



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
Tuesday, September 25, 2018

- Inbox: How will Twins approach free agency? MLB.com (Bollinger) p.1
- Twins' Joe Mauer enters the final week of his ... season. Star Tribune (Miller) p.3
- Former Twins pitcher Lee Stange dies. Star Tribune (Staff) p.4
- Twins-Detroit series preview. Star Tribune (Miller) p.4
- Where Joe Mauer ranks in Twins statistics. Star Tribune (Staff) p.5
- Wetmore's 5 thoughts: 5 out-there ideas for the final Twins homestand of the season. ESPN 1500 (Wetmore) p.6
- Preview: Twins vs. Tigers. Fox Sports North (Sports Xchange) p.8

Inbox: How will Twins approach free agency?

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | September 24, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- A disappointing 2018 season is coming to an end for the Twins, who wrap things up with a seven-game homestand that begins on Tuesday and includes a doubleheader against the White Sox on Friday.

Minnesota has actually been solid at home with a 43-31 record that's been overshadowed by a 29-52 record away from home that featured a club-record 15 walk-off losses. There's not much left to salvage this year, and there are more eyes toward next year, which brings us to our first question in this week's Inbox.

Rhett Bollinger



@RhettBollinger

· Sep 23, 2018

Looking for questions for an #MNTwins Inbox, so send them my way.

JD Cameron

@J_D_Cameron

FO has talked about this seasons strong FA class. Who are some potential targets you could see them pursuing?

1:26 PM - Sep 23, 2018

See JD Cameron's other Tweets

Twitter Ads info and privacy

It's going to be an interesting offseason for the Twins, as the club has a lot of money coming off the books, including Joe Mauer's \$23 million salary and Ervin Santana's \$13.5 million salary. They have roughly \$30 million committed to four players next year in catcher Jason Castro, reliever Addison Reed, right-hander Michael Pineda and roughly \$6.5 million owed to the since-departed Phil Hughes. They'll have up to 10 players eligible for arbitration, but they will still have plenty of money to spend.

The front office will have to decide when to use that financial flexibility, as they must evaluate if they believe they can compete next year or wait until the next wave of top prospects such as Royce Lewis and Alex Kirilloff arrive. Twins manager Paul Molitor said without hesitation on Sunday that Minnesota fully intends on competing next year.

As for the free-agent targets, it would only be speculation to look at names at this point, but it's clear the Twins need more starting pitching, a closer and infield help after the departures of Brian Dozier and Eduardo Escobar. They could also looking for a catcher, although they'll have Mitch Garver, Willians Astudillo and Castro on the roster next year. And if Mauer decides to retire, they could be in the market for a first

baseman/designated hitter to pair with Tyler Austin. Mauer is expected to make a decision early in the offseason, which will make it easier on the front office.

Rhett Bollinger

✓

@RhettBollinger

· Sep 23, 2018

Looking for questions for an #MNTwins Inbox, so send them my way.

Cory Moen

@CoryMoen

How does Jake Cave project in the future? Will he start over Buxton or Kepler next year?

1:26 PM - Sep 23, 2018 · Kearney, NE

See Cory Moen's other Tweets

Twitter Ads info and privacy

Jake Cave has been a pleasant surprise this season since being acquired from the Yankees in Spring Training, getting thrust into a prominent role because of Byron Buxton's injuries and offensive struggles. He has some power, as evidenced by his .261/.304/.467 line with 12 homers and 14 doubles in 85 games. But strikeouts remain an issue for Cave, with 95 in 282 plate appearances, and he doesn't walk enough to make up for it.

Cave also looks to be more of a corner outfielder than a true center fielder, so having him replace Buxton would be a downgrade at the position. Max Kepler still has much to prove offensively, but he is more advanced than Cave at this point. Cave, though, figures to be at least a solid fourth outfielder and could develop into more, but it doesn't appear likely he'll be a starting outfielder to open next season.

Rhett Bollinger

✓

@RhettBollinger

· Sep 23, 2018

Looking for questions for an #MNTwins Inbox, so send them my way.

Dan Wade

@Dwade

1) How many new faces (from today) will the Twins have on the 25 when they break camp next year?

2) If you had to bet your life on any Twins player winning a non-baseball competition, which player and which game would you choose?

7:29 PM - Sep 23, 2018

See Dan Wade's other Tweets

Twitter Ads info and privacy

The Twins have essentially used the past few months as a tryout for next season, with inexperienced players such as Austin, Cave, Astudillo and pitchers Zack Littell, Kohl Stewart and Stephen Gonsalves getting plenty of playing time. Austin, Cave and even Astudillo have put themselves in good shape for next year, while there have been mixed results with the rookie pitchers. But starting pitcher-wise, they'll bring back Kyle Gibson, Jose Berrios, Jake Odorizzi and the injured Pineda. Of the relievers, the only locks heading into next year would be Trevor Hildenberger, Taylor Rogers, Trevor May and Reed (because of his contract situation).

Of course, this roster is without Eddie Rosario, Miguel Sano, Buxton and Garver, and barring any trades, all will be back next year. Jorge Polanco has also continued to establish himself, but there's still a chance he could move from short to second, depending on what Minnesota does this offseason. But given the turnover, nearly half the roster could be new next year.

As far the second part, I'll go with May in a "Fortnite" competition. He's an impressive player and well known within gaming circles.

Rhett Bollinger

✓

@RhettBollinger

· Sep 23, 2018

Looking for questions for an #MNTwins Inbox, so send them my way.

A. William Allgood

@itsallgood013

How's the relationship between Buxton and the front office?

1:28 PM - Sep 23, 2018

See A. William Allgood's other Tweets

Twitter Ads info and privacy

It's a fair question, as Buxton and his agents were not happy with the decision to shut him down after the Minor League season and not be recalled as a September callup. Buxton's camp sees it as a service-time issue, as the Twins get an extra year of control by not bringing him up.

Minnesota general manager Thad Levine talked openly about how they need to mend that relationship going forward as a result, but it's not going to happen overnight. Buxton has reason to be miffed, but he also struggled this year and was coming off a left wrist injury. It's something to monitor going forward, as he remains an integral piece for the organization and the front office needs to make sure it doesn't have a disgruntled player in a clubhouse that already had several players quietly take issue with the decision not to bring up Buxton.

Twins' Joe Mauer enters the final week of his ... season

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | September 24, 2018

Sometime this week, most likely Tuesday night, Joe Mauer will smack a single to the opposite field, or line a double into the gap, or watch ball four go by, and he'll become a baserunner for the 3,073rd time in his career. On the giant scoreboard in left field, the Twins will congratulate him for passing Harmon Killebrew's record for reaching base safely as a Minnesota Twin, and the fans in attendance will stand and cheer. Mauer will wave his cap to the crowd, and the game will resume.

And Joe Mauer Week — perhaps the final one — will be underway.

“That'll be pretty cool to do it at home. We've got seven games left, I hope I can do it at home,” Mauer joked after tying Killebrew with two singles Sunday. “The fans have given me some really nice moments this year.”

Figure on several more this week, as fans take advantage of a just-in-case opportunity to see a homegrown three-time batting champion once more. Mauer revealed earlier this month that he hasn't decided about whether to play again in 2019, saying he wanted to make such a momentous decision outside the everyday stress of a 162-game season.

“We're still in the grind. My body isn't feeling too great; that's always the case every year,” Mauer said. “That's why I want to wait, take a deep breath, and take a step back to consider everything when it's all over.”

His status could add an air of Auld Lang Syne to an otherwise intrigue-free homestand, though. The Twins' marketing department, in an awkward position because Mauer may still play in 2019, isn't promoting the three games with the Tigers and four with the White Sox as a curtain call, but that doesn't mean fans won't react that way.

“There's no Joe Mauer Day planned. There's no pregame ceremony or anything,” Twins President Dave St. Peter said. “But the best tributes happen organically anyway. I expect there will be a fair amount of emotion in the ballpark. Fans can express their own feelings toward Joe, what he's meant to the Twins and Minnesota. That's only natural.”

That's the way Mauer likes it, anyway.

“I've had a couple of really nice moments this year,” he said, citing standing ovations from fans after a couple of big home runs. “When you get a little later in your career, you tend to stop and savor those moments a little bit.”

Fans may have to settle for an understudy once or twice, though. Manager Paul Molitor will meet with Mauer on Tuesday to work out a schedule for his playing time this week, a topic that Molitor brought up with him during the team's 10-day road trip, too. Mauer has started 82 games at first base this year, and 28 as designated hitter. He's sat out 10 games when healthy, and missed 25 in May and June because of a sore neck and

concussion symptoms.

“He wants to be in there for these games [coming up], which is great, but we haven’t finalized how many he’ll play,” Molitor said. “Or, which game in this particular campaign will be his last start of the year.”

Mauer’s former teammate, Jim Thome, took the field in his final home game as an Indian at third base for one ninth-inning pitch, in order to leave to a standing ovation. Might the three-time Gold Glove catcher pull on the chest protector again, for old time’s sake?

“Don’t tempt me with that,” Mauer said with a laugh. “I wish I could, but probably not.”

Oh well, the at-bats figure to be memorable enough. And it’s not just Twins fans who might want a final photo for their scrapbook this week. Mauer said he’s expecting several members of his extended family to be in town — he has a suite for them all, provided in his expiring contract — though that’s practically a September tradition anyway, he said.

“It’s funny, toward the end of every year, everybody always wants to come and watch. It might feel a little different this year, with next year kind of up in the air, but I guess we’ll find out,” he said. “It’s still baseball. I’m still going to have some fun and try to win some games.”

And then? Mauer insists his future remains a mystery. He’ll be a free agent, a father for the third time near Thanksgiving, and a 35-year-old ballplayer with a tough decision to make.

Some fans believe that Mauer’s admission that retirement is an option is a sign that he’s secretly already chosen it. He laughed at the notion.

“If anybody knows that answer for sure, they should let me know, because I really don’t,” Mauer said. “I haven’t made any decision. I’m not going to for a while. I’m just going to enjoy this last week.”

Former Twins pitcher Lee Stange dies

Staff Writer | Star Tribune | September 24, 2018

Former major league pitcher Lee Stange, who won a career-high 12 games for the Twins in 1963, died Friday. He was 81.

Stange pitched for the Twins from 1961-64, Cleveland from 1964-66, Boston from 1966-70 and the Chicago White Sox in 1970. He was traded from the Twins to the Indians in a deal where the Twins got future 20-game winner Jim “Mudcat” Grant.

Stange was later a Red Sox pitching coach and was with the Boston organization for 23 years. He was 8-10 for the 1967 “Impossible Dream” Red Sox. His career record was 62-61 with 21 saves and a 3.56 ERA.

Wire reports

Twins-Detroit series preview

Chris Miller | Star Tribune | September 24, 2018

Three-game series at Target Field

Tuesday, 7:10 p.m. • FSN, 830-AM: TBA vs. RHP Spencer Turnbull (0-1, 10.80)

Wednesday, 7:10 p.m. • FSN, 830-AM: RHP Jake Odorizzi (7-10, 4.35) vs. LHP Matthew Boyd (9-12, 4.16)

Thursday, 7:10 p.m. • FSN, 830-AM: TBA vs. LHP Francisco Liriano (5-11, 4.40)

Twins update

The Twins will use “openers” in two games; primary pitchers will be Kohl Stewart (Tuesday) and Stephen Gonsalves (Thursday). ... The Twins are 42-30 at Target Field and 36-33 against AL Central teams. After the Detroit series, they have four against the White Sox at Target Field to close out the season. ... The Twins are without 3B Miguel Sano (leg), C Mitch Garver (concussion) and LF Eddie Rosario (quad). ... The Twins

are 27th in the majors in stolen bases (44), 23rd in home runs (161) and 23rd in ERA (4.56). ... Manager Paul Molitor is one away from 300 career victories. ... The Twins swept a three-game series from Detroit at Comerica Park last week.

Tigers update

The Tigers are 25-50 on the road. ... Oft-injured five-time All-Star DH Victor Martinez is with the team but finished his playing career Saturday with an infield hit. In 1,973 career games he hit .295 with 246 home runs and 1,178 RBI. ... RF Nicholas Castellanos (.302) is eighth in the AL in hitting and second in the league with 45 doubles. ... The Tigers have played 50 one-run games (22-28), third most in the AL. ... The Twins lead the season series 10-6, including 5-2 at Target Field, but Detroit has won 18 of the past 27 played in Minneapolis.

Where Joe Mauer ranks in Twins statistics **Staff Writer | Star Tribune | September 24, 2018**

Where Mauer ranks

Joe Mauer today begins what could be the last homestand of his long major league and Twins career. Here's where the 2009 American League MVP and three-time Gold Glove winner ranks among the team's all-time leaders in a few statistical categories (The Twins began as the Washington Senators, but this list includes only players who played in Minnesota):

Batting average	Years	At-bats	Avg.
1.	Rod Carew	1967-78 6,235	.334
2.	Kirby Puckett	1984-95 7,244	.318
3.	Shane Mack	1990-94 2,161	.309
T4.	Brian Harper	1988-93 2,503	.306
T4.	Joe Mauer	2004-18 6,901	.306
T6.	Tony Oliva	1962-76 6,301	.304
T6.	Chuck Knoblauch	1991-97 3,939	.304

Hits	Years	At-bats	Hits
1.	Kirby Puckett	1984-95 7,244	2,304
2.	Joe Mauer	2004-18 6,901	2,112
3.	Rod Carew	1967-78 6,235	2,085
4.	Harmon Killebrew*	1954-74 7,835	2,024
5.	Tony Oliva	1962-76 6,301	1,917

Games played	Years	Games
1.	Harmon Killebrew*	1954-74 2,329
2.	Joe Mauer	2004-18 1,851
3.	Kirby Puckett	1984-95 1,851

4. Kent Hrbek 1981-94 1,747

5. Tony Oliva 1962-76 1,676

* — Killebrew played in Washington from 1954-60

Wetmore's 5 thoughts: 5 out-there ideas for the final Twins homestand of the season

Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | September 24, 2018

The Minnesota Twins are home from their final road trip of what's been a dreadful 2018 season. It began with postseason expectations. It will end this weekend with the conclusion of the final homestand of the year. The season was marred by injury and underperformance, and it's fair to say that it's cast doubt on some of the players that Twins fans were hoping would be the nucleus of a championship-caliber club as early as this season.

It hasn't been that. It's my contention that even for all that bad news that the Twins have endured this season, the club can once again compete in 2019. It'll take a big winter to catch up to the Indians. But the Twins should also have a lot of money to spend. That's another column for another day.

Before we look too far ahead, I wanted to share 5 free ideas for the Twins as they kick off their final homestand of the season Tuesday. This column will do just that. Some are serious and some are just sort of out there. Take them all or pick and choose.

1. Hold a Joe Mauer Appreciation Day

The premise is this: Joe Mauer is a great baseball player and these might be his final days in a Twins uniform. Maybe the team's brass knows something that I don't. But from my perspective it's not clear if Mauer will play another season or seasons after this one. It's not obvious that the Twins would have interest. It's not clear if he'd play for another team if they didn't want him. All of it's a toss-up in my mind right now.

My point is this. Are you totally sure he's going to play another game for you? If not then you need to take a chance to tip your cap to one of the greatest players in franchise history. Mauer would hate it, yes. But it would make for a nice gesture with the future of the relationship looking fuzzy at the moment.

At some point this homestand, Mauer will reach base for the 3,073rd time in his career. With that he'll surpass the legendary Harmon Killebrew for most times on base in a Twins uniform. That to me is more impressive than 2,000 hits, which Mauer checked off his list earlier this season. He's still got a ways to go to catch Kirby Puckett in base hits but he won't get there without additional time tacked onto his contract, which ends this year. He's a Twins Hall of Famer on the first ballot. His Cooperstown candidacy is a little trickier. But even in that discussion there's a case to be made for the St. Paul-native.

A career .388 on-base percentage (and .306 batting average) spanning at least 15 seasons, a decade as a catcher, three batting titles and an MVP award. More than 1,000 runs scored, three Gold Gloves and a perfectly Joe Mauer commercial with Scott Van Pelt.

Mauer's career should be celebrated in what could be the final homestand in Minnesota. And if I held any power, I'd vote to hold it on that Saturday at Target Field. Sunday's game is, after all, a day game after a night game.

2. Jorge Polanco, second baseman

As I've watched Jorge Polanco's evolution as a Major Leaguer over the years, I've gone back and forth on his defensive abilities. At the depths of my concerns, I simply didn't think he had the tools – the range, the internal clock, the arm, the hands – to be a good Major League shortstop.

Then he grew on my a little as I watched him iron out the inconsistencies from his game and learn to hone that clock that every good shortstop must have. He's no Andrelton Simmons, and he's not even close, really. But I started to get on board with the idea that he could be a first division shortstop on a winning team, and that feeling was at its most intense in the final two months of the season last year, when Polanco turned heel and transformed from one of the worst hitters in the big leagues to one of the most impressive. That'll play, I thought.

But this year I've seen some of the same questions arise.

The Twins will have some options this winter in free agency and maybe even on the trade market to upgrade their middle infield. Heck, you could even get a third baseman like Manny Machado and ask him to play shortstop, if you felt so inclined.

Whatever the winter plan holds, I'd think the Twins will want Polanco to be part of the finished product, as he's hit .279/.337/.419 since he returned from the half-season drug suspension. Down the stretch last year he clobbered pitchers, legitimately looking like one of the best hitters in a great lineup. Polanco was 24 years old last season when he hit .316/.377/.553 in the final two months of the year.

The bat plays but you're not sure about the glove? Try him out at second base.

Maybe a week's worth of innings doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things. But there was a time when the organization viewed him as a future second baseman. Maybe the Twins could revisit that this week, see how it goes, and plan accordingly in free agency this winter? The guess here is that they won't, although I'm sure the idea – Jorge Polanco, second baseman – will be a tempting thought this winter.

3. Willians Astudillo plays every position

Willians Astudillo is the only reason that people are talking about the Twins, on a national level. And I'm being serious about that.

So this Astudillo-at-every-position idea pretty much has to happen, right?

He made his MLB debut this year on a sweltering day in Chicago against the Cubs, when several players succumbed to heat exhaustion symptoms. Astudillo – all 5-foot-9 and 225+ pounds of him – stood out in left field and later center with a glove on his hand. He's played third base and second base and pitched in mop-up relief.

He's a catcher by trade and he's gotten more playing time behind the plate now that the Twins have Option 1 (Jason Castro) and Option 2 (Mitch Garver) on the shelf — and they traded Option 3 (Bobby Wilson) for a different Option 3 (Chris Gimenez).

Astudillo (Option 4?) has a unique approach and that helps to make him a fun story and internet baseball cult favorite. His bat could play in the big leagues if you can find a position for him. So why not try to get him a look at every spot this week?

This would be more meaningful to a lot of people than auditioning, for example, Trevor May as a closer. Look, I don't care about these things but people do. And right now if you're the Twins you want people to care.

4. Exit interviews

Give every individual player the floor in a room with the two guys at the top of the front office and Paul Molitor, and just let them speak.

What'd you think of the year? What's your plan/hope for this winter and next year? Have you talked to Byron Buxton lately?

Maybe skip over that last one. Still, exit interviews definitely should happen with the Twins. It's standard operating procedure to a lot of teams. Under Derek Falvey, the Twins have made a concerted effort to touch base with a lot of rostered players at points throughout the year, whether it's at TwinsFest, during spring training, or at the end of the season. And I'd expect that this year will be no different.

Maybe you'll learn something in those moments of structured honesty. Or maybe you won't. The only downside is the time and opportunity cost, and the minimum-level upside is that everybody feels like they've at least had their voice heard. There's value in that.

Additional note: From my perspective, guys like Gregorio Petit, Matt Belisle and Chris Gimenez could make valuable assets as coaches or support staff within the organization — if they decide that their playing days are winding down.

5. Timberwolves Awkwardness/Appreciation Day

This one's only kind of a joke. The Twins really are having a Timberwolves day. According to the team, they're giving away a "co-branded" Timberwolves/Twins cap this week, with some of the money from the special ticket package going to support the Positive Coaching Alliance.

It is a good gesture.

It's also nice, from a Twins perspective, to subtly remind Minnesota fans that even though the 2018 season has been trying...things could always be worse.

Maybe Jimmy Butler's messy and awkward exit will help fans to forget about how Byron Buxton's situation was handled. If that'd work, ask Butler to throw out the first pitch.

Preview: Twins vs. Tigers
Sports Xchange | Fox Sports North | September 25, 2018

When the Minnesota Twins host the Detroit Tigers Tuesday night at Target Field in the opener of their season-ending seven-game homestand, it could mark the beginning of the end for franchise icon Joe Mauer.

The veteran catcher turned first baseman and St. Paul native becomes a free agent after the season ends. He said last month retirement is something he'll consider but for the time being, he wanted to focus on closing out the 2018 campaign on a high note.

Mauer singled twice Sunday in the Twins' 5-1 victory at Oakland moving him 224th place on the all-time list with 2,112 hits and reached base for the 3,072nd time in his career, moving him into a tie with Harmon Killebrew for first place in franchise history.

He is almost certain to break that record this week but when is still up in the air as he and manager Paul Molitor try to figure out how much Mauer will play over the final seven games.

"We haven't finalized how many games he'll play throughout the course of the week and which game in this particular campaign will be his last one to start this year," Molitor said. "It's just Joe deserving of conversation almost daily of how we're using him and how he's doing physically."

The team doesn't have any special tributes planned to mark Mauer's 15-year career, all of which were spent wearing the uniform of his home town team.

"There's no Joe Mauer Day planned. There's no pregame ceremony or anything," Twins President Dave St. Peter told the Minneapolis Star Tribune. "But the best tributes happen organically anyway."

"I expect there will be a fair amount of emotion in the ballpark. Fans can express their own feelings toward Joe, what he's meant to the Twins and Minnesota. That's only natural."

The Tigers said farewell to their own franchise icon over the weekend. Designated hitter Victor Martinez announced his retirement prior to the Tigers' home finale Sunday against the Royals. He plans to travel with the team to Minnesota and Milwaukee but wanted his final game to come in front of his home fans and beat out an infield chopper in the first inning Saturday before being lifted for a pinch runner.

"From the bottom of my heart, I can only say thank you for being behind us all these years, supporting my teammates, supporting myself," Martinez said during a pregame ceremony. "Thank you very much."

Right-hander Spencer Turnbull gets the start for Detroit in the series opener. He'll be looking to bounce back after struggling against the Twins last week in his first big league start when he allowed six runs on six hits and a walk through four innings.

"It was a rough outing," Turnbull said. "I'm not worried about it. I'm sure I'll get better from it. I'm trusting myself more than I ever have. I know that I have the stuff. I know that I'm good (enough) to do it. It's just executing and not trying to do too much; just breathing, just calming down."

The Twins have yet to announce a starter and are expected to use an opener. Kohl Stewart is expected to be the primary pitcher.