



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
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Mic'ed up Dozier goes deep before game called

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | March 10, 2018

FORT MYERS, Fla. -- With the idea of bringing fans closer to game, Twins second baseman Brian Dozier wore a live microphone and earpiece for Saturday's radio/television broadcast. The experience paid off, as he went 2-for-2, including launching a two-run homer in the first inning of a rain-shortened game against the Red Sox at Hammond Stadium.

Dozier wore the equipment throughout the game -- which was cancelled with the Twins up, 10-3, after three innings -- conversing with radio broadcasters Cory Provus and Danny Gladden. But the highlight came during his at-bat against right-hander Trevor Kelley in the first. After Kelley's first pitch was ruled a strike on the outside corner, Dozier could be heard saying, "No," to the home-plate umpire -- clearly disagreeing with the call, before taking the next pitch for a ball. But when Kelley came back with a 1-1 fastball, Dozier jumped all over it, and exclaimed, "Uh, oh, uh, oh," as he made contact and ball carried over the left-field fence.

"I should wear a mic every game," Dozier said while rounding the bases. "Jeez."

Dozier later explained his thinking during the at-bat, as he was ready for the fastball after seeing back-to-back breaking pitches. Dozier is one of the best fastball hitters in baseball and turned on it for his first homer of the spring, which capped a nine-run first inning, that doesn't officially count because the game didn't go five innings.

"I thought he'd try to sneak a piece of cheese past me," Dozier said. "But sometimes it runs into the barrel. I like those."

Dozier also made conversation with teammates and opposing players during the game, including explaining to Boston third baseman Brock Holt that he missed the start of spring with kidney stones. He gave advice to Byron Buxton on what to expect from lefty Jalen Beeks in the first, and Buxton responded with an RBI single. Dozier's conversations with the broadcast team also confused Red Sox first baseman Hanley Ramirez, who at one point looked at Dozier and asked who he was talking to as he stood alone at second base.

"I thought it was fun," Dozier said after the game. "But I think everybody was looking at me like, 'Why does he have this white piece in his ear?'"

And in a funny moment, Dozier went to the mound after right-hander Kyle Gibson hit Jackie Bradley Jr. with two outs in the third and told him to stop hitting batters and speed the game up because of the worsening rain. Bradley ended up being the second-to-last batter before the game was called.

"That's what happens when you mic up Doz," Gibson said. "He starts telling more jokes on the field."

Gibson pleased

- It was a strange outing for Gibson because of two lengthy delays -- with the game starting 47 minutes late because of rain and Minnesota's nine-run first inning. Gibson was charged with three runs on seven hits over three innings, but was happy with the way he felt. "I felt good and I'm healthy right now," Gibson said. "My changeup was really good again. My curveball was better. My slider is the one pitch I haven't got a good feel for, right now, so I'll work on that in the bullpen."

Opening Day starter remains undecided

- Right-hander Jose Berrios has been lined up to start on Opening Day on March 29 against the Orioles, but the Twins would look to see him start one of their two games in his native Puerto Rico against the Indians on April 17 or 18. It's difficult to start in the opener and be lined up for that series, so it leaves Jake Odorizzi or Gibson as candidates.

"We kind of have an idea of how we're going to do it, but we're going to let it play a little bit longer before we make anything official," manager Paul Molitor said.

Injury updates

- First baseman/designated hitter Logan Morrison was held out of the lineup for a second straight game on Saturday, after suffering a right glute strain while running the bases on Wednesday. Morrison could return as soon as Monday.
- Right-hander Trevor May, who is recovering from Tommy John surgery last March, has progressed to throwing sliders and curveballs on flat ground. He's already throwing fastball and changeups off a mound and will incorporate his breaking pitches next.

Up next

- Right-hander Anibal Sanchez is slated to make his first start of the spring on Sunday against the Rays at 12:05 p.m. CT at Charlotte Sports Park. Sanchez, who is competing for the final rotation spot, has made two relief appearances this spring, allowing six runs in four innings. Other pitchers scheduled to see action include Aaron Slegers, Ryan Pressly, Alan Busenitz and John Curtiss.

With options limited, Vargas playing for future

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | March 10, 2018

FORT MYERS, Fla. -- While the addition of Logan Morrison should boost an already strong Twins lineup, it leaves the future of Kennys Vargas up in the air.

Vargas came into Spring Training with a strong shot to make the roster and split time at designated hitter with Robbie Grossman, while serving as Joe Mauer's backup at first base. But Morrison is now slated to be the club's everyday DH and the backup to Mauer, which means Vargas is expected to be the odd man out as the end of camp nears.

Vargas, though, has taken it in stride and is performing well in Grapefruit League action, hitting .318/.444/.455 with three doubles and four walks in nine games.

"I worked a lot in the offseason [on] my approach and trying to be consistent hitting the ball," Vargas said. "I just had a plan since the first day of Spring Training to play hard and try to make the team. I just concentrate on every at-bat. I know everybody is watching, so I just try to put on a show."

As Vargas noted, he's not just playing for the Twins this spring -- he's essentially auditioning for the other 29 Major League clubs, as well. Vargas, who is out of Minor League options, is expected to place on waivers at the end of camp. The Twins would love to see him clear waivers and keep him in the organization at Triple-A Rochester, but he could be claimed by a team looking for a power threat.

"I don't really think about it," Vargas said. "I just try to play hard and see what happens. I let my agent work."

Twins chief baseball officer Derek Falvey admitted the club has a roster crunch after the addition of Morrison. Twins manager Paul Molitor met individually with players such as Grossman, Eduardo Escobar and Vargas about how the signing of Morrison would affect their roles. Grossman

is now competing for the fourth-outfielder position with Zack Granite, while Escobar will see fewer at-bats at DH.

"Those things we will have to address," Falvey said. "The fortunate part is that we don't have to write out the 25-man until the end of the month. We'll see where it goes. To have all of those fits, it's a challenge."

Vargas, 27, simply wants an opportunity to play every day in the Majors, which has eluded him so far, as he's mostly been a part-time player with the Twins. He's a career .252/.311/.437 hitter with 35 homers and 116 RBIs in 236 games over the last four seasons.

"He's had very few stretches where he's gotten consistent at-bats," Molitor said. "I know he's one of those guys who always talks about, that works better for him than it does for most people. It just isn't always easy to execute that. I do think that hurt him last year."

Vargas played in a career-high 78 games with the Twins in 2017 and hit .253/.314/.444 with 11 homers and 41 RBIs. The switch-hitter has been better against lefties throughout his big league career, but he believes his numbers would improve across the board with consistent playing time.

"That's what I want for my career, playing every day and putting up good numbers," Vargas said. "I know I can do it. So I'm just going to keep hitting, play hard, play good defense and be a good teammate. And then we'll see what happens to me at the end of Spring Training."

Twins bolster rotation by striking deal with Lynn **Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | March 10, 2018**

FORT MYERS, Fla. -- The Twins made another major upgrade to their rotation, agreeing to terms on Saturday with right-hander Lance Lynn on a one-year deal worth \$12 million, a source confirmed to MLB.com's Jon Paul Morosi.

The Twins, however, have not made an announcement, as the deal is pending a physical. Lynn, however, will be the fourth addition the Twins have made since arriving at camp, as they also traded for right-hander Jake Odorizzi on Feb. 17, signed right-hander Anibal Sanchez on Feb. 20 and inked designated hitter/first baseman Logan Morrison on Feb. 28.

It will move their projected payroll to roughly \$130 million, which is a club record, and they'll lose the No. 95 overall selection in the third round of the Draft in 2018 because Lynn rejected the Cardinals' \$17.4 million qualifying offer. Lynn, however, cannot be extended a qualifying offer for a second time.

Lynn, 30, solidifies the rotation with his career 3.38 ERA in six seasons with the Cardinals, joining Jose Berrios, Kyle Gibson and Odorizzi as the four-man rotation expected to open the season. It leaves veterans Phil Hughes and Sanchez battling for a long-relief spot, while Adalberto Mejia is likely headed for Triple-A Rochester. The rotation will get a further boost once Ervin Santana returns in late April or early May, after undergoing surgery on his right middle finger in early February.

The veteran had been linked to the Twins for much of the winter and reportedly turned down a two-year, \$20 million deal recently, according to a story this week from the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

Lynn missed the 2016 season after undergoing Tommy John surgery, but remained effective last season, posting a 3.43 ERA in 33 starts. He struck out 153, walked 78 and gave up 27 homers in 186 1/3 innings. He posted career-worst walk and strikeout rates, but the Twins are hopeful that'll improve a year further removed from the surgery, as regaining command is often difficult in the first year back from the operation.

Outside of missing the 2016 season, Lynn was a workhorse for St. Louis, averaging 32 starts and 189 innings and a 3.39 ERA for five years from '12-'17. He's outpitched his peripheral stats throughout his career, as he has a career 3.64 FIP -- including a 4.82 FIP in '17 -- marks which are both higher than his 3.38 career ERA and 3.43 ERA last season.

Lynn is also the seventh free agent signed by the Twins this offseason, joining Zach Duke, Addison Reed, Fernando Rodney, Michael Pineda, Sanchez and Morrison. They're aiming to make the postseason in back-to-back years for the first time since 2009-10, after their surprise run to the AL Wild Card Game last season.

Although Lynn logged an unimpressive 4.82 FIP last season, he has produced a solid 3.38 ERA across nearly 1,000 career innings. The right-hander warrants late-round attention in shallow leagues after joining a contender in a division with three rebuilding teams, which should ease his transition to the American League by presenting many favorable matchups this year.

Rod Carew gives Twins prospects some valuable bunting instruction

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | March 10, 2018

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Just before the morning workouts ended in Twins camp, I saw a small group of people on Tom Kelly Field, so I walked over to take a look. It was Zack Granite, Nick Gordon, Coach Gene Glynn doing the pitching — and Rod Carew. The Hall of Famer had offered to give some tips about drag bunting to the Twins' prospects, and they weren't about to turn him down.

“He’s the best guy you could ever get,” Granite said, and he’s right about that: Carew’s 112 bunt singles as a Twin as twice as many as any other player in franchise history ever had. “You might as well take everything you can get from a guy like that. Anytime somebody of that caliber — I mean, a Hall of Famer, c’mon — I’m going to listen.”

Carew, here occasionally during the spring to help with coaching, had a bat in his hand during the drills, and frequently demonstrated the body position and footwork that made for an ideal bunt. “I was getting some pretty good ones down, so that makes you feel pretty good,” Granite said. “It’s awesome how the Twins bring those guys back. We’ve got all the analytics and computer guys, but it’s nice to hear from those baseball guys who just did it, too. You can learn a lot.”

Speaking of learning, fans might learn something about what ballplayers say to each other during today’s Fox Sports North simulcast. Brian Dozier has agreed to wear a microphone while he’s in the game today — on the field, at the plate and in the dugout.

It was a memorable Sunday for more than just the Perry brothers in July 1969

Patrick Reusse | Star Tribune | March 10, 2018

FORT MYERS, FLA. – Jim Perry came from Cleveland to the Twins in a trade for lefthander Jack Kralick on May 2, 1963. Perry was both a starter and reliever over next six seasons.

That changed in 1969, when 36 of his 46 appearances were as starts, and he pitched 261⅓ innings for Billy Martin, the one-and-done Twins manager. A year later, he was the AL Cy Young Award winner.

I was talking with Perry on Friday and this story surfaced:

The Twins were in Seattle to play the expansion Pilots in a four-game series on July 18-20, 1969, in tiny Sick’s Stadium. There was a twinnight doubleheader on Friday and a night game Saturday.

“I was starting Sunday and Billy told me to go back to the hotel, have dinner, get some sleep,” Perry said. “I did that, and the game kept going. It was stopped by curfew after 16 innings.

“Between that and the doubleheader, Billy had used all his pitching. I had a call from Billy in the morning and I knew what was coming: ‘Jim, you’re going to finish the suspended game, and then start the second and give me as much as you can.

“I pitched two scoreless innings and hit a double off the wall to start a four-run rally in the 18th. We went in the clubhouse between games and were watching the men on the moon ... waiting for Neil Armstrong to come down that ladder.”

A half-hour later, Perry was on the mound again, and he gave Martin a 4-0, nine-hit, no-walk shutout in 2 hours, 10 minutes.

Two wins and 11 scoreless innings was not the most famous feat for the pitching Perrys of Wilmington, N.C., on the day Armstrong took his one small step.

“My brother Gaylord was pitching for the Giants in Candlestick [Park],” Jim said. “He had a manager earlier, Alvin Dark, who said of Gaylord’s hitting, ‘They’ll put a man on the moon before he hits a home run.’

“And Gaylord hit his only big-league home run that day.”

And then Gaylord quipped of our first moon men, “They only beat me by about an hour.”

Rain wipes away Twins' big first inning against Boston

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | March 10, 2018

FORT MYERS, Fla. – Before it fades from memory, from the record book, from any trace of existence, let’s note what the Twins accomplished in

the first inning Saturday.

Their first eight batters reached base, seven of them with hits, and 14 batters came to the plate overall. Brian Dozier singled and homered in the inning, Joe Mauer walked and singled, and Eduardo Escobar singled and walked. Six Twins recorded RBI and Red Sox starter Jalen Beeks was knocked out without retiring a batter as the Twins took a 9-0 lead at Hammond Stadium.

Yet “it’s like it never happened,” Twins manager Paul Molitor said. That’s because, about an hour later, a light drizzle turned into a steady rain, and the game was called in the third inning with the Twins leading 10-3. Since five innings weren’t played, none of what happened will go on anyone’s Grapefruit League statistics. There was a sellout crowd on hand, but they went away disappointed.

“We’ve all lost hits along the way,” Molitor said. “We played as much as we could, but it looked like it was getting unsafe. You play in those conditions during the season, but down here, you’re a little more apprehensive.”

Hot mic

When Hanley Ramirez arrived on second base Saturday, he turned to Dozier with a question: Who are you talking to?

“He thought I was crazy,” Dozier said with a laugh. Actually, though, he was wearing a microphone and earphone, so he could communicate with Cory Provus and Dan Gladden as part of Fox Sports North and WCCO-AM’s simulcast of the game. It gave viewers and listeners a behind-the-scenes perspective.

For instance, when pitching coach Garvin Alston came to the mound to confer with Kyle Gibson after he hit a batter, Dozier wandered over and had a few words with the pitcher. During a normal broadcast, it might seem as if they were talking strategy. Thanks to the mic, viewers heard his actual advice: “Let’s go dude. This rain is killing me, let’s go,” Dozier said. “I’m out here getting wet, and he’s hitting people.”

“It was fun,” Dozier said after the game. “I was a little worried about the dugout — we’re grown men talking, and we might be talking about things we don’t want other teams to hear — but I had a good time. Especially with Nunie.”

That’s Boston’s Eduardo Nunez, the former Twins shortstop and close friend of Dozier’s. When Dozier homered in the Twins’ big first inning — listeners heard him say “Uh-oh” as the ball rose toward the horizon — he taunted Nunez as he rounded the base. “That’s for you, Nunie! That’s for you, baby!”

No decision yet

Molitor said he hasn’t determined who the Twins’ Opening Day starter will be, but he should have an announcement soon. The obvious choice is Jose Berrios, Molitor admitted, but that would make it difficult for him to pitch in Puerto Rico two weeks later.

“We kind of have an idea of how we’re going to do it,” Molitor said, “but we’re going to let it play out for just a little bit longer before we make anything official.”

On deck

The Twins travel to Port Charlotte to face the Rays for the second time in three days Sunday, and Mauer is scheduled to bat leadoff.

Looking at Twins rotation candidates

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | March 10, 2018

TWINS ROTATION CANDIDATES

Ervin Santana: Carried the Twins with an All-Star season in 2017 but also had hand surgery in January that will keep him sidelined until May.

Jose Berrios: His second season was a big success — 14-8, a 3.89 ERA — so the only question about the 23-year-old is whether he will start on Opening Day.

Lance Lynn: Missed 2016 because of Tommy John surgery, but in each of his five other full seasons, he has pitched at least 175 innings, won 11 games and posted an ERA below 4.00.

Jake Odorizzi: Acquired from Tampa Bay via trade, he is a solid midrotation righthander who figures to improve by moving out of the AL East.

Kyle Gibson: The Twins won nine of his final 11 starts in 2017, and his ERA was 3.55 in them, making him the presumptive fifth starter. But he was sent to the minors twice, too.

Adalberto Mejia: Came to camp slimmer and more determined, and his presence could keep the rotation from being entirely righthanded.

Anibal Sanchez: An inexpensive salvage experiment, but his time might be up: The Twins might need his roster spot to make room for Lynn.

Phil Hughes: The \$26.4 million still owed him may keep him on the staff as he recovers from surgery, but Lynn's presence makes a bullpen role more likely.

Tyler Duffey: He is having a strong spring, and gets his first start on Wednesday. But it's going to be difficult to crack the rotation.

Aaron Slegers, Stephen Gonsalves, Fernando Romero: Rookies had long shot hopes of sticking, but they appear headed to Class AAA Rochester now.

Trevor May and Michael Pineda: Tommy John cases who hope to win a rotation spot.

Accomplished group

With the addition of Lance Lynn, the Twins have five starting pitchers on their roster who won 10 or more games in 2017:

Ervin Santana (2017 stats: 16-8, 3.28 ERA, 211½ innings pitched; Age: 34)

Jose Berrios (2017 stats: 14-8, 3.89 ERA, 145½ innings pitched; Age: 23)

Lance Lynn (12-11, 3.03 ERA, 175½ innings pitched; Age: 30)

Kyle Gibson (2017 stats: 12-10, 5.07 ERA, 158 innings pitched; Age: 30)

Jake Odorizzi (2017 stats: 10-8, 4.14 ERA, 143½ innings pitched; Age: 27)

Twins are making smart, calculated moves

Jim Souhan | Star Tribune | March 10, 2018

FORT MYERS, FLA. – It is Oct. 4, 2017. You are the Twins' new front office. Your team has just capped a remarkable season with an unremarkable ending, a loss at Yankee Stadium.

You are not distraught. You did not expect your first team to win 85 games. You are pleasantly surprised, and impressed by the young talent that your predecessor assembled. You also know that you have work to do.

So you scratch out a task list.

Kidding.

You love technology. You send a virtual task list that will hover like a hologram in front of the retinas of all of your key employees all winter.

It reads:

1. Re-sign Paul Molitor.
2. Build a safety net for your young bullpen.
3. Find a reasonably priced bat that can improve your lineup at DH, and provide insurance in case Miguel Sano isn't reliable or Joe Mauer isn't healthy.
4. Improve and deepen your rotation.
5. Fight the urge to rush into expensive deals. Sign or trade for players who will help immediately but will not destroy your financial flexibility two or three years from now.

The deal with Molitor doesn't take long. He was easy to work with all season and made the decision for you by steadily guiding the team after the trading deadline and, rightly or wrongly, didn't worry about any angst caused by your silence on the matter.

Deals with Fernando Rodney, Addison Reed and Zach Duke aren't all that difficult or expensive, either. All three could buy time for younger relievers to develop, or could become important players.

Signing Logan Morrison accomplishes task No. 3. He becomes an intimidating DH and could become the starting first baseman next year, or could share DH and first base if Mauer returns and Sano is able to remain at third base. You have taken advantage of a market that, as Morrison and Mike Moustakas discovered, doesn't highly value players who hit almost 40 home runs the previous season.

Everyone you have acquired so far has been a bargain, but quality starting pitchers are never bargains.

Unless you have a deep stable of quality shortstops, and the patience to wait for free agents to become desperate.

So you trade your fourth-best shortstop prospect to Tampa Bay for Jake Odorizzi, who may be your Opening Day starter, and on March 10 sign Lance Lynn to a one-year deal worth \$12 million.

You now have a team that appears markedly better than the one from a year ago. You are an on-paper contender not just for a wild-card playoff spot but the division title should Cleveland stub a toe or three.

Sit with a general manager in 1993 or 2017, and you may hear the phrase: "There is no such thing as a bad one-year deal." This remains true. If Lynn pitches well, he will be considered a bargain. If he pitches poorly, he will have been a short-lived experiment.

Scouts have told me that they wonder if Lynn will pitch well in the American League, and analysts can find flaws in his more esoteric statistical profile.

Allow me to be a Luddite: He's going to pitch a lot of games against the weaker teams in a weak division, he'll be playing for an excellent defensive team, he has a career ERA of 3.38, and has pitched at least 175 innings in each of his five full big-league seasons.

The Twins may now begin the season with a rotation of Odorizzi, Jose Berrios, Lynn and Kyle Gibson, with Ervin Santana supposedly due to return at about the time the team will need five starters.

Adalberto Mejia, Fernando Romero and Stephen Gonsalves become quality depth instead of players the Twins would have to depend on as early as May.

Falvey and Levine have aggressively built a deep, strong team without giving up a top prospect or a long-term contract. They have positioned the 2018 Twins to win without hamstringing any future teams.

This might register as the best Twins offseason since in 1990-91, when Andy MacPhail missed out on signing Mike Boddicker and Kirk Gibson and settled for a couple of bargains named Chili Davis and Jack Morris.

Logan Morrison can solve Twins' problems at DH and cleanup spot if he gets pitches he likes
Michael Rand & Chris Hine | Star Tribune | March 10, 2018

RandBall: Michael Rand

As a team in 2017, the Twins were quite formidable on offense. They finished seventh in MLB in runs scored (815) and ninth in on-base-plus-slugging percentage or OPS (.768). Much of that was fueled by a surge in the last two months when the offense carried the Twins to a wild-card berth.

With many of the key players from that team young and improving, the Twins' offense already figured to be ascending in 2018. But then they found what on the surface looked like both a bargain and a luxury — Logan Morrison — and signed him in free agency.

The Twins already have a first baseman (Joe Mauer) and already have plenty of lefthanded hitters, and both those things describe Morrison. So what gives?

Well, the short answer is you can never have too many good players.

The longer answer is that a peek inside the numbers shows the Twins had a couple of deficiencies within their very good offensive production last season.

First, their designated hitters combined for just 17 home runs and a .711 OPS. Only Twins catchers had a lower OPS by position last season, and only two AL teams had fewer home runs from that spot a year ago.

Second, Twins cleanup hitters combined for a .748 OPS last season — ranking just No. 23 in MLB.

The Twins probably could have solved those problems without Morrison, but for \$6.5 million in 2018 the plan should be simple. At least against righthanders, Morrison — who hit 38 home runs last season — is the designated hitter and bats cleanup.

Two problems solved with one guy.

Michael Rand is the senior digital writer for Star Tribune sports and keeper of the RandBall blog at startribune.com/RandBall.

North Score: Chris Hine

Now that the Twins have a big bopper in the lineup with the addition of Logan Morrison, the question becomes where to slot him in the batting order?

The Rays, Morrison's former team, slotted him fourth in the lineup for 114 games last season and Morrison hit 30 of his 38 home runs from that spot. It seems a good fit for him in Minnesota.

Wherever they slot him, the Twins just may want to make sure somebody is protecting Morrison in the lineup because he feasted on fastballs. Morrison hit 18 of 36 home runs on fastballs, 11 of which were two-seamers, according to Statcast.

Morrison did manage to hit eight home runs off changeups and six off sinkers.

But Morrison said he feels most comfortable at the plate when he knows a fastball is coming.

“What I ultimately want to do is hunt fastballs [in the middle of the plate],” Morrison told Fangraphs.com last season. “But at the same time, I want knowledge on what the pitcher likes to do. Especially in certain counts. If I know a pitcher doesn't like to use one side of the plate, that helps me out even more. If it's a guy who can do everything, I'm just trying to get a fastball middle until two strikes. Sometimes pitchers don't comply.”

Part of the Twins' issue on where to slot Morrison likely won't get settled until MLB completes its investigation into Miguel Sano's alleged sexual assault of a female photographer.

Whether Sano is in or out of the lineup, the Twins need to find a way to make pitchers pitch to Morrison instead of pitching around him.

Twins strike a bargain deal with pitcher Lance Lynn **Phil Miller | Star Tribune | March 10, 2018**

FORT MYERS, Fla. — The Major League Baseball free-agent market of 2017-18 will be remembered as historically glacial for players looking for extravagant long-term contracts. But to the bargain-hunting Twins, it's been a bonfire like none other.

The Twins on Saturday agreed to a one-year contract that guarantees only \$12 million to former St. Louis righthander Lance Lynn, one of the more accomplished pitchers in this free-agent class and another clear upgrade to what was one of the AL's worst rotations a year ago. According to two sources with knowledge of the deal, the contract also contains bonus clauses that could pay Lynn an additional \$2 million.

Lynn's signing might also short-circuit what was shaping up as a heated competition, among at least five candidates, for a spot in the Twins rotation.

Once he passes a physical, Lynn will become the seventh free agent signed during this offseason by the Twins, an unheard-of level of player acquisition for a franchise normally reticent about plunging into the open market, and a move that will make this year's team the costliest in

franchise history, by far.

And yet Lynn, like Logan Morrison, the first baseman who signed with the Twins on Feb. 28, represents an amazing discount on his original asking price. The website Baseball Trade Rumors ranked Lynn as its ninth-most-prized free agent, predicting he would sign for \$56 million over four seasons.

Instead, the Twins receive a 30-year-old who has been a double-digit winner with the Cardinals five times, and owns a 3.38 ERA in 183 career games, at almost 80 percent off. Lynn missed the 2016 season after undergoing Tommy John surgery to replace a ligament in his right elbow, but he bounced back to start 33 games for St. Louis last year, going 11-8 with a 3.43 ERA.

Lynn became a free agent in November but has remained unsigned during a shockingly slow market for veteran free agents. The righthander, who declined a \$17.4 million qualifying offer from St. Louis in November, apparently decided to accept a one-year deal from the Twins and re-enter the market again next winter.

He will join Morrison, relievers Zach Duke, Fernando Rodney and Addison Reed, and fellow starters Anibal Sanchez and Michael Pineda as free-agent acquisitions who could cost the Twins as little as \$54.5 million overall, or barely one-third as much as the Padres committed to Eric Hosmer. Only Reed and Pineda are guaranteed any money from the Twins in 2019, and none are under contract for 2020.

Derek Falvey, the Twins chief baseball officer, said upon signing Morrison to a pennies-on-the-dollar \$6.5 million contract that he didn't expect another signing this spring — but he couldn't rule it out, either. "Until we're playing games, there are conversations to be had, and we're not going to shut them out. I'm not going to turn my phone off," said Falvey, who was unavailable for comment Saturday. "We'll stay in touch."

Adding Lynn plumps the Twins' 2018 payroll to roughly \$130 million, shattering their previous high of \$113.5 million on Opening Day 2011. That will likely rank about 18th in MLB this year.

There is an additional cost to this pickup, however. Under MLB rules, because Lynn was tendered, and declined, a \$17.4 million qualifying offer from the Cardinals in November, the Twins will forfeit their third-round pick, No. 95 overall, in next June's draft. (The Twins keep picks 20, 60 and 75, however.) They will also lose \$500,000 in their international free-agent budget.

Jose Berrios, Kyle Gibson and Jake Odorizzi, the righthander acquired in a trade with Tampa Bay shortly after training camp opened, figure to occupy three spots, with Gibson perhaps holding the most tenuous grasp on a job. Ervin Santana will return from surgery on his pitching hand in May, the Twins expect, and they will mostly use a four-man rotation until he's back.

Lynn now slots into that rotation, too, a development that seemingly leaves Adalberto Mejia, Phil Hughes, Tyler Duffey, Anibal Sanchez and rookies Stephen Gonsalves and Aaron Slegers without a regular job with the Twins.

Twins agree to one-year deal with Lance Lynn **Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | March 10, 2018**

Like a seasoned shopper at a lightly attended sidewalk sale, the Twins just keep adding shiny baubles for pennies on the dollar.

Saturday brought the news that they had reached agreement with veteran right-hander Lance Lynn on a one-year contract, according to a person with direct knowledge. Remarkably, it was for \$12 million with another \$2 million in potential performance bonuses. .

Lynn, 30, had turned down a recent two-year, \$20 million offer from the Twins, according to a person with direct knowledge, but the two sides kept talking amid a historically slow-moving market.

In addition to Lynn, a former all-star and three-time 15-game winner with World Series experience, the Twins signed 38-homer slugger Logan Morrison to a one-year deal last month and opened spring training with the trade acquisition of former Tampa Bay Rays right-hander Jake Odorizzi.

With Lynn in the fold, the team's Opening Day payroll could skyrocket toward \$130 million. The previous club record was \$113.2 million in 2011.

The Twins could offset some of their outlay for Lynn by cutting ties with veteran right-hander Anibal Sanchez, signed last month to a \$2.5 million deal that is non-guaranteed. They would owe Sanchez, due to start Sunday at the Rays, 45 days' termination pay (or about \$615,000) if they release him before Opening Day.

Holdover right-handers Jose Berrios, who won 14 games last season, and Kyle Gibson, who had a strong second half in 2017, round out a four-

man rotation to start the year. Veteran right-hander Ervin Santana, coming off Feb. 6 surgery on his right middle finger, is due back around May 1 after fronting their staff the past 2 1/2 seasons.

Their projected five-man rotation, once Santana returns, is due \$36.57 million in 2018. They also owe right-hander Phil Hughes \$13.2 million in each of the next two seasons, but he could wind up in the bullpen.

Twins reliever Zach Duke, who signed a one-year, \$2.15 million deal, spent parts of the past two seasons in St. Louis, where he pitched with Lynn.

“I haven’t talked to him in a while,” Duke said Saturday morning. “Hopefully he signs somewhere. He’s too good of a pitcher not to get a job.”

Lynn turned down a \$17.4 million qualifying offer from the Cardinals in early November, which means the Twins will have to forfeit their third-round pick (No. 95 overall) next June as compensation. Under the new Collective Bargaining Agreement, players may not be extended qualifying offers more than once in their careers.

“I think he’d fit great here,” Duke told the Pioneer Press in January of his fellow Tommy John surgery survivor. “He’s a competitor. He knows how to win. He works hard. He’d be a great addition to any pitching staff, honestly.”

Duke, who agreed to terms with the Twins a few days before Christmas, has stayed in touch with Lynn, who grew up outside Indianapolis and attended Ole Miss. Lynn, who missed all of 2016 after Tommy John surgery, returned last year to go 11-8 with a 3.43 earned-run average in 33 starts (186 1/3 innings).

Lynn posted back-to-back seasons of 200-plus innings in 2013-14. He also has 24 career postseason appearance, including seven starts, going 5-4 with a 4.50 ERA on the October stage.

He has pitched in both the 2011 and 2013 World Series, winning a championship ring the first time and falling to the Boston Red Sox in his return opportunity.

“We’ve talked throughout the offseason just because of our friendship,” Duke said in January. “I enjoyed being his teammate. I’d like to be his teammate again, just because I know how hard he competes and how much he wants to win. He’s really good.”

Lynn’s approach is to pound the zone with fastballs that average 93 mph. He also mixes in a curve, cutter and change.

“He does it with the fastball mainly,” Duke said at TwinsFest. “He’s like 85 to 90 percent fastball, so it’s not a big secret to what he does. He just has a fastball that’s tough to hit. That plays.”

Predicted to receive a four-year, \$56 million deal by MLB Trade Rumors in November, Lynn was among dozens of proven free agents to sit home throughout a long, strange winter. In recent weeks he has been working out in Jupiter at Cressey Sports Performance, where Morrison and Twins’ Rule 5 pick Tyler Kinley joined him.

While the Twins fell short with a reported five-year, \$100 million offer for Yu Darvish, who signed instead with the Chicago Cubs, they never showed much interest in another ex-Rays right-hander, Alex Cobb.

Jake Arrieta, who helped pitch the Cubs to the World Series title in 2016, also remains unsigned.

The Twins also made a run at veteran lefty CC Sabathia in December before the 37-year-old re-signed with the New York Yankees for one year at \$10 million.

“You always want to balance cost and length and risk and everything associated with that,” Twins chief baseball officer Derek Falvey said last week. “While everyone’s focused on the 2018 roster, I’ve got my sheet with ’19, ’20, ’21, ’22 built out. As we think about future flexibility, we feel really good about where our team is headed moving forward.”

The Twins have just \$37.7 million committed to four players in 2019 (Hughes, Addison Reed, Michael Pineda and Jason Castro) and no guaranteed money on the books for 2020.

Lance Lynn, Yu Darvish, the linearity of a win, and the Twins' great pivot **Eno Sarris | The Athletic | March 10, 2018**

On Feb. 13 — it was a Tuesday — the Twins found out that Yu Darvish had chosen the Cubs. For a Twins team that outperformed their

projections (and underlying stats) last season, and needed to improve the pitching staff to take advantage of a nice core of young position players, it could have been a devastating moment. Instead, the team went out and spread that Darvish money around.

Our Jim Bowden liked the offseason for the Twins.

Did they do just as well as signing Darvish by signing Lance Lynn, trading a low-level prospect for Jake Odorizzi, and picking up Logan Morrison?

At first glance, the numbers line up so well you have to think the Twins are going to get exactly the same production from their new three, for the same amount of 2018 dollars, and nowhere near the long-term commitment.

It's remarkable, really — \$25 million vs \$23.8 million, 4.2 wins as projected by FanGraphs' depth chart and Steamer-driven numbers vs. 4.3 wins.

But rosters don't work this way. You can't use three guys in one spot, so this is an unfair comparison.

Darvish would have probably replaced someone like Anibal Sanchez in the rotation. Pushing Sanchez to the pen would probably mean that he'd lose half his value. Take that lost production off of the projection for Darvish and you still have a four-win improvement.

Odorizzi and Lynn would push Anibal Sanchez down, but probably also Adalberto Mejia, who might go down to the minors to refine his changeup. Take the missing Sanchez and Mejia production away from the projections for Odorizzi and Lynn and you have something like a two-win improvement, maybe less.

Morrison replaces Kennys Vargas, and though he's an upgrade, Vargas' projected production eats away at Morrison's value and makes it more like a win improvement.

Add those up and you get a three-win improvement from the trio instead of a four-win improvement from a single player and their existing players.

While a win, in the fairly noisy world that is player and team projections, is nothing to worry too hard about, especially when it came at a much cheaper long-term cost, it does point to a possible development in this year's free-agent market that speaks to a shift in player value theory.

Many analysts have long held that the cost of player production is linear. In other words, a win is a win, and a four-win player will basically cost twice as much as a two-win player. Matt Swartz, just this past year, showed that the cost of a win was steady across deals of differing sizes.

But, while we've seen some large deals this offseason for stars — Darvish got \$126 million, for example — the players offering closer to league-average production are suffering. Lance Lynn, Jonathan Lucroy, even Mike Moustakas have all suffered at the hands of this market even while Eric Hosmer got his payday.

It's caused some to question if teams are valuing stars and average players differently these days.

As Szymborski continues, and I agree, it makes more intuitive sense for a win to be non-linear. You only have 25 roster slots, and only nine players can take the field at any time. Having a four-win upgrade on one slot is worth more than spreading that around because there are only so many four-win players and there are only so many roster spots.

Maybe teams have acted like player cost of production is linear in the past, and that's why Swartz has found what he has, but it's also possible the market is catching up to the scarcity of roster spots and the scarcity of stars and is starting to act differently now.

After all, Yu Darvish didn't just get \$25 million for 2018. He got a lot more, and he was the Twins' first choice.

Even if they did do the best they could after the pivot.