation as the No. 1 starter type.”

Sure, no-hitters do not happen often — it’s just the sixth in Seattle’s history. But it has nothing on the rarity of Challenger’s detour.

This was the first time Challenger tried to land on someone else in his 23 years of free-flight performances, according to his handlers. Under the

care of the American Eagle Foundation, the 28-year-old bald eagle has flown at athletic events across the country, including 12 World Series games, five BCS National Championship games and more than 80 NFL regular-season games.

He picks how he gets from one point to another each time he flies, Laura Sterbens, one of his main trainers, told The Athletic.

Usually, one handler is at Point A and a trainer awaits with some kind of food reward — often salmon — at Point B. But Point B became Paxton on April 5.

Sterbens said hindsight has not offered any more of an indication as to why Challenger selected a new landing spot.

“It was an odd situation because that baseball player was not there when we rehearsed,” Sterbens said. “He was standing in the middle of a green field, typically football, we are standing in the middle of a green field. Whether or not he thought there was a familiarity between the baseball player and one of his handlers ... he could have. There’s no real determination of why.”

@Mariners

"You should just be an American now."

The last time we were in Minnesota, @James_Paxton made a new friend. He, @FlashGJr and @heygoldy chatted about that ☐ incident.#TrueToTheBlue x @AlaskaAir

Challenger has since gone back to performing like before, Sterbens said. Paxton, however, has taken his game to the next level.

“Maybe the eagle is some kind of good luck,” Paxton said.

That’s about the most you’ll get out of Paxton on that — he admitted he’s not a superstitious person. Outfielder Dee Gordon has tried to encourage that side of his teammate, though.

Two days after Paxton’s encounter with Challenger, Gordon watched a ladybug land on Paxton’s shoulder. He had to pipe up and say something.

“Man, you’ve got eagles landing on you, ladybugs landing on you ... you are all kinds of lucky right now,” Paxton remembers Gordon telling him.

Luck? Maybe. Servais might instead point to the maturation and growth of Paxton, a 2010 Mariners draft pick.

When Paxton does not have all of his pitches working and has an off day, he has shown Servais that he has the ability to get deep in games and give the Mariners a chance to win.

“I think that is what really separates the upper-echelon, No. 1 guys,” Servais said.

Paxton has certainly garnered the media attention many top pitchers receive, whether it be because of his no-hitter or his encounter with Challenger. Paxton said he has done about 30 interviews over the past four days.

No wonder he wore the countenance of someone ready for a nap Monday afternoon in the clubhouse.

But there were no hints of anxiety on his face. Just relief that he didn’t have to pitch to close out Seattle’s seven-game road trip at a venue he might never forget.

He has no scars or injuries from the encounter with Challenger, just a viral memory and a career on the rise.

The two might or might not be related.

Another costly blunder sinks the Twins

If the scene in the top of the eighth Monday looked familiar, it’s because it should.

While the ball skirted into right field, Dee Gordon ran home and gave the Mariners a one-run lead. Logan Morrison had tried to throw the batter out at first on a sac-bunt, but he missed his man on first base.

“I went to reset my feet and just ... threw it away,” Morrison said. “Obviously a routine play I’ve got to make, and I didn’t make it.”

Another blunder, another Twins loss.

Whether it be an overthrow at first or dropping a catchable ball, Minnesota has found ways to hurt itself late in close games in about a quarter of its losses thus far this season.

The latest came via a 1-0 loss to Seattle in a rain-delayed, make-up game Monday.

The Twins have now had five different games in which miscues have helped hand the other team the game-winning run in either the eighth, ninth or 10th inning. In one other game, a dropped fly ball from Eddie Rosario in the ninth led to a big insurance run for the Blue Jays in a 7-5 win.

For the most recent example prior to Monday, look no further than Sunday.

The Twins dropped the last game of their 10-game road trip with a 2-1 loss to the Angels. In the bottom of the ninth, Zach Duke hit Chris Young on an 0-2 count to a lead off the inning. After a sacrifice bunt moved him to second, Young scored the winning run on a Zack Cozart single.

Before that, it was a May 1 home loss to the Blue Jays, where two 10th-inning wild pitches brought home two of three Toronto runs in the frame in a 7-4 loss.

Before that, it was Minnesota's 4-3 loss to the Yankees on April 26. With the Twins leading 3-1 in the ninth, a Miguel Sanó error and an infield single put two runners on that maybe shouldn't have been there. Gary Sanchez followed with a walk-off home run.

Finally, there was the 8-7 loss to Tampa Bay on April 20 that ended with Duke missing first base with his foot on a flip from Joe Mauer, allowing the winning run to score in the 10th.

"If you are playing clean baseball, you're going to win your share," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "Like I said, we have been playing, I think, improved defense over the last stretch for the most part. Tonight we just didn't execute on defense."

Sure, Minnesota silenced some doubters after the 7-3 road trip that ended Sunday and followed a stretch of 11 losses in 13 games.

But if the Twins had cleaned up some of these avoidable blunders and went on to win even two of those six games, they would be first place in the AL Central. Instead, Minnesota sits at 17-20 — 1.5 games back of Cleveland — after the first game of a nine-game homestand.

That long road trip likely didn't help the Twins as they fought back fatigue in a game that already started almost two hours late thanks to a rain delay.

But fighting back that fatigue and managing to minimize errors can make the difference for teams in the hunt and for those who actually lead the division.

"I know tonight it was one mistake that cost us and you will have that from time to time," pitcher Jake Odorizzi said. "You just need that one little thing to break through."