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Wednesday, September 5, 2018**

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Twins hampered by 4-run 1st against Astros

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | September 4, 2018

HOUSTON -- The Twins had trouble in the first inning again in their second time employing the "opener" strategy, but after Trevor May's struggles in the first, Houston native Kohl Stewart turned in the best outing of his young career in his role as the primary pitcher.

May, starting for the first time since Aug. 14, 2015, gave up four runs in the opening frame and the Twins couldn't recover despite five scoreless innings from Stewart in a 5-2 loss to the Astros on Tuesday night at Minute Maid Park. Minnesota will continue to use the strategy with its young pitchers this month, but Stewart could pitch his way into a more traditional starting role.

"I know we'll get a lot of questions and everyone is trying to find out if this is good or bad, or sound or whatever," manager Paul Molitor said. "Obviously, Trev went out there and I think he was kind of excited to get an opportunity to get the game going. He left some pitches up and they didn't miss them. They put up four quickly. But Kohl did a really nice job. I was a little concerned with him with all the people he had here at the ballpark, but he made them happy."

May, who entered with a 1.88 ERA over his previous 13 appearances in his return from Tommy John surgery, was hit hard, giving up an RBI double off the wall to Alex Bregman, an RBI single to Tyler White and a two-run homer to Yuli Gurriel. It was the second straight time an "opener" scuffled for the Twins, as Gabriel Moya gave up two runs in that role against the Rangers on Sunday.

"It didn't go the way we wanted it to go," May said. "There was a little bit of sign figuring out on their end. There were guys at second for quite a while. That's pretty regular."

But Stewart, the No. 4 overall pick in the 2013 MLB Draft out of St. Pius X High School located only seven miles from the ballpark, had success, starting his night by facing No. 9 hitter Tony Kemp, who he struck out looking. He faced 18 hitters -- or exactly two times through the order -- scattering three hits and a walk with three strikeouts.

"It felt really good," Stewart said. "I felt like I attacked better today. I didn't fall behind too often, and when I did, I was able to get back in counts. I'll try to build on this one and go forward."

Stewart used his sinker to generate nine ground-ball outs, including a double play to end the second inning. He departed after throwing 73 pitches,

reaching five innings for the first time in five career outings.

"I think there's more of a calmness out there," Molitor said. "Strike-throwing is a huge part for any pitcher. We didn't see it very consistently the first couple of outings, and pitching behind and losing command arm-side a lot. He's just been better at being able to make pitches and work ahead, and not be afraid to use his offspeed to get back in counts when he's got good fastball hitters."

The four runs in the first was enough for veteran Astros ace Justin Verlander, who surrendered one run on three hits and two walks over seven innings with eight strikeouts. Houston native Robbie Grossman had success against him, going 2-for-3 with an RBI double in the third.

Reliever Oliver Drake allowed an insurance run to score in the seventh on an RBI double from Bregman. Former Twins right-hander Ryan Pressly faced his old club in the eighth, striking out all three batters he faced, lowering his ERA to 1.15 since joining Houston. Jorge Polanco capped the scoring with a solo shot off Chris Devenski in the ninth for his fourth homer of the year, but Max Kepler lined into a double play to end the game.

"We made it a little exciting in the ninth," Molitor said. "But had a little blunder there as far as losing track of where we are at and what the score is."

SANO LEAVES WITH LEG BRUISE

In a scary play at second base in the second inning, Twins third baseman Miguel Sano jammed his surgically-repaired left leg into the second-base bag and was carted off the field. But after undergoing X-rays, Sano was diagnosed with a lower left leg bruise. He had offseason surgery to insert a titanium rod in his left shin. [More >](#)

"I'm very happy to say that he's doing better than I could have imagined," Molitor said. "At the time, we weren't sure. His first real impact to the area that was worked on last year with the surgery. He was in a lot of pain."

SOUND SMART

Stewart became the fifth Texas-born pitcher to throw five scoreless innings in a debut at Minute Maid Park, joining Matt Albers (2006), Homer Bailey ('11) Clay Buchholz ('14) and Austin Pruitt ('17). Albers was the only other one to do it in relief.

HE SAID IT

"I don't think it had any effect. It was different, but once the game started, it was fine. I felt the same. Once the first inning was over, it's all the same. I just kind of pushed back my routine a little bit. Instead of getting ready at 6:30 it was more like 6:45, 6:50. But once that happened, everything fell into place and worked out. Felt normal." -- Stewart, on coming in as a primary pitcher

UP NEXT

Twins right-hander Jake Odorizzi (5-9, 4.41 ERA) will start the series finale against the Astros at 7:10 p.m. CT on Wednesday at Minute Maid Park. Odorizzi is coming off his best month of the season -- posting a 3.77 ERA in six August outings. Lefty Framber Valdez (2-1, 2.16 ERA) starts for Houston.

Sano avoids serious injury with bruised leg **Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | September 4, 2018**

HOUSTON -- Twins third baseman Miguel Sano, who had a titanium rod inserted in his left shin last offseason, left Tuesday night's 5-2 loss to the the Astros on a cart after sustaining a lower left leg bruise while sliding into second base. X-rays were negative and his status is day to day, the club announced.

With two on and one out in the second, right-hander Justin Verlander threw a ball in the dirt and Sano broke for second, drawing a throw from catcher Martin Maldonado. Sano's left leg seemed to get caught underneath as he made contact with the second-base bag while shortstop Carlos Correa attempted to put the tag on him.

"I'm very happy to say that he's doing better than I could have imagined," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "At the time, we weren't sure. His first real impact to the area that was worked on last year with the surgery. He was in a lot of pain. Kind of radiated down all through his ankle, but we got him up here, got him checked out, and it looks like he's got bruising in the leg. We're going to precautionarily put him on crutches here just to keep the weight off for a day. Optimistic that it might not be too long, which I thought wasn't going to be the case when he got carted off the field."

Sano was ruled safe on the play, and the call was ruled to stand after a replay review, but he remained on the ground as Molitor and athletic trainer Tony Leo came out to second base. Sano didn't put any weight on his left leg as he got into the cart.

"That's a lot of mass," Molitor said. "And it hits the ground and there's impact, and his leg bent a little funny. I'm sure there was some stress, whether he had the rod in there or not. But I'm speculating that it might have concerned him, knowing the pain was where the work was done."

We're careful to make sure. I said get the cart, let's not mess around in case we got something major going on there."

Sano, 25, is hitting .202/.285/.405 in 70 games this year. He spent six weeks in the Minors from mid-June until late July to work on his conditioning after last November's surgery.

"After the X-rays were done, he was smiling," Molitor said. "I think he was relieved to know he wasn't facing being shut down here with something major."

Mauer nominated for 2018 Clemente Award
Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | September 4, 2018

HOUSTON -- Veteran first baseman Joe Mauer, who has long been respected around baseball for his work away from the field, was named the Twins' nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award for the third straight year, Major League Baseball announced on Tuesday.

The Roberto Clemente Award annually recognizes one player from each club who "best represents the game of Baseball through extraordinary character, community involvement, philanthropy and positive contributions, both on and off the field." The overall winner, which is picked by a panel of experts that includes MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred, MLB-affiliated networks, MLB.com and fan voting, will be announced during the 2018 World Series.

"It's awesome," Mauer said. "It's an honor. It's humbling to be recognized. To be recognized for something that's for on the field and off the field, it's pretty special."

Major League Baseball will celebrate the 17th annual Roberto Clemente Day on Wednesday and fans can also begin voting at mlb.com/clemente21. Mauer, 35, has never won the overall award, and he is looking to join Hall of Famers Rod Carew (1977), Dave Winfield (1994) and Kirby Puckett ('96) as the only Twins to earn the prestigious honor.

"It's a pretty good list if you look through the years of people who have received that recognition," manager Paul Molitor said. "I think it means a lot to players, not only to have the chance to be the nominee from their team, but potentially be the overall Clemente winner. Just people of high character that have taken advantage of their position to try to give back in different ways, and Joe certainly has been one of those guys for a long time."

Mauer, a St. Paul native, has always been active in the local community with his wife, Maddie. They annually host the Mauer and Friends Kids Classic luncheon event to benefit Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare, which has raised more than \$1 million for the hospital's foundation. He works with several local and national charities such as the Highland Friendship Club, Friends of St. Paul Baseball, Volunteers of America and is an active member of the MLB Players Association's Action Team. He also created a community ticket program called Mauer's Minnies, providing Twins game tickets to thousands of economically disadvantaged youth from Minneapolis and St. Paul.

"I think we've always tried to do that," Mauer said. "The Twins do a really good job of going out in the community. It's good to show support for fans. They support us on the field. Obviously, growing up there, it makes it even more special for me."

Worth noting

- Left fielder Eddie Rosario, who has been out since Thursday with a strained right quad, has progressed to hitting in the cages and running on the field. He could take batting practice as early as Wednesday.
- Molitor said the Twins considered bringing up lefty Lewis Thorpe as a September callup, but they were comfortable with the amount of innings he had thrown this season in the Minors. Thorpe, who missed the 2015-16 seasons after Tommy John surgery, posted a 3.54 ERA with 157 strikeouts in 129 2/3 innings between Double-A Chattanooga and Triple-A Rochester.

"We like Thorpe," Molitor said. "It just would have been very difficult to try to find much out about him if we would have brought him in. He had a good year. His innings were extended. He'll come back in next year and compete."

Miguel Sano bruises left leg as Twins' 'opener' strategy fails against Astros
La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 5, 2018

HOUSTON – The Twins don't appear to be getting far with this new "opener" pitching strategy.

Righthander Trevor May dug a hole the Twins could not climb out of in a 5-2 loss to Houston at Minute Maid Park on Tuesday night. Making the defeat worse was the early departure of Miguel Sano, who was carted off the field in the second inning with what's being described as a lower left leg bruise that initially looked more dire.

In two games, the Twins' "openers" have given up six runs. Houston scored four runs off May in the first inning on an RBI double by Alex Bregman, an RBI single by Tyler White and a two-run home run by Yuli Gurriel.

"I know we'll get a lot of questions and everyone is trying to find out if this is good or bad or sound or whatever," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. He's right, especially when righthander Kohl Stewart — the "primary" pitcher — followed May with five shutout innings.

The way Houston swung at his pitches, May (3-1) said he believed the Astros had him figured out. He wasn't accusing them of cheating; he said he just has to do a better job of changing signs when runners get on second base, because they can tip off hitters.

Bregman and White were on second that inning.

"It didn't go the way we wanted it to go," May said. "There was a little bit of sign figuring out on their end. There were guys at second for quite a while."

The Twins scored on Robbie Grossman's RBI double in the third and Jorge Polanco's homer in the ninth.

What the Twins will remember the most about the game is the sight of Sano grabbing his surgically repaired left leg. Sano had a rod inserted into the leg to stabilize the leg in the offseason.

The injury occurred in the second inning after Sano drew a walk off righthander Justin Verlander to put runners on first and third. Verlander's 0-2 curveball got away from catcher Martin Maldonado and rolled down the third base line. Grossman and Sano tried to advance a base and Maldonado threw to second, where Sano barely beat a tag by Carlos Correa.

Sano's right leg was his lead leg on the play, but his left leg eventually slammed into the bag, and the burly third baseman took his right hand and shoved Correa to get him away from the leg as he fell back in pain.

"That's a lot of mass," Molitor said. "And it hits the ground and there's impact and his leg bent a little funny. I'm sure there was some stress, whether he had the rod in there or not. But I'm speculating that it might have concerned him, knowing the pain was where the work was done."

Sano rolled over three times and was unable to get up as Twins head trainer Tony Leo rushed out to attend to him. After a few moments, a cart was summoned to carry Sano off the field as fans politely applauded.

Initial X-rays were negative, and the Twins announced less than 40 minutes later that Sano has a lower left leg bruise and is day to day. There were no plans for further tests, but he left the park on crutches as a precaution.

"I'm very happy to say that he's doing better than I could have imagined," said Molitor of Sano, who is in a 4-for-46 skid. "At the time, we weren't sure. His first real impact to the area that was worked on last year with the surgery. He was in a lot of pain."

Numbers support Twins decision on Byron Buxton's non call-up **Michael Rand | Star Tribune | September 4, 2018**

The big story of the unofficial last weekend of the summer was the Twins' decision not to bring Byron Buxton to the majors as a September call-up.

There are all sorts of well-reasoned takes on the issue, including the notion that Derek Falvey and Thad Levine come off looking bad because the decision appears motivated by keeping Buxton from gaining the service time needed to be a free agent a year sooner. Maybe that's the way the game is played, but the optics are bad.

From a purely baseball standpoint, though, there is evidence that Buxton has not earned a promotion — nor would him coming up and succeeding for a few weeks prove anything about his readiness for 2019.

Let's take a closer look at a few notable statistics from Buxton's career:

- On the subject of September proving nothing, there's this: Buxton has feasted in the majors as pitching has thinned out in the later months of seasons throughout his career.

His career OPS (on-base plus slugging percentage) in the majors by month: April, .464; May, .548; June, .546 — all awful. That includes a rough start this season (.195 average with the Twins) before health problems became apparent.

Then he starts to pick things up in July (.739) before hitting a stride in August (.818) and September (.853).

Maybe some of that is a result of better health and improved timing as seasons go along. Whatever the case, Buxton has shown he can hit in September when rosters expand. Doing so again this year wouldn't prove anything new.

- There were genuine reasons to be excited about Buxton coming into 2018 based on his second half in 2017 and a magic number he was quickly approaching.

Buxton entered 2018 with 980 career major league plate appearances, and there are some who believe 1,000 plate appearances is a key marker in a hitter's development. But if the thought was that Buxton had turned a corner last year as he approached that milestone, this year brought a regression in all areas.

The most telling advanced stat, per Baseball Info Solutions: Buxton in his 94 plate appearances with the Twins this season swung at 39.4 percent of pitches outside the strike zone. In his career entering the season, he was a little above 30 percent.

Maybe playing through an injury this season messed up his swing, leading to that uptick. But it's still concerning that his command of the strike zone as a hitter seemingly got worse.

- Buxton supporters point to his .365 average during a recent stretch in Rochester as justification for a September recall, but let's not confuse a 12-game hot streak at Class AAA in the second half of August for a meaningful turnaround with Buxton. In 23 other Rochester games this season, Buxton hit just .217.

This was a wasted year, but nothing that would have happened in September could have changed that.

What Buxton needs to show in 2019 is that he can hit and stay healthy consistently for the duration of a major league season, including the beginning when all 30 teams are fully engaged.

Ex-Twin Ryan Pressly admires Astros' approach
La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 4, 2018

HOUSTON – Ryan Pressly has joined the defending World Series champion Astros and has given them everything they needed.

The righthanded reliever, traded to Houston on July 27, has produced a sparkling 1.23 ERA in 15 appearances since joining the team. He gave up a home run to Texas' Rougned Odor in his Astros debut July 28 but has been nails ever since. He has struck out 22 batters in 15⅓ innings and has yet to walk a batter, including striking out the side Tuesday night.

Houston has options to close out games, so Pressly has been part of the bridge to the ninth inning, using his 96-miles-per-hour fastball and his breaking ball to shut down opponents.

“He quickly established himself as a guy that was going to pitch deeper in our bullpen in the leverage innings,” Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. “Came in and got a lot of big outs. And that certainly gains the trust of me and his teammates. I can't imagine he could be any better than he has for us.”

The Texas life suits Pressly, who was born in Dallas and grew up not far from there in Argyle. But it was hard to leave the Twins, who gave him a chance as a Rule 5 pick from the Red Sox before the 2013 season. He's spent the week catching up with Twins pitching coach Garvin Alston, bullpen coach Eddie Guardado and former teammates.

“Being there as long as I was, saying bye to everyone was tough,” Pressly said. “But it worked out for the best.”

More than joining a new team and being in first place, he's with Justin Verlander, Gerrit Cole, Jose Altuve and others, offering him a look at what makes another team great.

“Seeing how they go about their routine,” he said. “You watch [Verlander] and how he gets ready for a game. Same with Cole and all the starters. It's impressive. They still are talking about the game after they get done pitching, two days later after they get done pitching. They are trying to figure out how they can get better each and every time they get the ball. I've never seen people do that before.”

Oh, say can you sing?

Righthander John Curtiss has gotten rid of his high leg kick, which has allowed him to be more effective on the mound. And he's eager to show it, now that the Twins have called him up for the final weeks of the regular season.

His voice is ready, too.

On Sunday, Curtiss performed the national anthem before Class AAA Rochester's game against Lehigh Valley.

"[Rochester reliever] Jake Reed and I would sing along with the anthem singer every day," Curtiss said, "and sometimes 'God Bless America.' So I was like, 'I'll just do it.' The last game of the season. I asked their on-field people, and they let me do it.

"I really didn't get that nervous until right before it, then I was like, 'I don't remember the words,' but I did it. It was great."

Curtiss wants no part of a Target Field anthem, however; he prefers to take the mound so he can prove he can pitch. He gave up three runs in two appearances, totaling two-thirds of an inning, during a call-up earlier this season.

He joins righthander Chase De Jong and infielder Gregorio Petit as the final call-ups from Rochester. De Jong and Curtiss pitched in Monday's finale for Rochester — De Jong started and threw 61 pitches over four innings — so they weren't available Tuesday.

Etc.

- Not only players are being called up. Rochester trainer Chris Johnson will join the Twins this weekend and remain for the rest of the season. Minor league field coordinator Edgar Varela will join the club as an extra coach.
- Joe Mauer is the Twins' nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award, given to the player who best represents the game for contributions on and off the field.

Tuesday's Twins-Houston game recap

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 4, 2018

IMPACT PLAYER

Justin Verlander, Houston

The Astros righthander held the Twins to one run on three hits over seven innings while striking out eight.

BY THE NUMBERS

10 Times the Twins have lost the first two games of a road series.

19-9 Record for Justin Verlander against the Twins, his fewest victories against any AL Central opponent.

ON DECK

The Twins will try to avoid being swept in a series for the seventh time this season as they wrap up the three-game series.

May (opener) and Stewart (follower) ready to face Astros

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 4, 2018

Here we go. Take II of the Twins experiment with an opener is set for tonight as Trevor May takes the mound against the Astros, with rookie righthander Kohl Stewart expected to follow and try to pitch into the late innings. There were mixed results the first time, as Gabriel Moya gave up two first inning runs but Zack Littell was decent until the sixth, when Texas knocked him out of the game then preceded to score nine runs in the inning en route to an 18-4 laugher.

May opened once for Class AAA Rochester - the first opener for them - so he knows what it's like.

"I think if the results are good I think can go close to 40 pitches today," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "So we will see how it goes."

Stewart is from nearby Tomball, Texas, and will have a large contingent of fans at the game tonight.

The last call ups from Class AAA Rochester are here - righthanders Chase De Jong and John Curtiss and infielder Gregorio Petit. Both De Jong and Curtiss pitched in Monday's finale for Rochester - De Jong started and threw 61 pitches over four innings - so they won't be available tonight.

In addition to the players being called up, Rochester trainer Chris Johnson will join the Twins this weekend and remain for the rest of the season.

Also, minor league field coordinator Edgar Varela will join the club as an extra coach.

Joe Mauer is the Twins' nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award, given to the player who best represents the game through contributions on and off the field. Mauer is active in several initiatives, including his work with Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare, providing tickets to disadvantaged youth and supporting the improvement of youth baseball facilities in St. Paul.

The winner of the award will be announced during the World Series. In addition to each nominee being evaluated by a panel, fans will be able to vote on the award through a dedicated Website. Rod Carew (1977), Dave Winfield (1994) and Kirby Puckett (1996) all won the award while they were with the Twins.

Also, all you Fortnite fans who come to the ballpark on Sunday will be in for a treat. The Twins will host a Fortnite viewing party before the game with the Royals. Noted Fortnite player Trevor May will join professional gamers BasicallyIDoWrk and Jordan Fisher on the field around 10 am to play Fortnite, which will be shown on the video board at Target Field.

The event is being called, 'Fortday with Trevor May.' A special ticket to the event will allow fans to enter the ballpark early to watch the event. Mitch Garver will serve as emcee.

X-rays negative on Miguel Sano's left leg after 5-2 loss **Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | September 4, 2018**

HOUSTON — Already mired in a lengthy batting slump, Twins third baseman Miguel Sano saw his season go from bad to potentially horrific with one awkward slide into second base.

A motorized cart was summoned to remove Sano from the field Tuesday night after he suffered a lower left leg bruise on a wild pitch by Justin Verlander in the second inning. Sano extended his right leg on a hard, late slide but it was his surgically repaired left leg, tucked underneath his full body weight, that screamed at him after the play.

X-rays were negative, the Twins announced during the 5-2 loss to the Houston Astros, after Sano left the field in seemingly good spirits, waving to the crowd at Minute Maid Park and acknowledging its applause. He was given crutches as a precaution, and no further tests were scheduled.

"That's a lot of mass and it hits the ground and there's impact and his leg bent a little funny," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "We just were careful to make sure. I said, 'Get the cart. Let's not mess around here, just in case we got something major going on.'"

Sano, who was receiving treatment after the game and was unavailable for comment, had an 18-inch titanium rod implanted in his lower left leg last November after suffering a stress reaction on a foul ball in August. He rolled over several times and was writhing in pain after Tuesday's slide, receiving attention for several minutes from head athletic trainer Tony Leo as Molitor looked on with great concern.

"His first real impact to the area that was worked on, and he was in a lot of pain," Molitor said. "Kind of radiated down all the way through his ankle. I'm sure there was some stress, whether he had the rod in there or not. I'm speculating it might have concerned him knowing his pain was where that work was done."

Sano, who reached base with a one-out walk, is 4 for 46 (.087) with 19 strikeouts in his past 55 trips. He is batting .202 with 13 home runs and a .285 on-base percentage this season, which included a 44-day demotion to the minor leagues in order to improve his conditioning and overall approach.

Sano's injury overshadowed a successful homecoming for Kohl Stewart, a two-sport star at Houston's St. Pius X High School who was drafted fourth overall in 2013. Entering a 4-0 game in the second after Trevor May faltered as the Opener, Stewart worked five scoreless innings in the longest outing of his young career.

Nine of Stewart's 15 outs came on ground balls, and he added three strikeouts, including two in his final frame. The Tomball, Texas, resident worked around one-out singles in the second and fourth, and then stranded Alex Bregman (double) and Carlos Correa (walk) in the fifth.

Pitching at Minute Maid for just the second time, including a scouting showcase in high school, Stewart had a large contingent of friends and family in the stands.

"It was awesome," he said. "I could hear them when I came in from the bullpen, but once the game got going, it's so loud with the roof (closed) you can't hear a thing."

May, meanwhile, ran aground quickly in a 26-pitch first. A former starter who had served as the inaugural opener for Triple-A Rochester on July 22, he gave up a sharp single to George Springer on the first pitch of the game.

Bregman ripped a one-out RBI double off the wall in left, Tyler White added an RBI single and Yuli Gurriel clubbed a two-run homer to complete the uprising. Bregman added two more doubles to move past former Twin Eduardo Escobar for the big-league doubles lead (46-45).

Through two games, the Twins' have seen their Openers post a 27.00 earned-run average with two homers allowed. Their Primary pitchers have a 2.00 ERA in nine innings, including no earned runs the first two times through the order.

Justin Verlander (14-9) retired his final 13 batters after Robbie Grossman's RBI double with two down in the third. He improved to 19-9 all time against the Twins, including a 0.64 ERA in two starts since being traded to the Astros just over a year ago.

Ex-Twins reliever Ryan Pressly struck out the side in the eighth. He has yet to walk a batter in 16 appearances since the Twins dealt him for two prospects in late July.

Twins' John Curtiss handles his first (and last) national anthem performance **Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | September 4, 2018**

HOUSTON — Twins reliever John Curtiss checked off a bucket-list item on Sunday when he performed the national anthem before Triple-A Rochester's penultimate game of the season.

Curtiss, a country-music songwriter who plays guitar and sings in a rich baritone, made it through the song in 68 seconds without a single mistake. The only blip was feedback during rehearsals that left his guitar without amplification.

"There was a good cheat sheet on the board, but I didn't need it," Curtiss, 25, said after being called up as part of September roster expansion. "I looked, just at the first verse, right at the very beginning. I was scared I wasn't going to get to 'gleaming.' I was relieved afterwards."

Red Wings teammates were making bets on how many times Curtiss' voice would crack or how many words he'd mangle. Fellow reliever Jake Reed helped him rehearse in the bullpen in the weeks leading up to Sunday, but Reed refused an invitation to perform as a duo.

"Jake was not willing to do it at all, which is funny because he's got a beautiful voice," Curtiss said. "I have a tolerable voice, but he can sing in multiple registers. He sounds beautiful when he sings, and he said he just didn't feel like doing it."

Curtiss, who posted a 2.77 earned run average and 10 saves in 55 1/3 Triple-A innings, shook his head when asked if he'd be willing to sing the anthem at Target Field.

"I've sung my last anthem," he said. "I'm retired. One and done."

BERRIOS SWITCHES AGENCIES

Budding Twins ace Jose Berrios, finishing up an all-star season that could see him top 200 innings for the first time, has changed agencies.

The 24-year-old right-hander, who is still a full season away from his first crack at salary arbitration, has hired Wasserman Media Group to replace Melvin Roman of MDR Sports Management. Nick Chanock will handle Berrios, but Wasserman's long list of prominent clients include two free agents the Twins pursued last offseason: reliever Addison Reed (who signed) and starter Yu Darvish (who didn't).

Berrios, who could be an extension candidate this offseason, asked Reed on Monday about Wasserman. The veteran reliever didn't mince words, saying he considers agent Lenny Strelitz "like a second dad."

"I told him they've helped me tremendously," said Reed, who has known Strelitz for nearly a dozen years. "I told him, 'You say yes to them, you're not going to regret anything.' They've done everything that I could have ever asked for — times 40."

MAUER HONORED

First baseman Joe Mauer is the Twins' nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award, which goes annually to the player who "best represents the game of baseball through extraordinary character, community involvement, philanthropy and positive contributions, both on and off the field."

Mauer, who has been nominated before, has raised more than \$1 million for Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare over the past four years through the Mauer and Friends Kids Classic luncheon. Mauer also hosts a bowling fundraiser for the Highland Friendship Club and has supported Friends of St. Paul Baseball, among other community initiatives.

"It's humbling to be recognized," Mauer said. "It's awesome. It's good to show support for fans. They support us on the field. Obviously, growing

up there, it makes it even more special for me.”

Three Twins have won the award since it was instituted in 1971 upon Clemente’s death: Rod Carew (1977), Dave Winfield (1994) and Kirby Puckett (1996).

BRIEFLY

Mauer and Twins third-base coach Gene Glynn chatted and posed for pictures before the game with Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Jonathan Cain of Journey and other members of the band’s entourage. Journey played Target Field back on July 27 while the Twins were in Boston, and Cain told Mauer the “fans were killer” at their Twin Cities show.

Left fielder Eddie Rosario (right quad) did more light running and took swings in the cage. Barring any setbacks, he should hit on the field before Wednesday’s game and could test his leg by running the bases as soon as Friday back home.

Catcher Jason Castro, who makes his offseason home in Houston, has been in uniform and in the dugout during games this week against his former team as he works back from knee surgery in early May.

Miguel Sano listed as day-to-day after suffering leg bruise

Staff Report | ESPN 1500 | September 4, 2018

The Twins continued their losing ways on Tuesday with a 5-2 defeat in Houston, but it appears third baseman Miguel Sano escaped suffering a serious injury in the second inning.

Sano, who was serving as the Twins’ designated hitter, was taken off the field on a cart after he injured his left leg while sliding awkwardly into second base as he advanced on a wild pitch. It was easy to fear the worst given Sano had a rod inserted in his left leg last November after he suffered a stress reaction in his shin.

The Twins, however, said X-rays were negative and listed Sano as day-to-day with a bruise in his lower left leg. As Mike Berardino of the Pioneer Press reported, Sano isn’t scheduled to undergo further tests.

@MikeBerardino

No further tests for Sano. Crutches are precautionary. Could return soon.

As for the cart being brought out to take Sano off the field:

@MikeBerardino

Molitor on Sano: "We just were careful to make sure. I said, 'Get the cart. Let’s not mess around here just in case we got something major going on.' "

Sano suffers lower left leg bruise in Twins’ 5-2 loss

Associated Press | Fox Sports North | September 5, 2018

HOUSTON — Alex Bregman knows he doesn’t have to do too much in a Houston Astros lineup that also features George Springer, Jose Altuve and Carlos Correa.

And that, he says, is what has allowed him to put together the best year of his young career.

Bregman hit three doubles and Yuli Gurriel homered for the second game in a row, leading Justin Verlander and the Astros over the Minnesota Twins 5-2 on Tuesday night for their fourth straight win.

“Just having the guys that I have around me in that lineup allows me to just relax and try to put together a good at-bat,” Bregman said, playing down the fact that he’s leading the team in almost every offensive category.

Manager A.J. Hinch had no trouble raving about his 24-year-old third baseman, who’s in just his second full season in the majors.

“He’s just locked in,” Hinch said. “When that happens, he leaves very little margin for the pitcher to get him out. And we’re seeing that come pretty regularly for him.”

Verlander (14-9) yielded one run and three hits while fanning eight over seven innings.

Jorge Polanco homered off reliever Chris Devenski to begin the ninth. After Robbie Grossman walked, Roberto Osuna took over and gave up a single to Tyler Austin with one out. Gurriel then caught Max Kepler's liner and stepped on first to complete the double play and give Osuna his 13th save.

"Obviously, if that ball went through it would have been extra bases," Gurriel said. "So to be able to make that play was very, very important to win that game."

The Astros got to Trevor May (3-1) immediately when Springer hit a leadoff single and scored on a one-out double by Bregman. Tyler White hit an RBI single with two outs to score Bregman and a short mound visit came next.

On the second pitch after the visit, Gurriel sent a ball into the seats in left field for his 10th homer to extend the lead to 4-0.

Twins rookie Kohl Stewart, who was born and grew up in Houston, took over for the second inning and pitched well in front of a large group of friends and family sitting behind the visitor's dugout. He allowed just three hits over five scoreless innings.

"Kohl did a really nice job," manager Paul Molitor said. "I was a little concerned about him with all the people he had here at the ballpark, but he made them happy."

Verlander ran into some trouble in the second inning when Grossman singled before Miguel Sano and Kepler drew consecutive walks with one out to load the bases. But Verlander retired Ehire Adrianza before striking out Chris Gimenez to end the threat.

Sano was carted off the field in the inning after injuring his surgically repaired left leg sliding into second base. The team said X-rays were negative and he was listed as day-to-day with a bruise on his lower left leg. Sano had a rod inserted in his left leg in November.

"He was in a lot of pain," Molitor said. "It kind of radiated down to the ankle."

Molitor said Sano would be on crutches for a day as a precaution but that he was optimistic that he wouldn't be out for "too long."

Grossman, who previously played for the Astros, hit an RBI double with two outs in the third that made it 4-1. Verlander started rolling after that, retiring the last 13 batters he faced, with six strikeouts, before Ryan Pressly took over for the eighth inning.

Tony Kemp hit a bunt single to start Houston's seventh and the Astros pushed the lead to 5-1 when Bregman hit his major league-leading 46th double with two outs.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Astros: RHP Charlie Morton (shoulder discomfort) threw a bullpen session before the game. If he feels good in the next couple of days, he'll come off the disabled list to start against Boston on Saturday. ... INF/OF Marwin Gonzalez was out of the lineup after leaving Monday's game with discomfort in his oblique and is listed as day to day. ... RHP Hector Rondon probably won't pitch for a few days after taking deflecting a line drive off his right hand on Monday.

HOMETOWN GUYS

Stewart became the second pitcher born in Houston to throw five scoreless innings in relief at Minute Maid Park with his performance on Tuesday night. The other player to do it was Matt Albers, who was playing for the Astros when he did it on July 27, 2006.

UP NEXT

Houston rookie LHP Framber Valdez (2-1, 1.26 ERA) opposes Jake Odorizzi (5-9, 4.41) when the series wraps up on Wednesday night. Valdez allowed just two hits and one run in five innings in his last start but took the loss in a 3-0 defeat by the Angels. Odorizzi looks to get back on track after losing his last two starts.

Twins' Miguel Sano carted off field with lower leg bruise following scary slide **R.J. Anderson | CBS Sports | September 4, 2018**

Minnesota Twins slugger Miguel Sano seemingly escaped serious injury on Tuesday night despite a few scary moments.

Sano tried advancing on a wild pitch during the second inning of the Twins game against the Houston Astros. His left leg caught the bag and caused his body to recoil, however. He then remained on the field before being carted off.

Nonetheless, the Twins have since described Sano's injury as little more than a bruise:

@Twins

Miguel Sanó left tonight's game in the 2nd inning with a lower left leg bruise.

Sano had a titanium rod inserted into that same leg last winter. That was deemed necessary due to a stress reaction he suffered after fouling a pitch off the leg.

Sano entered Tuesday hitting .202/.282/.405 (84 OPS+) on the season.

Twins' Miguel Sano day-to-day with leg bruise after awkward slide **News Services | ESPN | September 4, 2018**

Minnesota Twins designated hitter Miguel Sano was carted off the field Tuesday night in Houston after an awkward slide into second base while advancing on a wild pitch in the second inning.

The team said X-rays were negative, and he was listed as day-to-day with a bruise on his lower left leg.

Sano had a rod inserted in his left leg in November. The procedure helped him deal with a stress reaction in his shin that came after he fouled a ball off the bone last August.

Twins designated hitter Miguel Sano is evaluated by medical personnel after an awkward slide into second base Tuesday night. USA TODAY Sports/Troy Taormina

Sano remained on the ground at Minute Maid Park for several minutes after his slide while a team trainer tended to him. He did not put any weight on his left leg as he was helped onto the cart and taken off the field, acknowledging the applause of fans.

"He was in a lot of pain," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "It kind of radiated down to the ankle."

Molitor said Sano would be on crutches for a day as a precaution but was optimistic that Sano wouldn't be out for "too long."

Sano was replaced by pinch runner Tyler Austin.

The Astros beat the Twins 5-2.

Minnesota Twins and Detroit Lions jump on Fortnite bandwagon **Sam Carp | SportsPro.com | September 5, 2018**

Major League Baseball's (MLB) Minnesota Twins and the Detroit Lions of the National Football League (NFL) have announced plans to incorporate activations centred on the Fortnite video game at upcoming home matches.

The Twins have teamed up with WorldGaming Network to host a streaming party at Target Field ahead of their fixture against the Kansas City Royals on 9th September. The event will star Fortnite players Marcel 'BasicallyIDoWrk' Cunningham and Jordan Fisher playing the game in the stadium alongside Twins pitcher Trevor May.

Meanwhile, the Lions are also planning to use Fortnite for promotional purposes when they welcome Tyler 'Ninja' Blevins, the game's most popular streamer, to their Ford Field home ahead of their season-opener against the New York Jets on Monday.

The game will offer a special discounted price for fans using the NINJA promo code, while those who purchase ten or more tickets will be granted the opportunity to attend a meet and greet with the gamer himself.

The two events are further examples of Fortnite being used as a marketing tool by traditional sports and brands. Various elite athletes including JuJu Smith-Schuster and Harry Kane have featured on streams with Ninja, who has attracted endorsement deals with the likes of Red Bull and Uber Eats.