



**Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
Thursday, September 6, 2018**

- Odorizzi derailed by Astros' early home runs. MLB.com (Bollinger) p.1
- Rosario, Sano aiming to return against KC. MLB.com (Bollinger) p.2
- Road woes have been part of Twins' undoing in 2018. Star Tribune (Rand) p.2
- Twins baseball-speak hasn't changed much, from Calvin to 'Falvine'. Star Tribune (Reusse) p.3
- Alex Bregman, Astros riddle Twins again for series sweep. Star Tribune (Neal) p.4
- New Twins pitcher Chase De Jong brings his clubs to new club. Star Tribune (Neal) p.5
- Wednesday's Twins-Houston game recap. Star Tribune (Neal) p.6
- Twins postgame: Austin and Sano injury updates, and Odorizzi can't wait to flush. Star Tribune (Neal) p.7
- Sano held out of batting practice but Twins feel he could play Friday. Star Tribune (Neal) p.7
- Called-up reliever John Curtiss brings new delivery, music game to Twins. Star Tribune (Neal) p.8
- Astros' Alex Bregman sends Twins to fifth straight loss, 9-1. Pioneer Press (Berardino) p.8
- Miguel Sano dealing with left knee pain after hard slide. Pioneer Press (Berardino) p.9
- Astudillo homers in Twins' loss to Astros. Fox Sports North (AP) p.11
- Brian Dozier struggling with Dodgers; how are the other ex-Twins faring?. ESPN 1500 (Zulgad) p.12

Odorizzi derailed by Astros' early home runs

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | September 5, 2018

HOUSTON -- It was the kind of start that has become standard for Jake Odorizzi this year, as he had some success early, only to run into a wall in the middle innings.

Odorizzi went 4 2/3 innings, surrendering five runs on four hits and four walks in a 9-1 loss to the Astros on Wednesday night as the Twins were swept in the three-game series at Minute Maid Park. Odorizzi, who fell to 5-10 with a 4.57 ERA, has made 29 starts, but he has only recorded an out after the sixth once this year.

"It's a fine line," manager Paul Molitor said. "A couple of zeros early. You try to keep it close and compete with your starting pitcher and we just didn't hold them down very well early in these games. and we certainly didn't hit well enough to get back into them."

Odorizzi didn't give up a run until the third on a two-run shot from a red-hot Alex Bregman. It was more of the same in the fourth, serving up a two-run blast to Evan Gattis.

It unraveled in the fifth, when Odorizzi walked Jose Altuve and Bregman with one out. Odorizzi got Tyler White to line out to right, but he gave up an RBI single to Yuli Gurriel that knocked him from the game. It was the eighth time this year that Odorizzi couldn't get through five innings.

"I just needed to execute a little bit better," Odorizzi said. "I felt like I hit some corners today, but when I needed to, I didn't. It's frustrating. It's kind of the story of my year."

Minnesota's offense stayed cold, scoring just once against rookie lefty Framber Valdez in 5 1/3 innings. Willians Astudillo was responsible for the lone run with a solo shot in the fifth, his second career home run.

"We didn't take advantage early," Molitor said. "There was some wildness issues from him. We got into some counts and then we'd try to do too much and roll it over. With his movement, if you try to pull it, it ends being ground balls and we had that issue in a couple of key spots."

The Astros made it a blowout, tacking on a run on a double from Altuve in the sixth, which snapped his 0-for-19 skid, before Bregman ripped a three-run double off Matt Belisle in the eighth. Bregman went 6-for-10 with eight RBIs in the three-game set.

"We had trouble containing," Molitor said. "Some of their players are incredibly hot right now. Bregman is about as hot as anyone I've seen in terms of consistently taking good at-bats. He was driving the ball. The two two-run homers were the downfall."

SOUND SMART

Bregman became the latest player the Twins utilized a four-man outfield against, as they employed it against him with two out in the first, but he walked. Other players who Minnesota has used the dramatic shift against include Joey Gallo, Jose Ramirez, Matt Olson, Lucas Duda, Khris Davis, Justin Smoak, Curtis Granderson, Eric Thames and Kyle Seager. The Twins are responsible for 71 percent of the four-man outfield setups in MLB this year.

HE SAID IT

"It's not like this has been the best year of my career or anything by any stretch of the imagination. It's actually the worst baseball season I've ever put together. So it's frustrating, and hopefully next year is a better season." -- Odorizzi

UP NEXT

After an off-day on Thursday, the Twins will use an "opener" for the third time this season in the series opener against the Royals at 7:10 p.m. CT on Friday at Target Field. Rookie lefty Stephen Gonsalves (0-2, 9.90 ERA) will serve as the primary pitcher for the first time after three starts. Miguel Sano (lower left leg bruise) and Eddie Rosario (strained right quad) could return to Minnesota's lineup. Right-hander Heath Fillmyer (2-1, 4.01 ERA) will start for Kansas City.

Rosario, Sano aiming to return against KC

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | September 5, 2018

HOUSTON -- The Twins received good news on left fielder Eddie Rosario and third baseman Miguel Sano on Wednesday, as they both could return at some point this weekend against the Royals.

"I feel better today," Sano said after a 9-1 loss to the Astros at Minute Maid Park. "There's a contusion on my knee. My knee hurts right now. But I feel much better than yesterday. Tomorrow, we are going to go for rehab and work on my knee."

Rosario has been out since Thursday with a strained right quad, while Sano sustained a lower left leg bruise while sliding into second in Tuesday night's loss to the Astros. Rosario took batting practice before Wednesday's series finale, while Sano was hopeful to join him, but the Twins backed him off for precautionary reasons. Both could return as early as Friday, but Sano could see his return delayed by a day or two after not hitting on Wednesday.

"I think there's a good chance [of Friday]," manager Paul Molitor said. "Things can change if they go backward for some reason when they get back on the field. Hopefully, [Sano] and Rosie will be seeing some baseball action this weekend."

Molitor remained surprised that Sano didn't sustain a more significant injury, as he felt a lot of pain in the area where he had a titanium rod inserted in his left shin and was carted off the field. Sano was off crutches on Wednesday, but he walked gingerly.

"He's doing well," Molitor said. "I wouldn't have surmised that would be the likely outcome at the time of the injury, but thankfully he's doing well. You're very concerned when it happens, thinking you're looking at some extended rehab again if things didn't turn out the way they did. Thankfully, maybe he learned something from it, that he's going to have some discomfort when he makes impact with that leg. But he survived it and he's doing well."

Rosario has been testing his quad with running drills the last few days. After hitting on the field, he could be back after Thursday's off-day.

"I think he's getting a little anxious to play," Molitor said. "We'll just try to be smart with it."

Road woes have been part of Twins' undoing in 2018

Michael Rand | Star Tribune | September 5, 2018

The Twins in 2017 had the strange distinction of finishing with a better road record (44-37) than home record (41-40), which could be viewed two ways:

Their lack of success at home kept them from an even better season ... or their road record was the key to at least grabbing a wild card berth.

In any event, it stood to reason that if the Twins could improve at home in 2018 they would have a real chance to contend in the AL Central.

That was a nice theory, but ... the Twins this year are 39-29 at Target Field — plenty good enough to compete and a pace to finish 46-35 at home.

On the road, though, they entered Wednesday with a 24-46 record — losses in nearly two of every three games.

Their team ERA is more than half a run higher on the road than at home, and their team batting average is 26 points lower (.232 vs. .258) on the road. Even more telling on the hitting side: Their road OPS is .677, and at home it's .761.

Granted, this is a more traditional split than last year's better road than home performance. The majority of teams in every league, including MLB, have better home records than road records as a rule.

But among the many things that have gone wrong for the Twins in 2018 — and it seems like there's a new one every day — their road regression is a culprit in a disappointing season.

Twins baseball-speak hasn't changed much, from Calvin to 'Falvine'

Patrick Reusse | Star Tribune | September 6, 2018

The Twins introduced baseball CEO Derek Falvey, a graduate of Trinity College in Hartford, Conn., and General Manager Thad Levine, a graduate of Haverford College on the Philadelphia Main Line, to head their baseball front office on Nov. 7, 2016.

In a way, the Twins were going back to their roots. Calvin Griffith was the president and general manager from the franchise's arrival in October 1960 until a sale to Carl Pohlad in September 1984. Calvin also was Eastern-educated, attending Staunton (Va.) Military Academy and then George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

As the Twins went through the late July fire sale, now followed by the go-home-Byron Buxton controversy, we have monitored their comments. And it has been impossible not to wonder what Mr. Griffith, the original Eastern-educated Twins decisionmaker, might have offered on these issues.

FALVEY, on the trades of Brian Dozier, Eduardo Escobar, etc.: “We played north of 100 games, and when you get to a certain point in the season — we try not to let one day or a few days to sway the decision. I don't expect the players to always understand ...”

What Calvin Once Said (WCOS): “We ain't America's farm team. I think we're smarter than Hades to get rid of those players.”

LEVINE, on not recalling Buxton: “The decision really for that is driven off of three mean factors.”

WCOS: “The way I look at it, sports owners don't owe an athlete anything. The athlete owes everything to the sport he's participating in.”

LEVINE, on the first Buxton factor: “One is a continued desire to put him in the best position possible to be healthy going into 2019 ... [so] that he's unencumbered from a health standpoint.”

WCOS: “A guy will become a man over the winter. We have a few ballplayers I'm hoping will become men over the winter.”

LEVINE, on two other factors in the Buxton decision: “Two, there is a performance standpoint factor ... and three, quite frankly, it's just a playing time situation. As we look to the major league team right now, we obviously view Byron Buxton as a starting outfielder. Those at-bats were not necessarily prevalent at this time ...”

WCOS: “The trouble is, we baseball people can never be trusted to do anything sensible.”

LEVINE, on Buxton's unhappy reaction to the decision: “From this day forward, I think we recognize a responsibility to make amends. And we're going to need to invest in the Byron Buxton relationship moving forward ...”

WCOS: “If you keep a player a little hungry, he'll play better for you. If you grease his palms all the time, there's no incentive for him.”

LEVINE, on the team's desire for collaboration with Buxton: “We understand this is a blow to the player ... and we're prepared to try and stay as consistent as we can and reinvest in that element of this because we realized this was information that was not appealing or certainly

collaborative.”

WCOS (on collaboration): “I am the boss and the only one in the organization who can hire and fire people as I desire.”

More WCOS: “I don’t mind being called a dinosaur. A dinosaur from what I’ve seen on TV is a pretty powerful person. A dinosaur usually pushes himself around to where he doesn’t get hurt.”

LEVINE, on a possible grievance and other actions by Buxton’s camp: “In terms of conversation with his agent — displeased, disappointed for sure. Their recourse has not been laid out for us.”

WCOS (on grievances): “The more pressure put on me, the more stubborn I get. And when I get stubborn, I don’t change my mind. I just say, ‘No.’”

More WCOS: “Most lawyers are paid to get people out of trouble. [Baseball] lawyers are paid to get us in trouble.”

More WCOS: “I can’t tell you exactly what I intend to do, but I can tell you one thing ... it won’t be anything rational.”

And there is also this comparison between today’s Twins and Calvin’s Twins on marketing.

Twins 2018 advertising campaign: “This Is How We Baseball.”

WCOS: “We got rid of it. You spend \$250,000 to \$300,000 a year telling people, ‘Come on out and see us, we’re great.’ Then, you win five out of 15 and make yourself look like a horse’s rear end.”

Calvin signed over the Twins in a Metrodome ceremony on Sept. 22, 1984. And it’s amazing that in 34 years, the smooth-talking responses of these Eastern-educated baseball bosses really haven’t changed all that much.

Alex Bregman, Astros riddle Twins again for series sweep

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 6, 2018

HOUSTON – After hitting a homer Monday and bashing three doubles Tuesday, Alex Bregman had more for the Twins on Wednesday.

Bregman, homered, doubled and drove in five runs in the Astros’ 9-1 victory over the Twins that completed a three-game series sweep.

All six of Bregman’s hits in the series went for extra bases — four doubles and two homers — as Twins pitchers could not neutralize him.

Before the game, Twins manager Paul Molitor was asked about Bregman, the swing stylist.

“I like watching good hitters, not so much against us,” Molitor said. “He’s very calm, doesn’t panic, sees the ball a long time. I think there’s a lesson to be learned, not that it is for everybody. But he has tremendous bat control, and part of the reason is that he’s not afraid to choke up on the bat. Still has power. He’s just dangerous.”

He launched a two-run homer off Jake Odorizzi in the fourth to open the scoring. It was the first of two two-out, two-run homers given up by Odorizzi (5-10).

Bregman added a bases-clearing double on the eighth.

“We just had trouble containing some of their guys who are extremely hot right now,” Molitor said. “Bregman’s probably as hot as anybody I’ve seen for a while in terms of just consistently good at-bats and driving the baseball.”

Odorizzi also gave up a two-run homer to Evan Gattis in the fourth inning and ended up being charged with five earned runs over 4⅓ innings. Willians Astudillo’s homer in the fifth accounted for the Twins’ only run.

Sano update

Twins third baseman Miguel Sano wanted to take batting practice to see how he felt after injuring his left leg Tuesday. The Twins decided to be

cautious and nixed the idea.

There is still hope he could be ready to play Friday when the Twins open a three-game series against the Royals.

“[Thursday] is a day off,” Sano said. “I’m going to go to the field and work on rehab with [trainer] Tony Leo, get in the water and work my knee. My knee hurts right now, but it is better than [Tuesday]. Hopefully the next day I will go hit in B.P. and see how I feel.”

The sight of Sano rolling on the ground in pain, then needing to be carted off Tuesday, was a concerning sight. Sano was concerned, too.

“I got scared because I thought I broke my leg at that moment when I hit the bag,” he said. “But, obviously, I didn’t.”

But it appears he’s dodged a bullet and could contribute Friday.

“I think there’s a good chance,” Molitor said of Sano being available. “Things can change if they go backward for some reason when they get back on the field. Hopefully, him and Rosie will be seeing some baseball action this weekend.”

Yes, Eddie Rosario got in some running and took batting practice before Wednesday’s game and could return to action Friday as well. Rosario has not played since the Cleveland leg of the road trip because of a sore left quadriceps.

Etc.

- The Twins on Sunday will host a viewing party for the popular online game Fortnite before their game with the Royals. Noted Fortnite player Trevor May will join professional gamers BasicallyIDoWrk and Jordan Fisher on the field around 10 a.m. 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.
- Alex Kirilloff went 5-for-5 on Wednesday as Class A Fort Myers beat Palm Beach 3-1 to win the South Division and advance to the Florida State League championship series. ... Rookie league Elizabethton beat Princeton 2-1 on Wednesday to win the Appalachian League Championship for the eighth time since 1989.

New Twins pitcher Chase De Jong brings his clubs to new club **La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 6, 2018**

HOUSTON – Coming to a local golf course near you soon is new Twins righthander Chase De Jong.

De Jong is from a family of avid golfers, about to marry into a family of even more avid golfers and estimates his handicap at about a six.

“I’m also a baseball player,” said De Jong, called up Tuesday by the Twins after Class AAA Rochester’s season ended.

Sure, sure. But let’s run with this golf thing for a minute.

In December, De Jong (pronounced De Young) will marry Chrissy Langer near his home in Long Beach, Calif. That name should ring a bell. Not because she played collegiately at Florida Atlantic, but because she’s the daughter of former PGA great and current Champions Tour stalwart Bernhard Langer.

Chase’s older brother, Blake, by the way, is married to the daughter of 1996 U.S. Open champion Steve Jones.

So what was it like meeting Mr. Langer for the first time?

“I remember the first time I went to their house,” De Jong said. “We played all kinds of games. Golf. Ping-Pong. Tennis. And cards. I got my butt kicked in everything. Everything. I’m telling you, that family is the most competitive family ever.

“Finally, before I was going to go to the airport, I said, ‘You guys want to go shoot hoops?’ I won knockout. That was fun. I finally left with some dignity.”

De Jong said he used to play as many as 40 rounds of golf a year. He was drafted by Toronto in the second round in 2012 and spent time in the

Dodgers and Mariners organizations before landing with the Twins on July 31 as part of the Brian Dozier trade. So he knows courses on the spring training circuit in Florida and Arizona. As he's moved up the minor league chain, he's reduced his tee times to about 20 rounds.

De Jong hasn't played in Minnesota, but he's aware of its reputation for fine golf courses. He said Chrissy has caddied for her father at the 3M Championship in Blaine.

"I would love to get on at Hazeltine," De Jong said. "I like playing golf, just about everywhere I go."

De Jong had been known as a sinkerballer in his stops with the Blue Jays, Dodgers and Mariners. He actually was called up by the Mariners for seven games (four starts) last season in an emergency situation, going 0-3 with a 6.35 ERA.

But once he arrived with the Twins, he was told by Jeremy Zoll, the Twins' director of minor league operations and senior analyst Josh Kalk that his sinkerball had become, to use a golf term, something of a handicap.

"They showed me that the two-seamer that I threw was doing me more harm than it was doing me good," De Jong said. "They proved it with the data. It was getting hit very hard and wasn't getting the results as much as I thought it was."

De Jong bought into the research and has worked on throwing his other pitches, using all quadrants of the strike zone. Over his past six outings at Rochester, De Jong has posted a 2.27 ERA.

"I think my 89-92 (miles-per-hour fastball) plays a little bit harder because of the ability I have to spin the ball," De Jong said, "and I can use the top of the zone."

Now De Jong will get a chance to see if his new style of pitching will work in the majors. He could make his Twins debut on Sunday against the Royals.

He's been promoted, just in time for the fall golf season, but first the Twins need him for a few innings.

"With De Jong, we're trying to mix him into different looks," Twins manager Paul Molitor said, "whether we piggyback him with someone is a real possibility, possibly [Zack] Littell somewhere along the way as we slot him in there somewhere."

Wednesday's Twins-Houston game recap

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 6, 2018

GAME RECAP

IMPACT PLAYER

Alex Bregman, Houston

The Astros third baseman was 2-for-3 with a double, homer and five RBI.

BY THE NUMBERS

6 Hits in the series for Bregman: four doubles and two homers.

8 Road wins for the Twins since the All-Star break.

ON DECK

The Twins have a scheduled off day Thursday. They will open a three-game series against Kansas City on Friday at Target Field.

Twins postgame: Austin and Sano injury updates, and Odorizzi can't wait to flush
La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 6, 2018

Here are three thoughts from LEN3 following the Twins loss to Houston:

First baseman Tyler Austin chased after a foul ball in the seventh inning and fell on his back when he tried to pull up to avoid running into the rail in front of the Astros dugout.

One Astros player motioned for the Twins trainers to come over to help Austin, but he got up and tried to shake it off. But Austin came out of the game after the inning and will be re-evaluated Thursday and Friday.

"His back's a little bit tight," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "He took a pretty good slip and fall over there. He wanted to keep trying to play and he started getting a little more stiff, so we thought we'd get him out. We'll get him checked out to make sure he's ok."

Sano update

Miguel Sano is being treated in three different areas in his lower left leg. But he focused on the contusion near his left knee one day after injuring himself when he slid into second base and leaving the field on a cart.

"I got scared because I thought I broke my leg at that moment when I hit the bag," Sano said. "But, obviously, I didn't."

X-Rays confirmed that there was no break, and Sano will go in for treatment on Thursday and might be available on Friday.

"Tomorrow is a day off," Sano said. "I'm going to go to the field and work on rehab with Tony, get in the water and work my knee. My knee hurts right now, but it is better than yesterday. Hopefully the next day I will go hit in b.p. and see how I feel."

In both cases, Austin's and Sano's, what's the rush? If they need to rest a few days to get right, keep them out of the lineup, No bosuns points now for playing at less than 100 percent.

The only problem would be if Sano's injury was serious, which it doesn't appear to be.

No Odo mojo

Jake Odorizzi sounded like someone who can wait to hit the reset button after this season.

Odorizzi was knocked out in the fifth inning on Wednesday after giving up five runs - including two, two-out, two-run homers that put the Twins in a 4-0 hole. Now, 5-10 with a 4.57 ERA. Odorizzi said he plans to try to pitch as well as he can over his final three starts of the season - then look forward to 2019.

The Twins expected a little more from him when they traded for him at the start of camp. It seemed like it took a while for him to find his change up, and every mistake he made got pounded. He's completed seven innings just once all season - and that was on Aug. 24.

"Finished the last three good, flush the season away, get back at it next spring," Odorizzi said. "That's how I'm trying to compartmentalize this year and forget about it as soon as possible."

It's been a strange season for Odorizzi. ERA is definitely up. But strikeout rate is up. Opponents BABIP of .300 is the highest it's been in a handful of years, suggesting opponents are living large against him. He's change up usage is down, suggesting his struggles and reluctance. His home run rate is down from last season and below his career average. It just hasn't clicked for him this season.

Sano held out of batting practice but Twins feel he could play Friday
La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 5, 2018

Twins third baseman Miguel Sano, walking with a slight limp through the clubhouse this afternoon, wanted to take batting practice to see where he's at after injuring his left leg on Tuesday. The Twins decided to be cautious and nixed the idea.

There is still hope that could be ready to play on Friday when the Twins open a three game series against the Royals - which is a little surprising

given that he was carted off the field Tuesday with a lower left leg bruise after sliding into second base. But Sano, despite the limp, has indicated he feels much better.

"I wouldn't have surmised that would be the likely outcome at the time of the injury but thankfully he's doing well," Twins manager Paul Molitor said.

The sight of Sano rolling on the ground in pain, then needing to be wheeled off, was a concerning look and suggested that his lower left leg, which has a titanium rod in it, was severely injured. But it appears that he's dodged a bullet and could contribute on Friday.

"I think there's a good chance," Molitor said. "Things can change if they go backward for some reason when they get back on the field. Hopefully, him and Rosie will be seeing some baseball action this weekend."

Indeed, Eddie Rosario is running and taking batting practice and could return to action Friday as well. Rosario has not played since the Cleveland leg of the road trip because of a sore left quadriceps.

"I think he's getting a little anxious to play," Molitor said.

Sano is being treated in three different areas in his lower left leg. But he focused on the contusion near his left knee one day after injuring himself when he slid into second base and leaving the field on a cart.

"I got scared because I thought I broke my leg at that moment when I hit the bag," Sano said. "But, obviously, I didn't."

X-Rays confirmed that there was no break, and Sano will go in for treatment on Thursday.

"[Thursday] is a day off," Sano said. "I'm going to go to the field and work on rehab with Tony, get in the water and work my knee. My knee hurts right now, but it is better than yesterday. Hopefully the next day I will go hit in [batting practice] and see how I feel."

Called-up reliever John Curtiss brings new delivery, music game to Twins

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 5, 2018

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.

Astros' Alex Bregman sends Twins to fifth straight loss, 9-1

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | September 5, 2018

HOUSTON — Twins manager Paul Molitor couldn't hide his admiration as he talked about Houston Astros star Alex Bregman before Wednesday's 9-1 loss.

“I like watching good hitters, not so much against us,” Molitor said. “He’s very calm, doesn’t panic, sees the ball a long time. I think there’s a lesson to be learned. He has tremendous bat control, and part of the reason is that he’s not afraid to choke up on the bat. Still has power.”

Does he ever.

From the moment Trevor May buzzed Bregman’s tower with a 92-mph fastball in the first inning on Tuesday night, the third-year infielder closed out the series with four doubles, two walks, a two-run homer and seven runs batted in.

On Wednesday, as they closed out a 2-7 road trip with their fifth straight loss, the Twins tried a four-man outfield only to walk Bregman in the first. His next time up, the former No. 2 overall draft pick ripped his 29th homer of the year into the Crawford Boxes in left field off right-hander Jake Odorizzi (5-10).

“I threw it right down the middle,” Odorizzi said. “It’s frustrating. Kind of the story of my year. Lot of frustration.”

Another full-count walk followed in the fifth, and Bregman threatened to go deep again in the sixth before flying out to the warning track in left. He added a bases-clearing double off Matt Belisle in the eighth.

Evan Gattis added a two-run blast that traveled 430 feet in the fourth, but it was Bregman who truly flummoxed the Twins throughout the series. He kicked it off with a solo homer off Kyle Gibson in Monday’s first inning as the Twins were swept for the seventh time this season.

“Bregman’s probably as hot as anybody I’ve seen for a while,” Molitor said, “in terms of just consistently good at-bats and driving the baseball.”

Since September dawned without a call-up for Byron Buxton, the Twins have now been outscored 43-12 and outhomered 15-5. They went 3 for 23 in this series with runners in scoring position, with just one of those hits producing a run: Miguel Sano’s opposite-field single off Dallas Keuchel in Monday’s 4-1 loss.

They also saw Jorge Polanco become their 17th pickoff victim of the year after a one-out single in the third off rookie left-hander Framber Valdez. The Twins entered with just 39 stolen bases on the year, 28th out of 30 teams in the majors.

Only the Toronto Blue Jays (35) and Oakland A’s (32) have been less larcenous on the bases.

Back to Bregman, who is still just 24 years old — 3 1/2 months younger than Buxton.

“He’s just dangerous,” Molitor said. “You don’t know where he’s going to hit it. He’s got a chance to hit mistakes. They’ve got a lot of those guys over there, but he seems to be the hottest one right now.”

Besides Logan Forsythe, Molitor was asked which current Twins will choke up on the bat with two strikes.

“Gosh, I don’t really see it too often from our guys,” he said. “(Eduardo) Escobar was one who did. There are subtle suggestions about different things that they can try to make themselves put up a little fight at times.”

First baseman Tyler Austin reported back tightness after sliding feet first into the home dugout in pursuit of Bregman’s foul pop in the seventh. Austin stayed in the game but later left for a pinch hitter.

Odorizzi failed to survive the fifth for the eighth time in 29 starts as a Twin. His earned-run average ticked up again to 4.57, and he has now allowed 20 or more homers four times in five full seasons in the majors.

Miguel Sano dealing with left knee pain after hard slide

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | September 5, 2018

HOUSTON — Miguel Sano was limping noticeably on Wednesday afternoon, a day after being taken off the field on a motorized cart following an awkward slide into second base.

Publicly diagnosed with a bruise in his surgically repaired lower left leg, the Twins’ third baseman amended that after Wednesday’s game to a

knee contusion.

“My knee hurts right now, but I feel much better than (Tuesday),” Sano said.

Sano said he plans to go to Target Field for treatment and water exercises on Thursday’s off day. If that goes well, he hopes to take batting practice on Friday and reassess his status.

ADVERTISING

“He’s doing well,” Twins manager Paul Molitor said before the game. “He’s a little sore today. I wouldn’t have surmised that was the likely outcome at the time of the injury but thankfully he’s doing well. I think there’s a good chance we’ll have him ready for Friday.”

Initial fears were a jammed right ankle or knee after leading with that leg on the second-inning slide, but it turned out the left leg — which is fortified by an 18-inch titanium rod from his knee to his ankle — suffered the brunt of the impact on the late slide as it tucked under Sano’s full weight.

“I got scared because I thought I broke my leg at that moment when I hit the bag,” Sano said. “But obviously I didn’t.”

Molitor said the hope was for Sano to take batting practice on the field, but that idea was scuttled due to lingering soreness.

“He’s had some hurdles along the way,” Molitor said. “You’re very concerned when it happens that we’re looking at some kind of extended rehab again. Thankfully, maybe he learned something about it: that he’s going to have some discomfort. That was the first time really that he had a jarring impact on that particular leg, but he survived it and he’s doing well.”

Sano, hitting .202 with 13 home runs and a .285 on-base percentage in the majors, is 4 for 46 (.087) with 19 strikeouts in his past 55 trips.

PRIMARY JOGGER

ADVERTISING

inRead invented by Teads

Friday night against the Kansas City Royals will mark Stephen Gonsalves’ second crack at serving as the so-called Primary pitcher.

When the rookie left-hander handled the role in early August for Triple-A Rochester, he took major ribbing from journeyman first baseman Andy Wilkins. Apparently, the lanky Gonsalves didn’t jog in from the bullpen with the proper form.

“Wilkins called me a little T-Rex,” Gonsalves said. “He got me good. That was funny. The next three days in conditioning, I practiced running my sprints in from the pen. I even tried a little Heath Bell power slider from the All-Star Game.”

That was a reference to the former closer for Gonsalves’ hometown San Diego Padres.

“I was trying to save my breath, not get overanxious, and sure enough I got ridiculed for my jog,” Gonsalves said with a laugh. “I came in the middle of an inning. I had runners on second and third, and I got a pop up to the shortstop from the leadoff guy. So it all worked out.”

Two games into the experiment, Twins Openers have a 27.00 ERA while their Primaries are cruising along at 2.00.

“It takes me back to being a younger guy,” he said. “When I was a sophomore in high school, we had seniors who were above me in the pitching staff. I had to come in and play off situations out of the pen. It’s the same thing. We’re just playing baseball, you know?”

Gonsalves, who has a 9.90 ERA through three starts, is looking forward to Friday.

“People think there’s going to be pressure because it’s changing your routine, but we’re just having fun,” he said.

STILL WAITING

Sunday, Molitor said he looked forward to calling Byron Buxton and having a “nice conversation” with his erstwhile center fielder. As of Wednesday afternoon, that still hadn’t happened.

“I haven’t talked to him yet,” Molitor said.

Molitor said he still planned to reach out to Buxton, who is understandably upset after being passed over for a September promotion. In the process, the Twins gained an extra year of control over Buxton, who is now under club control through the 2022 season.

Team officials have not advised Molitor against contacting Buxton in light of a potential grievance being filed, the manager said. Molitor said last week he had stayed in touch with Buxton via text and multiple phone calls during his extended time in Triple-A.

BRIEFLY

Left fielder Eddie Rosario (strained right quad) planned to do more light jogging and take batting practice on the field in advance of a potential weekend return. “I’m sure he getting anxious to play,” Molitor said of Rosario, out since Aug. 30.

Rookie-level Elizabethton, a Twins’ affiliate since 1974, won its second straight Appalachian League title and the eighth under manager Ray Smith. Only Bluefield, W.Va., with 14 titles, has more than the E-town Twins’ 12 titles in a league history that dates to 1911.

Right fielder Alex Kirilloff, the Twins’ 2016 first-rounder, went 5 for 5 on Wednesday to lead Class A Fort Myers to the championship series of the Florida State League.

Triple-A pitching coach Stu Cliburn is scheduled to spend the last homestand of the regular season with the Twins’ big-league club. This was the second straight year Cliburn has been called up after sending 14 members of this year’s Red Wings’ pitching staff to the majors, plus rehab assignments for Addison Reed and Ervin Santana.

Astudillo homers in Twins’ loss to Astros

Associated Press | Fox Sports North | September 6, 2018

HOUSTON — Alex Bregman homered and had five RBIs to lead the Houston Astros to a 9-1 win over the Minnesota Twins on Wednesday night.

Evan Gattis also hit his 25th home run of the year in the win.

The defending champs have won five straight, finishing a 10-game homestand with a 7-3 record. Houston has won 12 of its last 15 games entering a three-game series in Boston against the team with the best record in baseball.

Bregman gave the Astros a 2-0 lead in the third inning with his 29th homer of the season, a line-drive shot off Jake Odorizzi into the left-field Crawford Boxes. He later added a three-run double off the left-field wall with the bases loaded in the eighth inning, his 47th double of the season, to put Houston up 9-1.

Gattis extended Houston’s lead to 4-0 with a two-run homer in the fourth inning off Odorizzi, also to left field on the first pitch of his at-bat.

Houston went up 5-1 with an RBI single to right from Yuli Gurriel off Odorizzi (5-10), who allowed five runs on four hits and four walks in 4 2/3 innings.

Houston starter Framber Valdez (3-1) went 5 1/3 innings, allowing one run on five hits and three walks while striking out five. He’s the first pitcher in club history to begin his career with four straight appearances of at least 4 1/3 innings, allowing one or fewer runs in each of those outings.

Valdez struggled with his accuracy early, throwing two four-pitch walks to his first three batters faced before escaping the first inning with a double play. The Twins’ lone run off Valdez came in the fifth inning on a solo home run from Willians Astudillo.

Jose Altuve finally snapped a lengthy hitless streak with a double down the left-field line in the sixth inning that scored George Springer. After striking out in the first inning and popping out in the third, Altuve stretched his hitless streak to 19 at-bats, the longest hitless streak of his career.

The Astros were without All-Star shortstop Carlos Correa for a second straight game as he was given another day off. Correa is batting .171 since returning from a back injury on Aug. 10.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Twins: 3B Miguel Sano wanted to take batting practice on Wednesday afternoon, but the Twins ultimately held him out as a precaution. Sano was carted off the field Tuesday night with a lower left leg bruise suffered after he slid into second base. He was walking with a limp on Wednesday, but Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said there's a "good chance" he plays on Friday. . OF Eddie Rosario (sore quadriceps) took batting practice and could return on Friday.

Astros: RHP Charlie Morton (shoulder) will likely start for Houston on Saturday in Boston, barring any setback, Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. Morton was placed on the 10-day disabled list on Aug. 29 with right shoulder discomfort. If Morton is unable to start, rookie Josh James will likely start, Hinch said. . RHP Lance McCullers (forearm) threw a brief bullpen session off the mound on Wednesday, Hinch said. . IF/OF Marwin Gonzalez (oblique) and RP Hector Rondon (wrist) are expected to be available for the Boston series, Hinch said.

UP NEXT

Twins: Stephen Gonsalves (0-2, 9.90 ERA) will serve as the so-called 'primary pitcher' in the Twins' third attempt at the experimental approach of starting a relief pitcher for an inning or two as an 'opener' before a primary pitcher enters. The Twins host Kansas City on Friday.

Astros: Gerrit Cole (13-5, 2.86 ERA) will start for Houston when they visit Boston on Friday night for the start of a three-game series. Cole is 1-0 in one start against the Red Sox this season where he went seven innings and allowed three runs, five hits, a walk and seven strikeouts in a 7-3 win on June 1.

Brian Dozier struggling with Dodgers; how are the other ex-Twins faring? **Judd Zulgad | ESPN 1500 | September 5, 2018**

The Twins began the non-waiver trade-deadline purge of their roster on July 27 when they dealt Eduardo Escobar to the Arizona Diamondbacks for three minor leaguers. Deals that sent Zach Duke, Lance Lynn, Ryan Pressly and Brian Dozier elsewhere soon followed.

So more than a month into their stay with new teams how is this group of five doing? Here's a look.

Brian Dozier, second baseman

The deal: Traded to the Dodgers for second baseman Logan Forsythe, minor-league pitcher Devin Smeltzer and minor-league outfielder Luke Raley.

As a Twin: Dozier hit .227 with a .307 on-base percentage and a .405 slugging percentage with 16 home runs and 52 RBIs in 104 games.

As a Dodger: Dozier hit a home run in each of his first two games with Los Angeles and drove in five runs but he soon slowed down and it doesn't look as if his disappointing season in Minnesota was a fluke. He is hitting .202/.318/.367 with four home runs and 16 RBIs in 30 games. Entering Wednesday's game against the Mets, Dozier was hitting .143 in 13 games since Aug. 20.

Zach Duke, lefthanded reliever

The deal: Traded to the Mariners for minor-league pitcher Chase De Jong and minor-league infielder Ryan Costello.

As a Twin: Duke went 3-4 with a 3.62 ERA in 45 games, eight of which he finished, and 37.1 innings.

As a Mariner: The veteran is 2-0 with Seattle but has a 7.88 ERA in 17 games, one of which he has finished, and only eight innings.

Eduardo Escobar, third baseman

The deal: Traded to the Diamondbacks for minor-league pitcher Jhoan Duran and minor-league outfielders Gabriel Maciel and Ernie De La Trinidad.

As a Twin: Escobar hit .274/.338/.514 with 37 doubles, 15 home runs and 63 RBIs in 97 games.

As a Diamondback: He has continued a productive season, hitting .276/.351/.474 with eight doubles, five home runs and 14 RBIs in 33 games.

Lance Lynn, righthanded starter

The deal: Traded to the Yankees, along with cash considerations, for first baseman/DH Tyler Austin and minor-league pitcher Luis Rijo.

As a Twin: Lynn went 7-8 with a 5.10 ERA in 20 starts and 102.1 innings. He walked 62 and struck out 100.

As a Yankee: Lynn gave up only one run over his first three appearances with the Yankees, including two starts, but in his past four starts he has given up five runs in four innings; five runs in 5.1 innings; three runs in 5.2 innings; and six runs in 3.2 innings on Sunday against Detroit. He is 1-2 with a 5.09 ERA in seven games (six starts) and 35.1 innings. He has walked 10 and struck out 44.

Ryan Pressly, righthanded reliever

The deal: Traded to the Astros for minor-league pitcher Jorge Alcala and minor-league outfielder Gilberto Celestino.

As a Twin: Pressly was 1-1 with a 3.40 EA in 51 games, seven of which he finished, and 47.2 innings. He walked 19 and struck out 69.

As an Astro: Pressly has a 1.15 ERA in 16 games, two of which he's finished, and 15.2 innings. He has not walked a batter and has struck out 22.