



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
Sunday, June 10, 2018

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Twins can't capitalize on Gibson's strong start

Jarrid Denney | MLB.com | June 9, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- Kyle Gibson tossed a season-high 118 pitches and delivered seven innings of two-run baseball on Saturday, but the effort wasn't enough to get him off the hook for a loss.

Gibson and the Twins fell, 2-1, to the Angels at Target Field as Los Angeles locked up a series win. Saturday marked the eighth time this season that Gibson left a start having surrendered two runs or fewer.

But it has been more than two full months since the right-hander last added to his tally in the win column. Gibson's last win came in his first start of the season -- on March 31, when he tossed six scoreless innings against the Orioles.

"I told [manager Paul Molitor] I was feeling good, and they let me go back out there," Gibson said. "Thankful for that. Those are the innings where I want to be the guy that can go out there and get seven, even when the pitch count's high, and try to give the bullpen a break. They've been working really hard down there, and to be able to finish seven innings, it feels good, and unfortunately we just couldn't come up with a couple runs there at the end.

"But we'll start being on the right side of these games like I've been saying. We've just been running into some pitchers throwing the ball well and caught a couple tough breaks offensively."

Gibson's absence from the win column this season isn't inherently due to a lack of run support; entering Friday, Gibson had received the 25th-lowest amount of run support in the Majors. Per FanGraphs, he is receiving 4.09 runs of support per nine innings. While that isn't spectacular, it is also much higher than the 3.18 runs per nine that teammate Jake Odorizzi receives.

But Minnesota wasn't able to back Gibson on Saturday, and the Angels made him pay for a pair of mistakes. Ian Kinsler got the Angels on the board in the third inning when he lifted Gibson's 2-2 slider over the left-field fence for a two-out homer. Kinsler's solo-shot had just a 10 percent chance of being a home run, according to Statcast™.

The ball left Kinsler's bat at 92 miles per-hour. Only 13 other homers in the Majors this season have come with an exit velocity lower than

Kinsler's did -- two of those were inside-the-park homers.

Gibson followed by issuing walks to Mike Trout and Justin Upton, but battled back to strike out Albert Pujols looking to escape further trouble.

The Angels doubled their lead in the sixth inning when Pujols launched a 405-foot solo homer of his own into the second deck in left field. It was Pujols' ninth homer of the season and 623rd of his career. It also moved him up to a tie for seventh on the all-time RBI list; he is now even with Stan Musial with 1,951 apiece.

"Unfortunately, the one pitch to Pujols kind of came back to bite me there," Gibson said. "I was trying to go in on him, and we had talked in the dugout, me and [Bobby Wilson] talked about maybe it was time to go in on some of these guys. They were really spitting on some good sliders and good fastballs away. Unfortunately, I just made the wrong pitch at the wrong time and Albert did what Albert does, he did a really good job on that pitch."

Minnesota got on the board in the bottom of the sixth after Eddie Rosario lined a leadoff single, then went first-to-third on Robbie Grossman's single through the left side of the infield. Max Kepler followed with a sharp grounder to first, and Los Angeles first baseman Jose Miguel Fernandez tagged his bag and then worked Grossman into a rundown. Rosario managed to score from third before Zack Cozart tagged out Grossman to end the inning.

Matching Gibson pitch for pitch was Angels starter Tyler Skaggs, who tossed seven innings and struck out eight Minnesota batters, including the final three that he faced.

"Good curveball," Molitor said of Skaggs. "He didn't give in. A lot of 3-2 offspeed pitches. We didn't center up too many balls overall off him. He can change around a little, for sure. He'll throw you 88 to start the at-bat and finish you off with 93. He's got a little bit in there, but I thought the curveball was particularly effective."

Los Angeles nearly pushed its lead to 3-1 in the eighth, but Rosario threw out Upton at the plate from left field to end the inning and save a run. After Trevor Hildenberger and Zach Duke each tossed a scoreless inning, Miguel Sano reached on a two-out single before Angels reliever Blake Parker got Jake Cave swinging to end the game.

MOMENT THAT MATTERED

Rosario throws out Upton: In the top of the eighth, Pujols lined a single to left that sent Upton charging home from second base. Rosario fielded the ball in shallow left and came up throwing. He fired a perfect strikes to Wilson at home, and Wilson applied the tag to end the inning.

UP NEXT

The Twins will close out their three-game set with the Angels in Sunday's finale, which is set to begin at 1:10 p.m. CT. Fernando Romero will take the mound for the Twins in search of his second consecutive strong outing. Romero faced the Angels in Los Angeles on May 13, in what was just his third career Major League start, and held them to one run on four hits over five innings. Romero will square off with Nick Tropeano, who allowed three runs in six innings vs. the Twins on May 12.

Duffey optioned; Cave recalled from Triple-A

Jarrod Denney | MLB.com | June 9, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Twins announced on Saturday that they have optioned reliever Tyler Duffey to Triple-A Rochester and recalled outfielder Jake Cave.

The move is intended to give Minnesota a bit of offensive help off its bench after it spent much of the past several weeks carrying only three reserve position players.

"Just looking at our roster here with a couple games to go before an off-day, being in fairly good shape with our bullpen, the bench has been a little bit slim in terms of options late in games," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said. "With the Angels being so right-handed dominant in their bullpen, knowing we can probably could use a potential one or two pinch-hitters late in the game, we just try to supplement with a guy in Jake who's probably been the most consistent down there of late for Rochester."

Cave had a brief Major League stint with the Twins in mid-May. The 25-year-old outfielder hit a home run in his big league debut on May 19 and appeared in three games before returning to Triple-A.

Cave was hitting .280 with eight doubles, one triple, five home runs and 25 RBIs for the Red Wings.

The former Yankees Draft pick, who came to Minnesota when it traded pitcher Luis Gil to New York last summer, has made improvements to the defensive side of his game of late, according to Molitor. The club hopes Cave can provide some versatility in the outfield.

"Really good reports from Joel Skinner, the manager down there," Molitor said of Cave's recent performance at Triple-A. "He says [Cave's defense is] improving. Not elite speed, but runs well enough, instincts are good, routes, all those things that you look for. Definitely an option to play any of the outfield positions."

Duffey, who tossed a scoreless ninth inning on Friday for the Twins, owns a 6.35 ERA in seven Major League appearances this season. He struck out three batters during four scoreless innings in June and did not issue a walk.

"Tyler was better upon his return," Molitor said. "Not a ton of appearances, but more effective, including last night. He got a nice clean ninth inning for us."

Buxton beginning to test injury

Minnesota outfielder Byron Buxton has begun testing his injured toe, Molitor said on Saturday.

Buxton, who was placed on the 10-day disabled list on May 30 with a broken big toe on his left foot, ran on a non-weight bearing treadmill at Twins' facilities on Friday. Molitor said the next step is for him to hit off a tee and take soft-toss swings in order gauge how his front feels when he plants on it. The club was hoping Buxton would get the chance to do that before Saturday's game.

"It's just to see how he was doing in the area that was probably the most problematic for him," Molitor said. "In terms of how he can plant on that front foot when he swings, just to get a little bit of a better feel for where he's at."

Eduardo Escobar, Ehire Adrianza and Miguel Sano showed the value of teamwork on a deflection play

Adrian Garro | MLB.com | June 9, 2018

The top of the fifth inning of the Twins' 2-1 loss to the Angels on Saturday at Target Field presented viewers with an opportunity to really learn something -- namely, the quantifiable value of reflexes and teamwork.

Combine the two, and you have this pretty stellar all-around effort from third baseman Eduardo Escobar, shortstop Ehire Adrianza and first baseman Miguel Sano. The Angels' Ian Kinsler smashed a hard-hit grounder to Escobar at third, who couldn't quite corral the ball as it skipped up into the air.

"Fear not, teammate, for I am here," is a sentiment Adrianza acted out with a slick barehanded grab of the baseball, firing it to first where it was picked off the ground by Sano -- who also acted out that same sentiment of teammate-saving defensive prowess:

@MLB

Teamwork makes the dream work.

Professional athletes will tell you, it's all about having each other's back, working toward the same common goal, and other platitudes of that nature.

This trio of Twins would agree.

Kyle Gibson goes seven innings but gives up two home runs in loss to Angels

Joe Christensen | Star Tribune | June 10, 2018

Kyle Gibson has made 12 starts since he last earned a victory for the Twins, which sounds like an indictment for a pitcher, unless you have seen the games.

Gibson's last victory came March 31 at Baltimore, two days after the season opener, but Saturday's 2-1 loss to the Angels at Target Field was another example of a strong performance going unrewarded.

Gibson (1-4) withstood a four-hour rain delay and finished seven innings with a career-high 118 pitches, lowering his ERA to 3.45. His only blemishes were bases-empty home runs by Ian Kinsler and Albert Pujols.

But the Twins couldn't solve Los Angeles lefthander Tyler Skaggs (5-4), who also tossed seven innings, as the Angels extended their winning streak to six. The Twins fell to 3-13 in one-run games and 5-5 on this 11-game homestand.

"We'll start being on the right side of these games, like I've been saying," Gibson said. "We've just been running into some pitchers throwing the ball well and caught a couple tough breaks offensively."

Kyle Gibson, talking with Bobby Wilson on Saturday, gave up two or fewer runs for the eighth time in 13 starts this season, yet he hasn't earned a v

Gibson also pitched scoreless outings at Yankee Stadium (April 26) and Kansas City's Kauffman Stadium (May 29) without getting a victory. The latter was one of four losses in late May for the Twins in which they scored only one run, and they lost Friday's series opener to the Angels 4-2.

"These losses are frustrating," manager Paul Molitor said. "You have a really nice series last weekend [taking three of four from Cleveland], and you haven't been able to back it up."

Gibson overcame a shaky third inning, when Kinsler homered with two outs and the next two batters walked. With reliever Matt Magill warming, Pujols took a called third strike on Gibson's 35th and final pitch of the inning.

Pujols struck back in the sixth, drilling his 623rd career homer into the left-field second deck. That gave Pujols 1,951 RBI, tying him with fellow former Cardinals great Stan Musial for sixth on the all-time list.

"Unfortunately, I just made the wrong pitch at the wrong time," Gibson said, "and Albert did what Albert does."

The Twins cut the lead in half that inning, as good baserunning led to a run. Eddie Rosario went from first to third on a seeing-eye single to left by Robbie Grossman. Max Kepler then hit into an inning-ending double play, but Rosario scored anyway because Grossman got into a rundown after Kepler was forced out.

"As an offense, we've got to do a better job," Grossman said. "But that was a tough game today. A couple of things go our way and the game changes."

Molitor noted the poor execution in the fifth inning, when Ehire Adrianza hit a leadoff double, only to be stranded at second. Ryan LaMarre grounded to the pitcher, and Bobby Wilson flied out to right field before Brian Dozier struck out.

Gibson started the seventh with 103 pitches, but Molitor let him get three more outs.

"I'm thankful for that," Gibson said. "Those are the innings where I want to be the guy that can go out there and get seven, and even when the pitch count's high and try to give the bullpen a break. They've been working really hard down there."

Gibson's performance was small consolation for a team that fell to 27-34. The Twins will send rookie righthander Fernando Romero to the mound Sunday, hoping to avoid an Angels sweep — and a losing homestand.

Bringing the Twins clubhouse together: 'Everybody can play dominoes'

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | June 9, 2018

Garvin Alston stood behind Kyle Gibson, who was seated at the large table in the Twins' clubhouse, eyeing his remaining tiles. Alston is the Twins' pitching coach, but coaching is prohibited here, and it was making him anxious.

"I really need these guys to win this," Alston said, gesturing toward Gibson and his partner, Zach Duke.

Alas, Miguel Sano laid his final tile, a four-one, moments later, and began shouting in triumph. Sano and Jake Odorizzi remained undefeated, a surprise to everyone but Sano and Odorizzi, in the Great Minnesota Twins dominos tournament.

Card games have long been the accepted time-killer in major league clubhouses, and Joe Nathan used to captain a daily obsession with cribbage in the Twins' Metrodome quarters. Lew Ford and Jeff Cirillo passed the time playing chess, and many clubhouses have arcade games for players' use.

But dominoes, a deceptively simple game that dates to ancient China, has become the passion of the Twins' clubhouse this season, one that frequently draws crowds of teammates to watch the action and critique the play.

"It's really good. Some guys don't like cards, but everybody can play dominoes," said Eduardo Escobar, whose occasional games with assistant hitting coach Rudy Hernandez caught his teammates' attention, and whose boasts about his ability triggered several challenges. "Sometimes you have time before games, between games, and it makes you relax."

It doesn't seem relaxing when the gamesmanship starts, and the volume rises. The Twins' clubhouse, particularly on road trips, is filled with

boisterous laughter and friendly taunts.

“Everything with Sano is louder,” needles Escobar. Replies Sano, “Esky likes to talk.”

The dominoes craze began on the Twins’ long plane ride to San Juan, Puerto Rico, in April. Soon most of the team became involved, the format evolved into partners, and earlier this month, a tournament was undertaken. Playing a game or two before and after batting practice, the Twins are about halfway through it, with 10 two-man teams — 16 players, coaches Alston, Hernandez and Eddie Guardado, and bullpen catcher Nate Dammann — playing a round-robin against each other in order to determine seeding for a bracket.

At stake is ... well, they’d rather not say.

“But pride and bragging rights are the biggest thing anyway,” Brian Dozier said.

Nearly everyone claims a lifelong interest in the games.

“In the Latin countries, we play a lot of dominoes,” Escobar said. “Venezuela, we played and played. The Dominican guys are really good. And [Puerto Rican Eddie] Rosario, he played a lot.”

So did Dozier.

“I grew up playing pool a lot, going to a pool hall,” he said. “And there would be all these old men in the corner playing dominoes. That’s how I learned, by watching that and playing them sometimes.”

For Alston, there was a lot more at stake.

“I got involved in dominoes when I was in high school. I don’t know if I should say this, but I was playing for my lunch money,” he said. “I was afraid to jump in, I just watched at first. But my dad taught me the game and I tried it one time. And next thing I know, I was playing for dollar bills. That’ll make you better real quick.”

Then again, standings leader Odorizzi just learned the game a few weeks ago.

“Odorizzi understands how to lead, understands how to get ahead of his partner’s plays,” Alston said. “He’s pretty good.”

The Twins see inclusiveness as the best part of the game, Dozier said.

“It’s great for bringing the entire team together,” he said. “We didn’t want to be a sit-at-your-locker-staring-at-your-phone-all-the-time kind of team. So this is a blast.”

Who is best at it is the topic of much debate, of course, because these are intensely competitive athletes.

“Si, still the best,” Sano said, for instance, moments after beating Gibson/Duke. “I could tell you my secret, but you might tell somebody.”

Escobar insists he knows the secret — focus, concentration, teamwork, just like baseball — but teammates are skeptical.

“Esky keeps saying it’s him, but he’s not,” Dozier joked. “This tournament will decide it. Unless we have another one.”

Central Intelligence

The Twins added Oregon State outfielder Trevor Larnach in last week’s draft, while the rest of the AL Central teams addressed their own needs. Here’s a look:

Indians: Once the Indians, picking at No. 29, chose Canadian high schooler Noah Naylor, the debate began over whether he’s a catcher. For now, the Indians will keep him there, though his defensive skills need work. His status as an elite bat — the best hitter on the Canadian Junior National team — might move him to third base.

Royals: With a beleaguered pitching staff and a relatively thin farm system, the Royals’ plan was clear: They drafted nine college pitchers in the first 10 rounds. KC was delighted when Florida righthander Brady Singer was available at No. 18. With a fastball that can hit 96 mph and a high-80s slider, Singer figures to rise quickly.

Tigers: The only other time Detroit had the overall No. 1 pick, in 1997, the Tigers chose a college righthander, Matt Anderson, who never became

a star. So the Tigers know well the risks. But Casey Mize's command of four pitches, producing 151 strikeouts and only 12 walks at Auburn, convinced them he's a far better bet.

White Sox: Though just 5-foot-7 and 165 pounds, many scouts rated Oregon State second baseman Nick Madrigal the top hitter and perhaps top overall prospect in the draft. It's an odd fit, given that the Sox have young talents Tim Anderson and Yoan Moncada in the infield, but Chicago couldn't turn him down at fourth overall.

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

Twenty-three pitchers have thrown 100 mph at Target Field — it's happened 159 times (through Thursday), but no Twin has ever done it. Who has thrown the most ultra-heaters?

100-mph pitches at Target Field

29 — Aroldis Chapman

18 — Mauricio Cabrera

15 — Kelvin Herrera

14 — Bruce Rondon

12 — Frankie Montas

10 — Dellin Betances

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Almost as rare as a 100-mph pitch? A batted ball traveling 110 mph. There have been 186 such blasts in Target Field's nine seasons, hit by 86 different batters, and the leaders are much more familiar to Twins fans.

110-mph exit velocity leaders at Target Field

28 — Miguel Sano

14 — Max Kepler

13 — Kennys Vargas

6 — Nelson Cruz

6 — Jose Bautista

4 — Josh Donaldson, George Springer, Justin Upton, Edwin Encarnacion

Miguel Sano's career statistics on path with Harmon Killebrew's **Sid Hartman | Star Tribune | June 9, 2018**

The fact that the Twins are hanging around in the AL Central race remains an accomplishment when you consider how little production they have gotten from Miguel Sano, their All-Star third baseman who looked like he was ready to become an MVP candidate last year after hitting .264 with 28 homers, 15 doubles, 77 RBI and 75 runs scored in an injury-shortened 114-game season.

This year, Sano entered Saturday hitting .203 while striking out 60 times in 133 at-bats, an incredible 45.1 percent. And while he had seven homers, eight doubles and 26 RBI, his .272 on-base percentage was 68 points lower than his career mark.

Still, believe it or not, for all the hand-wringing about Sano from the media, through his first 343 career games he compares identically to the greatest power hitter in franchise history, Harmon Killebrew. But Sano has once again been questioned about his conditioning as he works his way back from serious leg injuries.

When it comes to questions about his weight, Sano said he understands everyone has an opinion about what kind of shape he should be in, but he

feels comfortable with his game and his body.

“I do not worry about [what other people say]. I play my game,” Sano said through a translator. “That’s my job, what I do here, I don’t care about what other people say about my weight. I can handle extra weight or normal, it’s the same because I hit the same ball. I do my job. I play good defense. Nothing bothers me.”

Has it been tough coming off a long rehab? “It has been tough, because I am coming with that injury in my foot from last year, in my knee, and then this year I hurt my hamstring,” Sano said. “But thank God everything is coming along and I’m getting better.”

Sano said he is working on his high strikeout rate.

“I am just trying to put the ball in play every day and make good contact with it,” he said. “Consistent contact.”

Asked if it was hard dealing with rehab while trying to get in a groove with his bat, he said, “No, I just am focusing on working hard every day and none of that stuff is affecting me.”

Historic comparisons

Sano, who turned 25 on May 11, entered Saturday with 343 games in parts of four seasons and was hitting .249 with 78 homers, 62 doubles, 221 RBI and a .340 on-base percentage.

Through 343 games and parts of seven seasons with the Washington Senators, Killebrew, who had turned 24 a little over two months earlier, hit .246 with 68 homers, 39 doubles, 173 RBI and a .343 on-base percentage.

It’s also worth noting that when Killebrew hit 343 career games it was in 1960, the Senators’ last year before moving to the Twin Cities, and he was a year removed from making his first All-Star Game, just like Sano is this year.

Killebrew didn’t reach the All-Star Game in 1960 because he missed most of May because of a hamstring injury and played 124 games that season. Sano missed a little under four weeks this season because of a hamstring injury as well.

Asked if he wants to get back to being an All-Star this year, Sano said of course, but he’s also pulling for his team. What he really wants is to play in his first postseason.

“We have a great team. We have a lot of baseball to play,” he said. “I hope we can be in the playoffs.”

Saturday’s Twins-Angels game recap

Joe Christensen | MLB.com | June 9, 2018

GAME RECAP

IMPACT PLAYER

Tyler Skaggs, Angels

The lefthander gave up fewer than three runs for the 10th time in 12 starts this season.

BY THE NUMBERS

5-10 The Twins’ record against AL West teams.

.370 Eddie Rosario’s batting average since May 1 (56-for-151).

1,951 RBI for Albert Pujols, tying him with Stan Musial for sixth on the all-time list.

ON DECK

Fernando Romero, who needed 92 pitches to get through five innings against the Angels on May 13, faces them again in the series finale.

News of Shohei Ohtani’s DL trip a jarring blow to Japanese media

Chip Scoggins | Star Tribune | June 9, 2018

The tweet arrived at 2:03 p.m., just as a contingent of Japanese reporters trickled into the press box at Target Field for another day of exhaustive coverage of rookie sensation Shohei Ohtani, the hottest story in Major League Baseball this season.

Except Ohtani isn't in Minnesota. And the tweet delivered news of a potentially serious injury in Ohtani's pitching elbow. The mood changed in a snap.

"Shocked," said Hideki Okuda, a sportswriter for Sports Nippon newspaper who has covered Japanese players in MLB since 1997.

Shocked, dejected, gut punch.

They all apply.

The magic carpet ride of Ohtani's debut season took an ominous turn Friday with diagnosis of a Grade 2 sprain of an elbow ligament. Sprain and UCL used in the same sentence usually causes baseball folks to break into nervous sweat.

Ohtani left his start Wednesday because of a blister on his hand. Now there is concern he might need Tommy John surgery if rehab doesn't yield positive results.

"Naturally you're concerned any time a pitcher has any type of discomfort," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said.

Scioscia was flanked by Japanese reporters who chronicle Ohtani with tunnel vision. Much like previous Japanese stars who migrated to MLB, Ohtani has his own beat corps assigned to cover his exploits and little else.

"The majority of those who are covering him, their focus is basically 95 percent Shohei Ohtani," said Tim Mead, the team's longtime VP of communications.

The fascination is rooted in historical significance. Not since Babe Ruth has MLB witnessed a regular two-way player. Ohtani hits and pitches, and has displayed tremendous aptitude at both. He smashes home runs and throws 100 miles per hour, a rare talent who arrived with the subtlety of a lightning strike.

"This guy is obviously special," said Okuda, the veteran sportswriter. "The size of impact might be as big as Hideo Nomo and Ichiro Suzuki."

Okuda has covered Japanese players throughout the majors since 1997, starting with Nomo. He normally covers Chicago Cubs pitcher Yu Darvish, but he was assigned the Angels-Twins series this weekend.

He got thrown a knee-buckling curveball.

Mead was conducting an interview about Ohtani-mania as news of his injury began to circulate. He stopped at one point to arrange a media conference call with Angels General Manager Billy Eppler, who was back in California. Forty-five minutes later, the Japanese media joined a few of the team's American beat writers around a phone in a conference room inside the Target Field press box.

The regular Japanese contingent covering Ohtani has settled in, with 50 to 60 working home games. About half that number travels to road games, too.

The Angels established rules to help ease his transition. Ohtani doesn't play the day before or after he pitches, so he doesn't do interviews on those days. He only talks to reporters on days that he plays.

He prefers to hold his news conferences outside of the clubhouse to avoid being a distraction. And no 1-on-1 interviews because his requests are a mile long and the team doesn't want to show favoritism.

Ohtani has his own interpreter and the Angels also hired a woman who worked in public relations for the Dodgers during the Nomo era to assist them in accommodating the international media.

"All of the decisions have been collective decisions," Mead said. "It's not Shohei in any way, shape or form saying 'I won't' or 'I don't want to.' There's been a certain amount of protecting because of the adjustment to the culture and all the work getting to know his teammates."

Mead noted that interest in Ohtani is so intense that Japanese TV stations host half-hour shows to dissect his pitching outings.

"At some point we all take a step back and recognize this is history," Mead said. "It's a national appeal. Certainly baseball wants to see him do well."

And see him healthy. This will be an anxious wait while Ohtani rehabs on the disabled list. With any luck, he will avoid the dreaded Tommy John surgery.

His press corps is in limbo, too. Many weren't sure if they would finish covering this series, return to California immediately or stay with the team for the next series in Seattle.

Outfielder Jake Cave returns for Twins **Joe Christensen | Star Tribune | June 9, 2018**

Jake Cave homered in his major league debut for the Twins last month before quickly getting sent back to Class AAA Rochester.

When word came Friday night that the Twins had called up the hot-hitting outfielder again, Cave hurried through airports to be at Target Field for Saturday afternoon's game against the Angels.

Turns out, he didn't have to rush.

The Twins waited through a four-hour rain delay before starting the game, but Cave was just glad to be back in a major league clubhouse. A lefthanded hitter, Cave has batted .342 with three home runs in his past 10 games for Rochester.

"The roster stuff I can't control," he said. "But I'm hoping I can play hard every day, run the bases well, play outfield well, and swing the bat, and show the organization that I belong here."

Cave, 25, came to the Twins from the Yankees during spring training in a trade for minor league pitcher Luis Gil.

The Twins first promoted Cave on May 19, and he delivered a home run that night vs. the Brewers. He went 0-for-6 his next two games before heading back to Rochester.

"I was happy to see he went down there and responded, but not surprised by it," manager Paul Molitor said.

Molitor said the Twins made the roster move — demoting reliever Tyler Duffey and promoting Cave — to give them another lefthanded hitter against a predominantly righthanded Angels bullpen.

Molitor said Cave is "definitely an option to play any of the outfield positions," noting that the reports on his speed, instincts and route-running have been good.

Solving Sano's slump

A day after dropping Miguel Sano to seventh in the lineup for the first time in his career, Molitor bumped the slumping slugger to sixth on Saturday.

Sano went 1-for-4 in Friday's 4-2 loss to the Angels, with a bad-hop, RBI double followed by three more strikeouts. He lined a double in his first at-bat Saturday against Los Angeles lefthander Tyler Skaggs.

Sano ranked in the top seven among AL hitters in strikeouts each of the past two seasons and is striking out at an even higher rate this season. Entering Saturday, he had whiffed in 40.8 percent of his plate appearances, compared to 36.0 and 35.0, respectively, the past two years.

Molitor met briefly with Sano before Friday's game, explaining the batting order move. Sano's response was, "No worries, man. You're the manager," Molitor said.

Sano, who missed 24 games in May because of a strained hamstring, entered Saturday batting .136 in June (3-for-22) with two walks and 12 strikeouts in 24 plate appearances.

"I just tried to get him understand," Molitor said, "that [moving him to seventh in the order] was about a combination of trying to give us a different look, and at the same time, giving him a chance to not maybe feel the pressure of the middle of the lineup."

Patience rewarded

The Twins announced that because of the long rain delay, anyone holding a ticket to Saturday's game can exchange it for a ticket to any future Twins home game, subject to availability.

The Twins made a similar gesture after fans sat through 4-hour, 50-minute delay last June 22, before a 9-0 loss to the White Sox. That was the longest weather delay in Twins history.

Etc.

- Center fielder Byron Buxton (broken toe) worked out on a non-weight-bearing treadmill, and there was hope he could test out the injury with some batting tee work. “Minimal” progress, Molitor noted.
- First baseman Joe Mauer (concussion) took grounders and did some running but was “pretty much status quo,” Molitor said.
- Duffey had three scoreless outings, spanning four innings, before his latest demotion to Rochester. “He was disappointed,” Molitor said. “I wouldn’t have expected anything else.”

Listless Twins fall 2-1 to Angels despite Kyle Gibson’s solid start
Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | June 9, 2018

Two solo homers were all the Los Angeles Angels could muster against hard-luck Kyle Gibson on Saturday after a four-hour rain delay.

Thanks to young left-hander Tyler Skaggs and a struggling Twins lineup, that was enough for the Angels to escape with a 2-1 win at Target Field.

“As an offense, we have to do a better job,” Twins cleanup hitter Robbie Grossman said after the hosts were held to three runs or less for the fourth time in five games.

With the loss the Twins fell to 3-13 in one-run games. Among American League teams, only the Chicago White Sox (6-14) and Tampa Bay Rays (9-16) have suffered more narrow losses so far this year.

The Angels, now 12-7 in one-run games, have locked up the season series (4-2) heading into Sunday’s finale.

“These losses are frustrating,” Twins manager Paul Molitor said. “Offensively, when you’re struggling, it’s tough not taking advantage of these really good starts that we’ve been getting.”

Ian Kinsler pulled a two-strike slider out to left with two down in the third, and Albert Pujols pounded a sixth-inning fastball 405 feet into the second deck in left. It was the third career homer for each off Gibson, who has allowed six of his eight homers this season over his past five starts.

Pujols now has 623 career homers, seven shy of Ken Griffey Jr. for sixth all-time, and his 1,951st run batted in tied him with Stan Musial for sixth all-time.

“I just made the wrong pitch at the wrong time, and Albert did what Albert does,” Gibson said. “Unfortunately, that ended up being the difference maker.”

Gibson (1-4) would allow just three other hits — all singles — and two walks (back to back in the third) while turning in his eighth quality start in 13 tries this season. He remained winless in his past 12 outings, however, mostly because of poor run support.

Sent back out for the seventh at 104 pitches, Gibson worked around Jose Fernandez’s leadoff single to complete seven innings for the second time in three starts. Gibson finished with a career-high 118 pitches, one more than his previous high from June 10, 2015 against the Kansas City Royals.

Gibson produced eight swinging strikes but none in his final 46 pitches. He was pushed to three-ball counts nine times overall by a lineup missing the injured trio of Shohei Ohtani, Andrelton Simmons and Kole Calhoun, and he needed 19 pitches to strike out Luis Valbuena in his first two trips, including a 12-pitch confrontation.

Skaggs, who has a 2.08 earned run average in two starts against the Twins this season, scattered five hits and a walk while fanning eight. The Twins, falling to 6-10 against left-handed starters, scored their only run on a Max Kepler double-play grounder in the sixth after singles by Eddie Rosario and Grossman.

Skaggs became the sixth lefty starter to beat the Twins this year. He joined a group that includes veterans CC Sabathia and Hector Santiago as well as up-and-comers James Paxton, Brent Suter and Blake Snell.

“I think we’ve just faced some tough lefties, and you don’t see them very often,” Grossman said. “We went the first month without seeing but

one, maybe? It's a different look. I think the more we see them, it's only going to help us."

They wasted a leadoff double by Ehire Adrianza in the fifth, went down in order three times and are now hitless in eight at-bats with runners in scoring position for the series.

"We just couldn't get much going off Skaggs," Molitor said. "We had one opportunity with the leadoff double, and we didn't execute there as far as moving him along."

The Twins were again without Joe Mauer due to a neck strain and concussion-type issues traced to a May 11 game against the Angels. Since the start of 2017, they are 88-79 (.527) with him in the starting lineup, but they are 24-32 (.429) without him in that span.

Slumping Miguel Sano, who had a bad-hop double on Friday, had two hits and ripped a curveball for a double in the second for just his second extra-base hit of the year off a lefty. The other was a game-tying homer off Paxton in the home opener on April 5.

Making his eighth start at first base, Sano also made several good defensive plays and saved multiple errors by scooping throws out of the dirt.

Angels superstar Mike Trout went 1 for 3 with a walk and is now 2 for 17 (.118) with six walks against the Twins this season.

Oregon State star Trevor Larnach almost set to become a Minnesota Twin **Hayes Gardner | Pioneer Press | June 9, 2018**

On Monday, as Trevor Larnach stressfully waited for his name to be called during the Major League Baseball draft, he received a text message from adviser Jason Comte. "Get ready," it read.

"Get ready for what?" he replied, unsure of what to expect.

The confusion didn't last long. Moments later, Larnach was selected with the 20th overall pick by the Twins.

The 6-foot-3, sweet-swinging outfielder has exploded this season to hit 18 home runs for the Oregon State Beavers and help them advance to the NCAA Super Regionals in Corvallis. Oregon State faced the Gophers on Saturday night after having defeated them 8-1 Friday.

During the draft, Larnach was surrounded by family members, his girlfriend Jessica Garcia — who plays softball for Oregon State — as well as his Beavers teammates.

Still a bit shocked, he told his dad, Adam Larnach: "It's a dream come true."

It's been a dream a long time in the making.

Years ago, when Adam would pitch wiffle balls to a young Trevor, he had to be careful. The little lefty's line drives would leave Adam ducking left and right to avoid being stung.

"There was always a money ball I'd throw to him and he would hit it over the neighbor's house. I said, 'Uh oh. He's got something going here.' That was when he was 6 and 7 years old," Adam said.

That has remained true.

When Trevor was about 12, his father put a fake \$1 million bill on a framed photo in their home of Trevor smashing a home run. The rationale? He believed his son's swing would one day earn him a million dollars.

Although Trevor has not yet signed with the Twins, his slot is valued at \$3.1 million, considerably more than the fake bill Adam used as motivation.

"I looked at it the other day and I said, 'Son of a gun,' " he said.

But the younger Larnach wasn't always sure he'd become a pro ballplayer. He grew up in Pleasant Hill, Calif., in a community rife with talent.

Since third grade, Larnach played baseball and basketball with Willie MacIver, Joe DeMers and Jeffrey Mitchell — all of whom went on to play Pac-12 baseball. MacIver and DeMers were selected in the ninth and 11th rounds of the draft this year.

"They were always very special. They stood out as 10-year-olds," Adam remembered.

But even as a ninth-grader, Trevor had not really considered collegiate baseball. Playing with other gifted players can be beneficial, but Trevor's mother, Jeannine, noted it can also be intimidating.

"Trevor always thought that Joe (DeMers) was just amazing and thought, 'I'm never gonna be as good as Joe,' " she said.

In high school, Trevor's stepfather, Joseph Yore, informed Trevor that he was one of the most natural athletes he had seen. That opened Trevor's eyes a bit.

By the time his College Park High School team — with seven Division I commits — finished as one of the top teams in the state his senior year, Trevor was signed to play at perennial power Oregon State.

On Friday in the Super Regional opener against the Gophers, Larnach stole the show. In the first inning, he powered a two-run homer to left-center. Then, in the third inning, he made perhaps the most pivotal play of the game, tracking down a would-be-double in right field.

"I just got on my giddy-up and started running. It carried a little bit more than I expected, so I caught it full-length, full reach. I was just glad I could get the job done," Larnach said.

The Gophers faithful who traveled to see Minnesota seek its first College World Series berth since 1977 had to be disappointed in Larnach's performance against their team. But, they also had to be subconsciously pleased. After all, he'll soon be in the Twins organization.

The Twins boast a talented, young outfielder, but Adam Larnach doesn't believe Trevor is too bothered by that.

"I don't even think he knows who's playing on the Minnesota Twins," Adam said with a laugh, noting Trevor still has years of minor league baseball ahead of him. "That's too far ahead."

Larnach isn't the first successful athlete in his family tree. His uncle, Brian Cabral, won a Super Bowl with the 1985 Chicago Bears and his grandfather, Walter Cabral, was the first Hawaiian to play football at Notre Dame.

Although neither Larnach nor his parents have spent time in Minnesota, they hope that changes in the near future, should Larnach reach the majors.

"We're ready to go to battle the mosquitoes," Adam said. "I hear they're the state bird."

Jason Castro still plans to contribute during rehab from knee surgery

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | June 9, 2018

Twins catcher Jason Castro hobbled into the home clubhouse on crutches again Saturday morning, a bulky black brace on his surgically repaired right knee.

A little more than three weeks out from May 15 surgery to repair torn meniscus, Castro plans to stick around as much as possible during his rehab. He won't sit in the dugout until he's off crutches in late June, but there has even been talk about having him go on select road trips in an effort to help the game-planning process for pitchers and catchers.

"I'm definitely going to be around as much as possible," he said. "Just working with and talking with guys and just doing the things I would do if I was on the active roster."

Signed through 2019, Castro has been assured his recovery timeline will allow him to go through a normal offseason of preparation. Set to turn 31 on June 18, he usually begins "more intense workouts" around Thanksgiving and then adds in baseball activities around Christmas.

"From a timing standpoint, as far as getting ready for next year, that's pretty much ideal," he said. "That wasn't something I really thought about, but as far as all the benchmarks from the recovery, it looks like it's going to line up perfectly."

Castro knows the drill after having multiple right knee procedures with the Houston Astros. When he had season-ending surgery in the spring of 2011 to repair a torn anterior cruciate ligament, he also had a meniscus repair and was back doing light swinging in the cage after four months.

Late in the 2013 season, he had roughly 30 percent of his meniscus removed, and Dr. Richard Steadman told him after last month's surgery the remaining meniscus looks good. The risk of going "bone on bone" in future years appears to have been mitigated.

"I have a pretty substantial amount in there still," Castro said. "Everything that's in there, based on my MRIs, he said looked really good. He just

did a little bit of cleaning up and then fixed the meniscus. That was the game plan going in. It ended up being a pretty complex tear, but that's what (Steadman) specializes in."

There had been talk initially about Castro being able to return in four to six weeks after a minor knee procedure, but the very fact Castro headed to Vail, Colo., for the procedure should have been a tip-off he was done for the year.

"You see meniscus injuries a lot to catchers, just from flexion, from staying bent quite a bit," he said. "It's not uncommon. Repairs vs. removals, there's pros and cons to each, but with my history and then just moving forward in my life, what a removal would have meant with this specific injury would have been pretty bad. This was really a best-case scenario."

CAVE RETURNS

Outfielder Jake Cave was recalled from Triple-A Rochester after hitting .354 (17 for 48) with four home runs since a three-game audition in the majors last month.

A left-handed batter, Cave is "definitely an option" to play all three outfield spots, Twins manager Paul Molitor said. Reports from Red Wings manager have been "really good," he said, on Cave's improving play in center field, where he has played 13 games at Triple-A this year.

"Not elite speed, but runs well enough," Molitor said. "Instincts are good, routes, all those things that you look for."

BRIEFLY

Byron Buxton (fractured toe) was due to hit off a tee or take light flips indoors and has resumed running on the low-gravity treadmill to maintain his conditioning.

Joe Mauer (neck/concussion) couldn't hit on the field because of rain before the game, but he was due to take grounders on the outfield grass.

Outfielder LaMonte Wade Jr. was promoted to Triple-A Rochester after posting a .393 on-base percentage in 201 plate appearances for Double-A Chattanooga. Wade, who spent all of last season with the Lookouts, has 32 more walks than strikeouts over his four pro seasons.

The team of Miguel Sano and Jake Odorizzi knocked out Eduardo Escobar and assistant hitting coach Rudy Hernandez to win their side of the bracket in a spirited clubhouse dominoes tournament that has been going on throughout the homestand. Likely awaiting them in the final were Brian Dozier and bullpen catcher Nate Dammann.

Those holding tickets for Saturday's rain-delayed game may exchange them for any future Twins regular-season home game, subject to availability.

Dominican right-hander Luis Gil, traded for Cave this spring, remains in extended spring training with the New York Yankees and has yet to appear in a minor-league game in 2018. He turned 20 on June 3.

Gibson, Twins lose 2-1 pitching duel to Angels **Associated Press | Fox Sports North | June 9, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS — Albert Pujols met Hall of Famer Stan Musial during his time with the St. Louis Cardinals and grew to appreciate Musial and his legacy.

For now, the pair is sharing a place in baseball's record books.

Pujols hit his 623rd career homer and tied Musial for seventh on the career RBI list with 1,951, helping the Los Angeles Angels beat the Minnesota Twins 2-1 after a four-hour rain delay Saturday.

Pujols' solo home run in the sixth proved to be the difference as Tyler Skaggs (5-4) allowed one run in seven innings and matched a season best with eight strikeouts.

The team announced Pujols is sending the ball he hit, his jersey and bat from Saturday's game to the family of Musial, who died in 2013.

"I know those two had a chance to spend a lot of time together when he was in St. Louis and he respects him, respects his legacy tremendously," Los Angeles manager Mike Scioscia said. "For him to be in the same sentence with Stan Musial I know is a nice feeling for Albert."

Ian Kinsler had a solo home run, his sixth in the past 11 games, for the Angels. Blake Parker recorded his seventh save as Los Angeles won for the seventh time in its past eight games.

Kyle Gibson (1-4) allowed both home runs before completing seven innings. He gave up five hits, walked two and struck out five batters as Minnesota fell to 3-13 in one-run games.

Gibson threw a career-high 118 pitches. He's posted six consecutive quality starts without a win.

"Offensively when you're struggling, it's just tough," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "Especially not taking advantage of some of these really good starts that we've been getting."

The four-hour rain delay is the second longest in Target Field history behind a 4:50 delay last June against the Chicago White Sox.

Pujols struck in the sixth with a towering homer to the second deck in left field.

"They were really spitting out some sliders and some good fastballs away and, unfortunately I just made the wrong pitch at the wrong time, and Albert did what Albert does," Gibson said. "He did a really good job on that pitch."

Pujols added a single in the eighth for his 3,027th career hit, which ranks 27th on the career list. He's seventh on the home run list, seven behind Ken Griffey Jr., and his RBI total is 44 behind Lou Gehrig for sixth.

"The names that are thrown up next to his are names that all baseball fans know and some are names that just people know," Kinsler said. "He's passing, I guess you could call them, legends. It's a lot of fun to watch."

Minnesota's lone run crossed the plate in the sixth after Max Kepler grounded into a double play, but Robbie Grossman got caught in a rundown before being tagged out, allowing Eddie Rosario to score.

ENERGY TO SPARE

Skaggs had his second straight strong start. He was coming off six scoreless innings in a win against Texas on June 3. The left-hander retired 11 of the first 13 batters he faced and ended up giving up five hits and one walk in tying his longest outing of the season.

"I had like four Red Bulls and a lot of energy drinks," Skaggs said of how he spent the rain delay. "So, I was ready to go. I woke up early, got here on the first bus because I wanted to wake up for the game. I think it worked out really well."

ANGELS ANNOUNCER CLEARED

Los Angeles radio play-by-play announcer Terry Smith was released from a local hospital after an irregular heartbeat forced him to leave Friday's broadcast. Smith was taken to Hennepin County Medical Center where he underwent tests.

The team said Smith was cleared after the testing and he'll return to the broadcast on Monday in Seattle.

MINNESOTA MOVES

The Twins recalled OF Jake Cave from Triple-A Rochester before the game and optioned RHP Tyler Duffey. Cave hit .111 in three games earlier this season, including his first major league hit on a home run.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Angels: C Martin Maldonado was out of the lineup a day after fouling a ball off his foot. But Scioscia said he planned to start rookie catcher Jose Briceno anyway because of the day game following a night game.

Twins: OF Byron Buxton (10-day disabled list) ran on an antigravity treadmill Friday as he tests his broken left great toe. Buxton was likely to advance to hitting off a tee Saturday.

UP NEXT

Angels: RHP Nick Tropeano (3-3, 4.35 ERA) starts the series finale. Tropeano allowed five runs in 4 2/3 innings in his last start against Kansas City.

Twins: RHP Fernando Romero (2-2, 3.96) will take the mound looking to follow-up his two-run, six-inning start last week against Chicago. The rookie has allowed two runs or fewer in five of his career seven starts.

Twins call up Cave, send down Duffey
Staff Writer | Fox Sports North | June 9, 2018

The Minnesota Twins fortified their bench Saturday, recalling outfielder Jake Cave from Triple-A Rochester. To make room on the roster, Minnesota sent reliever Tyler Duffey to the Red Wings.

Cave made his major-league debut in May with the Twins and homered in his first game. With Rochester, Cave was hitting .280 with eight doubles, one triple, five home runs and 25 RBI.

Duffey appeared in four games for the Twins and pitched six scoreless innings with three hits allowed, no walks and four strikeouts.

Preview: Twins vs. Angels
Associated Press | Fox Sports North | June 9, 2018

Nick Tropeano takes the mound Sunday as the Los Angeles Angels look to wrap up a sweep of the Minnesota Twins at Target Field and extend their winning streak to seven games.

Tropeano (3-3, 4.35 ERA) has a 2.84 ERA in three career appearances against the Twins and is looking to bounce back after allowing five runs over 4 2/3 innings against Kansas City in an eventual 9-6 win on Monday.

It was a rare dud from an Angels' starter.

Los Angeles has the third-best ERA among AL rotations and the best in the league since May 1 (2.61).

The Angels are the only team in baseball to have five starters with an ERA at or below 3.50 this season.

"I don't think you could look at this last month and think we could pitch any better from the starting rotation," Los Angeles manager Mike Scioscia said. "Some of these guys are getting a little more rest. At times they are going on normal rest. I think it's going to be a bigger plus as we move deeper into the season."

Adding Shohei Ohtani helped make it possible for the Angels to go with a six-man rotation. It was a double-edged sword as Ohtani was able to pitch on the same rest schedule as he did in Japan and the rest of the starters would get an extra day between outings.

Despite Ohtani landing on the disabled list, the Angels plan to keep using the six-day format, which Tropeano believes has helped him.

"You can get a little more intent into it," he said. "On a five-day rotation, you don't have that luxury. You want to stay with your routine. You throw 25-30 pitches. Now you can go maybe 35 or 40-plus with the six-day."

Tropeano is 3-1 with a 2.55 ERA on the road where the Angels are 20-10. He has a 2.84 ERA in three career appearances (two starts) against Minnesota.

Besides their winning streak, the Angels are 7-1 in their last eight games after getting a 2-1 win on Saturday following a four-hour rain delay. Albert Pujols homered and tied Hall of Famer Stan Musial on the RBI list at 1,951 good for sixth place.

Right-hander Fernando Romero (2-2, 3.96 ERA) goes for the Twins, who will be trying to avoid a sweep and have mustered three runs against the Angels.

Romero gave up two runs over six innings in his last outing Tuesday against the Chicago White Sox. He made his first career appearance against the Angels earlier this season, allowing his first career run on four hits and three walks while striking out six over five innings.

Minnesota shuffled its roster slightly ahead of Saturday's game. Outfielder Jake Cave was recalled from Triple-A Rochester to provide some depth for a short-handed bench that had been carrying only three reserves for the last few weeks.

"Just looking at our roster here with a couple games to go before an off-day, being in fairly good shape with our bullpen, the bench has been a little bit slim in terms of options late in games," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said. "With the Angels being so right-handed dominant in their bullpen, knowing we can probably use a potential one or two pinch-hitters late in the game, we just try to supplement with a guy in Jake who's probably been the most consistent down there of late for Rochester."

Cave appeared briefly with the Twins last month and homered in his big league debut May 19. He is batting .280 with five home runs and 25 RBIs for Rochester this season.

Reliever Tyler Duffey was optioned to Rochester, clearing room for Cave on the active roster.

Struggling Twins offense wastes yet another strong Kyle Gibson outing **Dan Hayes | The Athletic | June 10, 2018**

There's no question that the Twins offense is hurting without Joe Mauer, Byron Buxton, Jorge Polanco and Jason Castro in the lineup. The same group earlier played for nearly a month without Miguel Sanó, too.

Those personnel losses are enough to sink most clubs and have undoubtedly played a role in the Twins' 27-34 start. But the Twins still possess enough firepower in their lineup to win contests like Saturday's 2-1 loss to the Los Angeles Angels, and yet they haven't.

Another poor showing by the bats led to yet another disappointing loss for starting pitcher Kyle Gibson, who allowed two earned runs and five hits in a career-high 118-pitch effort. The Twins' fourth loss in five games prevented Gibson from earning his first victory since March and dropped the team's record to 3-13 in one-run games.

"These losses are frustrating," manager Paul Molitor said. "You have a really nice series last weekend and you haven't been able to back it up.

"It's tough not taking advantage of these really good starts that we've been getting."

There isn't an easy fix to what ails the Twins. Mauer's career .391 on-base percentage at the top of the lineup is irreplaceable. Polanco was a good enough hitter in the second half of 2017 to bat third for the 85-win Twins. Buxton was an impact two-way player the final three months of the season.

But the Twins still should have enough to get by, even when facing tough pitchers as they have the past two days against the Angels.

This is one of the reasons they signed Logan Morrison, who has struggled again in limited June plate appearances (22) with a .372 OPS after a hot May. Morrison's presence was expected to extend the lineup. The Twins also haven't received enough recent offense from Brian Dozier, who is 3 for his past 19, or Max Kepler, who is in a 6-for-39 funk, or Sanó. Though he went 2-for-4 on Saturday and extended the game with a two-out single in the ninth inning, Sanó has been anything but a force. The effort to turn things around has been there from him, but the results have not. Since he returned from the disabled list, Sanó is 12-for-57 with two home runs, 26 strikeouts and only four walks.

Aside from Morrison, who didn't start Saturday, the rest of the offense struggled against Los Angeles left-hander Tyler Skaggs. But the equally short-handed Angels — who are without Shohei Ohtani, Andrelton Simmons and Kole Calhoun — found enough offense to survive a strong start by Gibson. Ian Kinsler and Albert Pujols homered to lift Los Angeles to the win.

"A couple of solo home runs is all it took for the Angels to come out on the victorious side today," Molitor said. "We just couldn't get much going."

When a team doesn't score, it magnifies its other issues (see: the bullpen's recent failures). The latest eye-catching phenomenon is that Gibson somehow doesn't have a win next to his name since March 31 even though he's allowed two or fewer runs seven times in those 12 starts. He may not have been perfect Saturday, but Gibson was plenty deserving of his second victory.

"We've played some tough games," said designated hitter Robbie Grossman, who went 1-for-4. "We can only think that it's gonna turn and we're gonna catch fire.

"As an offense, we've gotta do a better job."

Gibson deserves it. Friday's starter Lance Lynn was also deserving, though he was fortunate enough to leave with a 2-1 lead.

Gibson exited down by a run because the Twins couldn't take advantage of the few chances they had against Skaggs. Sanó doubled with two outs in the second inning and Ehire Adrianza walked. But Ryan LaMarre grounded out.

Adrianza later doubled to start the fifth inning but didn't move from there. Skaggs retired LaMarre on a comebacker, Bobby Wilson on a fly to right and struck out Dozier, who went 0-for-4.

The Twins also got a man aboard in the eighth and ninth innings but came up empty, which led to a tough loss for Gibson. Aside from a lengthy

third inning in which he surrendered a homer to Kinsler, Gibson worked quickly and efficiently. He retired eight of his next nine batters after his third-inning struggles and pitched well into the sixth. With the bullpen taxed, Molitor let Gibson return in the seventh despite a pitch count of 104, and the right-hander responded.

Gibson walked two and struck out five. His 118 pitches topped his previous high of 117 from a June 10, 2015 contest. But the team's offensive woes left Gibson talking about the one that got away — a sixth-inning fastball that Pujols turned into career homer No. 623.

“Unfortunately, the one pitch to Pujols kind of came back to bite me there,” Gibson said. “I was trying to go in on him, and we had talked in the dugout, me and Bobby, about maybe it was time to go in on some of these guys. They were really sitting on some good sliders and good fastballs away. Unfortunately, I just made the wrong pitch at the wrong time and Albert did what Albert does ... that one ended up being the difference maker.”