



**Minnesota Twins Daily Clips**  
**Sunday, March 4, 2018**

- Hughes taking positives from early spring outing. MLB.com (Bollinger) p.1
- Inbox: How will Morrison's signing impact club? MLB.com (Bollinger) p.2
- Twins' Byron Buxton tries to become a thief of the highest order. Star Tribune (Neal) p.3
- Twins overpowered by Blue Jays, 13-8. Star Tribune (Neal) p.4
- James Rowson guides Twins' young hitters to success. Star Tribune (Hartman) p.4
- Twins day at camp: Astudillo doesn't wait to put the ball in play. Star Tribune (Neal) p.6
- Twins' Tyler Duffey still waiting for his changeup tutorial from Fernando Rodney. Pioneer Press (Berardino) p.7
- Twins' Hughes allows two homers in loss to Toronto. Fox Sports North. (Staff) p.8

---

**Hughes taking positives from early spring outing**  
**Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | March 4, 2018**

DUNEDIN, Fla. -- Twins right-hander Phil Hughes, who is competing for the final spot in the rotation, was hit hard against the Blue Jays on Saturday, giving up four extra-base hits, including two homers, in a 13-8 loss at Dunedin Stadium.

Hughes was scheduled to go three innings or 45 pitches, and lasted 2 1/3 frames with 28 of his 47 offerings going for strikes. His fastball mostly sat at around 90 mph after touching 91 mph several times in his first outing on Monday against the Cardinals. He surrendered five hits, including a triple to Curtis Granderson, a double to Randal Grichuk and homers to Kevin Pillar and Yangervis Solarte on a breezy day that saw both teams combine for five homers.

"I felt good and that's the biggest thing," Hughes said. "Obviously, I'm not happy with the results. But I'll take the positive that I felt good. I located some pitches OK. I really got to mix everything in there and I was happy with that. I just need to clean up the command a little bit. I don't want to focus on the results too much, but as we progress, I want to avoid innings like that where I give up runs."

Hughes, who is coming off a second surgery to alleviate thoracic outlet syndrome, is competing with fellow veteran Anibal Sanchez and youngster Adalberto Mejia for the rotation's last spot, as the club is expected to open the year with four starters behind Jose Berrios, Jake Odorizzi and Kyle Gibson, with Ervin Santana sidelined until at least mid-April after undergoing middle right finger surgery.

Twins manager Paul Molitor said before the game that he won't rule out Hughes possibly opening in long relief, which is a role he served in last year after struggling early in the season as a starter. Sanchez also pitched in long relief with the Tigers last year, although Mejia will either start with the Twins or at Triple-A Rochester.

"We're going to have some flexibility with how we want to shape up the bullpen if we go with four [starters]," Molitor said. "Where he is as part of that depends on the rotation mix and where he's at [health-wise]. But I think we're a little ahead on that."

Hughes knows he's competing for a spot in the rotation, but said he's not focusing on a decision that is still weeks away from being made.

"I haven't given it any thought," Hughes said. "All of my focus this spring has been from the rubber to the plate. I haven't looked ahead to the schedule or anything. I'm just trying to stay healthy and show I'm improving and show good stuff out there."

#### Camp battles

- Right-hander Ryan Pressly is considered highly likely to make the team and is out of Minor League options, but he helped his cause by throwing 1 2/3 scoreless innings, including escaping a jam in the second after Hughes departed with one out.

- Right-hander Tyler Duffey is getting stretched out to start, but saw his chances of making the rotation hurt by the additions of Odorizzi and Sanchez. He could still make the team in long relief, but struggled on Saturday, allowing four runs on four hits, including a three-run homer to Russell Martin in the fifth. But he settled down to throw 1 2/3 scoreless frames after his shaky fifth.
- Zack Granite, who is competing for a bench spot as a fourth outfielder, went 1-for-4 and is batting .133 during the spring. Kennys Vargas, whose spot on the roster is in jeopardy after the signing of Logan Morrison, went 1-for-3 with a double and is hitting .267 this spring.

#### Injury updates

- Catcher Mitch Garver is likely to make his return on Tuesday after tweaking his right knee during a rundown on Wednesday. Garver has returned to baseball activities and participated in a full workout without any issues on Saturday.
- Shortstop prospect Nick Gordon (mild right wrist strain) is expected to return to the lineup on Sunday. Non-roster infielder Brock Stassi (back spasms) is also scheduled to return on Sunday.

Right-hander Berrios is set to make his second start of the spring against the Pirates on Sunday at 12:05 p.m. CT at Hammond Stadium. Watch the game on MLB.TV. Other pitchers scheduled to see action include Sanchez, Fernando Rodney, Zach Duke, Addison Reed, Alan Busenitz and John Curtiss.

#### **Inbox: How will Morrison's signing impact club?**

**Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | March 4, 2018**

DUNEDIN, Fla. -- The unexpected signing of Logan Morrison to be the club's everyday designated hitter is expected to have a ripple effect on the Twins' roster this spring.

The signing doesn't bode well for first baseman Kennys Vargas and outfielder Robbie Grossman, who were expected to share DH duties, so the Twins have some important roster decisions in the coming weeks. With that in mind, it leads us to the first question of this week's Twins Inbox.

Twins manager Paul Molitor met with both Grossman and Vargas after the Twins signed Morrison to explain the roster crunch and how it could impact them. Minnesota will open with a four-man bench, which is expected to include backup catcher Mitch Garver and infielder Eduardo Escobar. Ehire Adrianza is close to a lock as a utility infielder/left fielder, while the last spot is up for grabs.

Grossman was told he'd have to make the team as a backup outfielder, and he's competing with Zack Granite for that position. Grossman's greatest asset is his ability to get on base with a .372 on-base percentage in 218 games since joining the Twins in 2016, but he's struggled defensively. Granite could make more sense because of his ability to play all three outfield spots to go along with his contact skills. But one consideration is that Grossman is out of options, while Granite can be sent to Triple-A Rochester to get regular playing time.

Vargas, meanwhile, is likely to be placed on waivers at the end of Spring Training. There's no reason to make a move now, as there's a chance he could pass through waivers with teams finalizing their rosters. With his inconsistency offensively, he doesn't offer much trade value.

As for Erick Aybar, the most likely way he makes the team is if Miguel Sano opens the year on the disabled list or is suspended for his alleged sexual assault. Sano, though, has looked healthy so far, and is expected to be ready for the start of the season, barring a setback to his surgically repaired shin.

Twins chief baseball Officer Derek Falvey said he's likely done adding to the roster after trading for Jake Odorizzi and signing Anibal Sanchez and Morrison this spring. Adding another starter seems remote, although if the asking price dropped to one year, it would make some sense for the Twins. But there are no indications the market is dropping that much, and Minnesota's payroll is roughly \$118 million, which is above the club record of \$113 million.

It's a bit early to be talking about the July 31 non-waiver Trade Deadline, but if the Twins are contending at that point, it would make some sense to trade for starting pitching help. I think it's likely the Twins stand pat now and then re-evaluate their need for starting pitching at the deadline. They have a deep enough farm system to make a trade happen.

It's still hard to project how Phil Hughes will do after his second surgery to alleviate thoracic outlet syndrome. He looked solid in his first outing, hitting 91 mph, but struggled in his second time out against the Blue Jays on Saturday. He's had trouble staying healthy over the last three seasons, but the hope is he can be a capable fifth starter. If not, he's likely to pitch in long relief, as the Twins owe him \$26.4 million over the next two years.

Hughes will be worth monitoring the rest of spring, as he remains in a competition with Sanchez and Adalberto Mejia for the final rotation spot.

Byron Buxton has hit in several spots this spring, including leadoff, but Brian Dozier is still expected to be the club's leadoff hitter to open the season. It's likely the Twins go with Dozier atop the order ahead of Joe Mauer, Sano and Morrison. Buxton could hit fifth to break up the lefties ahead of Eddie Rosario or bat sixth or seventh depending on the matchup.

**Twins' Byron Buxton tries to become a thief of the highest order**  
**La Velle E. Neal | Star Tribune | March 4, 2018**

Fort Myers, Fla. – The fastest man in baseball is focused on being even faster in 2018. But first, Byron Buxton attempted the unimaginable.

Apparently unimpressed by his sub-200-pound frame, the Twins center fielder began the offseason with a goal of adding weight. He yearned for strength and more power.

“The whole month of November, every day, three times a day, I’d eat chicken,” he said. “Every single day that whole month.”

He grilled, baked and, occasionally, fried chicken. To his dismay, he stayed lean: “I didn’t gain one pound,” he said. “Not one pound.”

Twins second baseman Brian Dozier laughed for several moments when told the story.

“I need to talk to him,” Dozier said. “I’ll tell him how to gain weight. Eating a lot of chicken is not going to do it.”

Then Dozier’s voice raised a couple pitches as he added: “He don’t need to beef up. Shoot, it’s not getting bigger and having more power. It’s flexibility, movement and stuff.”

And no one moves like Buxton. According to MLB’s Statcast tracking technology, Buxton’s sprint speed measurement of 30.2 feet per second made him the fastest runner in the game. He used his speed to devastate opponents on the basepaths. A Gold Glove winner, Buxton blazes across the outfield to make diving catches and crashes into walls so often, he could be the first player to be fitted with air bags.

And, following a .195 start, he batted .309 after June 30, giving him confidence he will hit his way on base more often in 2018. That could help him reach his goal of 50 stolen bases.

Why be infatuated with weight? Why do something that could possibly slow him down?

“I realized, I am not getting bigger,” said Buxton, who is listed at 190 pounds on the Twins website and said he fluctuated between 188 and 192 last season. “I need to find something else ... something to help me out try to find something, speedwise.”

After that experimental November, Buxton went back to the lab — his old track and baseball field at Appling County High School in Baxley, Ga. That’s where he once popped a 4.37-second 40-yard dash while on the track team.

There he worked on his technique, remembering the teachings of his track coach, Sheldon Pearce. Buxton practiced his form, making sure he was in the best position to round the bases as cleanly as possible. He knows if his hands are too high while he is rounding second, it could affect his arrival at third.

“Something very small I can work on,” he said.

Buxton stole 101 bases in 128 attempts in the minors, taking off on the pitcher’s first move and using raw speed to beat throws. His thievery did not come as easily in the major leagues. Pitchers are quicker to the plate and hold runners better, catchers have stronger and more accurate arms — and Buxton was having a hard time simply reaching first base.

Buxton attempted only four stolen bases in 46 major league games in 2015 and 12 in 92 games in 2016, mainly because he was learning to read pitchers and trusting his explosion toward second base.

He used to let his right arm dangle between his legs as he took a lead off first base. That caused him to fly open when he took off for second and cost him time. Twins third base coach Gene Glynn suggested Buxton dangle his left arm instead, and he believes he is aligned better when he takes off.

That, plus reading pitchers better, enabled him to steal 29 bases in 30 attempts last season. The one time he was thrown out, he overslid second base at Baltimore on May 23.

A pitcher who can deliver a pitch to the plate in less than 1.3 seconds is considered good. A catcher is considered good if he can throw the ball to

second base around 2.0 seconds. Buxton is out to wreck stopwatches and beat them both.

“Even if a pitcher is 1.1 to home plate, we want him to go,” Glynn said, “and make them throw him out.”

Although Buxton continues to hone his baserunning technique, Glynn maintains that Buxton’s reaction time is elite. If he gets the right read and takes off, he can pile up the steals. It began to fall into place last season and could an ever bigger part of his game in 2018.

“Once I see you move to the plate, because I was so comfortable at first base, I just went,” Buxton said of the strides he made last season. “It wasn’t about if the pitcher had a quick delivery to the plate. I didn’t care about that. If I got a good jump, I was gone.”

Now, Buxton said, he wants to steal 50 bases. Dozier, once again, was incredulous.

“Why don’t he steal 60?” Dozier said. “Why don’t he steal 100? I’m not going to put a ceiling on that guy. You’re only scratching the surface with what that guy can accomplish.”

Being called the fastest man in baseball suits Buxton just fine. The moniker validates the time he has put into running the bases flawlessly, chasing down balls hit into the gaps and learning how to steal bases off pitchers.

It also is a challenge to him to not settle for anything but his best. As he slipped on his spikes and raced around his old high school field during the offseason, he felt he was doing just that.

“If I feel like I’m hitting the corners right, I feel like I’m pushing off the bases right, I can feel the difference,” Buxton said. “I knew something was changing and something was getting better.”

### **Twins overpowered by Blue Jays, 13-8**

**La Velle E. Neal | Star Tribune | March 4, 2018**

DUNEDIN, FLA. – The wind was blowing out at Dunedin Stadium on Saturday, and pitchers paid the price when hitters got the ball in the air.

The Twins scored their most runs in any spring training game so far, but they also gave up their most in a 13-8 loss to Toronto. The teams combined for five home runs and 11 extra-base hits.

With the score tied 8-8 in the eighth and the bases loaded, Toronto’s Jon Berti doubled off the left-field wall off Twins lefthander Lewis Thorpe, driving in Ezequiel Carrera with the go-ahead run. A second runner was thrown out at home plate.

Thorpe then walked Steve Pearce to load the bases and was replaced by sidearm Tom Hackimer. He hit the first batter he faced, forcing in a run. Toronto’s Jason Leblebician grounded to third baseman Gregorio Petit, who threw home for a forceout. But umpire Jeremie Rehak ruled catcher Jordan Pacheco failed to step on home plate.

“He said [Pacheco] just was not on [the plate],” Molitor said. “He said, ‘I’m not going to call it unless it was obvious.’”

Hackimer walked in another batter and gave up a sacrifice fly to make it 13-8.

Toronto led 3-0 through two innings, including home runs by Kevin Pillar and Yangervis Solarte. Wind-blown homers became the rage after that, as the Twins’ Taylor Featherston, Toronto’s Russell Martin and the Twins’ Ryan LaMarre each hit three-run homers, and the game entered the eighth tied 8-8.

“I’ve been in this park enough to know that, when the prevailing wind to right center takes over, the ball is going to find its way over the fence a few times,” Molitor said. “We took advantage. They took advantage. A couple were hit really good, there’s no doubt about that.”

### **James Rowson guides Twins' young hitters to success**

**Sid Hartman | Star Tribune | March 4, 2018**

Last season the Twins scored 815 runs, the fifth-highest run total since the team moved to Minnesota in 1961. They finished fourth or tied for fourth in the American League in runs, batting average (.260) and on-base percentage (.334) while starting five position players under the age of 25.

One man who was given a lot of credit for that success was James Rowson, who signed on as hitting coach last season to replace Tom Brunansky.

When Rowson joined the Twins, he said he immediately saw just how athletic the young hitters were.

“It was great last year,” the former Yankees minor league hitter coordinator said. “First of all, we had a great, young athletic group. Probably the most athletic group of players I have ever been around, and I have been around the minor leagues with players for awhile. It was exciting to come in with [Byron] Buxton, [Eddie] Rosario, [Jorge] Polanco, [Max] Kepler, all these guys are young, very athletic and they just need more at-bats.

“The more experience they get, the better they get. I think last year was a chance to give them a chance to fail, give them a chance to go out there and be themselves, and not worry about what they do wrong but try to stay positive with them and let them do what they do right.”

Rowson’s approach really paid off for the young Twins down the stretch.

Looking at the first 103 games of the season, from April 1 to July 30, the Twins hit .251 with a .328 on-base percentage and averaged 4.6 runs per game while posting a 50-53 record. But in the home stretch from Aug. 1 to Oct. 1, the team hit .275 with a .344 on-base percentage while posting 5.9 runs per game. They finished the year going 35-24 to clinch a wild-card playoff spot.

#### Buxton’s surge

The player who might have had the most pressure on him was Buxton, the consensus best prospect in baseball from 2014 to 2016, who really struggled again at the start of the season.

Buxton was hitting only .195 over the first 78 games of his year with just 14 RBI, 22 runs scored and four home runs.

Rowson said he and Buxton broke down small parts of the center fielder’s swing and over the final 62 games of the year, Buxton hit .314 with 12 homers, 37 RBI and 47 runs scored.

“I would say we talked about Byron — and his leg kick, that was the thing going around and it was never about the leg kick in our discussions. What we talked about is, I always say you can’t fire a cannon from a canoe. So the thought is you’re so powerful, his swing is so powerful, if you’re not strong in your lower half, you’re not going to be able to execute that swing consistently all the time.

“What we talked about with him was just getting to a point where he was stronger on his legs, and he could feel his legs and feel like he was grounded when he was going to take a swing. When he started to feel that by eliminating the leg kick a little bit at first, that gave him the feeling that he needed. But from that point on it was about him. Once he got that feeling, I told him, ‘Go out there and be an athlete and do the best you can.’”

#### Kepler vs. lefties

If there is one player who will be looking for a similar adjustment this season it’s Kepler, the 25-year-old right fielder.

Kepler hit .272 with a .343 on-base percentage, with 17 home runs, 57 RBI and 29 doubles against righthanded pitchers. But against lefties, Kepler hit only .152 with 19 hits in 125 at-bats, with two homers, 12 RBI and three doubles.

“If you watch him historically, he has hit lefthanded pitching well,” Rowson said. “I thought there were times when he hit lefthanders hard and just didn’t get rewarded for it at times. That puts you in a hole and at times you start trying to do too much here and there. But as far as I’m concerned, it’s something we’ll continue to work on, but it’s not a huge thing for me. It’s something that if you put too much thought into it, the player will start to think about it too much.”

#### Learning from Mauer

Rowson might have had a lot of work with the young talent, but he said Joe Mauer’s season — in which he bounced back to hit .305 with a .384 OBP and had his most hits, 160, since 2012 — was special.

“I tell everybody all the time that I learned more from Joe Mauer than Joe Mauer learned from me last year,” Rowson said. “Joe is an incredible professional, probably one of the most professional guys I have ever been around. He studies his craft, he goes about his business the right way, and what young players had a chance to learn from Joe was his consistency.

“He doesn’t ride the waves. There are no ups and downs. He comes up and shows up and does the same routine every day. He understands if he does that over the course of the season, at the end, the numbers are going to play out. A bad week doesn’t have to turn into a bad month, and Joe has done a nice job on that.”

Yes, the Twins are looking for big things this year, and with Rowson helping the hitters, look for their output to continue to be among the best in baseball.

**Twins day at camp: Astudillo doesn't wait to put the ball in play**

**La Velle E. Neal | Star Tribune | March 4, 2018**

DUNEDIN, FLA. – Twins catcher Willians Astudillo jumped on the first pitch he saw Saturday and flied out to right field. No one was surprised.

When a hitter steps to the plate, his at-bats can end in a variety of ways. Astudillo, who has yet to play in the major leagues, appears to avoid two of those possible outcomes.

In 2,154 minor league plate appearances, he has struck out a total of 67 times, an astounding rate of 3.1 percent. For comparison sake, Miguel Sano struck out 67 times over his first 189 major league plate appearances.

Astudillo has walked only 75 times in his minor league career. Joe Mauer has walked at least that many times in five separate big-league seasons.

“I think he averages about one and a half pitches per at-bat,” Twins manager Paul Molitor joked. “He takes those [outcomes] out of play.”

In Saturday’s 13-8 loss to Toronto, Astudillo flied out in the third inning on the first pitch he saw. He swung at the first two pitches in the fifth before eventually hitting a sacrifice fly. He hit the second pitch he saw in the sixth, flying out to center.

Astudillo, 26, batted .342 last season as a reserve catcher at Class AAA Reno. Saturday, he played for the second consecutive day while Jason Castro (migraine), Mitch Garver (knee) and Bobby Wilson (hand) recovered from ailments.

“It’s a little bit out of need and a little bit out of being curious about him,” Molitor said.

Hughes gets hit around

Phil Hughes got his work in. At least that’s what he got out of his outing Saturday.

Pitchers had to work under the same windy conditions at Dunedin Stadium, and Hughes paid the price for leaving some pitches up in the strike zone. In 2⅓ innings, he gave up four earned runs on five hits and one walk while striking out one. His fastball topped out at 90 miles per hour, which he reached several times.

“Obviously, I’m not happy with the results,” said Hughes, who threw 45 pitches, 27 for strikes. “I’ll take the positive that I felt good and located some pitches OK.”

Hughes threw around eight to 10 sliders, striking out Kendrys Morales with one in the second inning.

“I was pretty happy to see that he didn’t recognize it out of my hand,” Hughes said. “He’s a pretty good hitter and recognizes pitches pretty well.”

But he gave up a triple to Curtis Granderson on a deep drive in the first inning, a home run to Kevin Pillar in the second and a home run to Yangervis Solarte in the third.

As Hughes builds up his endurance and works on his pitches, his results will matter even more. “The line isn’t going to be great,” Molitor said. “You can tell he was trying to use his pitches, his changeup and his true slider.”

Etc.

- Twins outfielder Brock Stassi (back) and infielder Nick Gordon (wrist) could play as soon as Sunday, Molitor said.

- Molitor continues to lean toward opening the season with a four-man rotation and 12-man pitching staff. Because of five off days scheduled in April, the Twins won’t need a fifth starter until April 11, and they won’t need one again until April 24. Going with four starters and eight relievers enables Molitor to have a four-man bench, which he prefers.

On deck

Jose Berrios is scheduled to make his second appearance of spring training when the Twins play host to Pittsburgh on Sunday. Berrios labored during a one-inning outing Tuesday against Boston. Anibal Sanchez will relieve Berrios, followed by Fernando Rodney, Zach Duke and Addison Reed. Righthander Jameson Taillon is scheduled to start for the Pirates.

**Twins' Tyler Duffey still waiting for his changeup tutorial from Fernando Rodney**  
**Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | March 4, 2018**

DUNEDIN, Fla. — Back at TwinsFest in mid-January, Fernando Rodney said he would probably take Tyler Duffey out to dinner and talk to him about his vaunted changeup as compensation for taking over uniform No. 56.

Duffey, who had worn that number for the Twins since 2015 and now wears No. 21, said that dinner has yet to happen.

“It’s early,” he said. “We’ve got time. I’m not going anywhere.”

Nor, unfortunately, has Rodney had a chance to assist Duffey with his changeup, which was the primary reason he lost his spot in the rotation after making 36 starts in 2015-16.

“We’re not in the same (work) group actually so we haven’t even really gotten to talk that much,” Duffey said. “He’s a great guy. I love being around him. I can hear him from afar. He’s always entertaining.”

In the meantime, Duffey waits.

“I’m not going to do anything to cause controversy,” he said. “You don’t want to ruffle anybody’s feathers before you even know them. I’m here to play baseball. I’m going to do my part in trying to make this team and let that work itself out.”

There is no guidebook for what is appropriate in such transactions, but players and coaches have been known to receive a new set of golf clubs (or something similar) for surrendering their uniform number. In Rodney’s case, the situation is a bit murkier as the Twins gave him no indication any bartering would be necessary after he signed a one-year deal as a free agent in December.

“They asked me, ‘Do you want to stick with ‘56’ or you want to change?’ Rodney said. “They told me it was available if I wanted it and said it’s not going to be a big deal. That’s why I asked.”

Aside from the 14 games he pitched for the Chicago Cubs in 2015, when he chose to wear No. 57 despite Hector Rondon’s offer to give up No. 56, Rodney has worn the same number throughout a big-league journey that began in 2002.

“I say I’m the lucky guy; all the different teams I go to, it’s available,” Rodney said. “It’s just special for me because I started my career being ‘56.’ It feels good. It feels comfortable. It’s not too heavy. If you have a chance to finish your career with that number, that’s perfect. “

#### ROSARIO’S REWARD

Eddie Rosario’s 27-homer season has been rewarded with a \$50,000 raise for the pre-arbitration left fielder, according to a person with direct knowledge.

Rosario, who just missed the Super Two cutoff by just three days of service time, will make \$602,500 this season instead of the \$3.5 million that had been projected for him had he qualified for arbitration. The major league minimum salary has increased from \$535,000 to \$545,000 under the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Fellow Twins outfielders Byron Buxton and Max Kepler still hadn’t agreed to 2018 contracts as of Saturday, according to people with direct knowledge. Both young stars figured to receive similar bumps after making \$535,000 and \$547,500 last season, respectively, but the renewal date isn’t until March 13.

Relievers Taylor Rogers (\$565,000), Tyler Duffey (\$557,500), Trevor Hildenberger (\$555,000) and Alan Busenitz (\$550,000) are slated for modest raises as well under the Twins’ pre-arbitration formula. Rogers, who posted a 3.07 earned-run average in a team-leading 69 appearances last season, made \$542,500 as the top left-hander out of the Twins’ bullpen.

#### HUGHES PLAN

Phil Hughes allowed two homers and four earned runs in 2 1/3 innings on a windy day against Toronto, but he was encouraged by improvements in his slider, which he threw eight to 10 times.

Hughes, coming off his second straight thoracic-outlet syndrome procedure, topped out at 90 mph and got just one swinging strike in his 47 pitches. That came on a 2-2 slider to Kendrys Morales for a second-inning strikeout.

“I’m just trying to make sure I’m healthy and improving and showing good stuff on the mound,” Hughes said. “I’m not thinking about anything arm-related. We have enough to worry about, and baseball’s a pretty hard game without having to take your health and everything else into account.”

#### BRIEFLY

Backup catcher Mitch Garver (right knee) continued to improve and is tentatively scheduled to return to action on Tuesday at home. ... Infielder Nick Gordon (right wrist) and first baseman Brock Stassi (back spasms) are slated to return on Sunday. Gordon has been out since Tuesday. ... Lefty prospect Lewis Thorpe failed to retire any of the five batters he faced in the eighth inning, walking three and allowing a pair of hits to earn the 13-8 loss to the Blue Jays.

#### **Twins’ Hughes allows two homers in loss to Toronto** **Staff | Fox Sports North | March 4, 2018**

Kevin Pillar and Yangervis Solarte homered for the first time and Russell Martin added a three-run shot to help Toronto beat the Twins 13-8.

Pillar and Solarte both went deep off Minnesota starter Phil Hughes, who pitched 2 1/3 innings and allowed four runs on five hits and a walk in his second start.

Aaron Sanchez pitched three shutout innings and allowed one hit while striking out two in his second start for the Blue Jays. Twins outfielder Ryan LaMarre and third baseman Taylor Featherston each recorded three RBI off a pair of hits.