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**Saturday, June 2, 2018**

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**Escobar's 2 HRs, Rosario's defense lift Twins**  
**Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | June 1, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS -- It was the Eduardo and Eddie show for the Twins on Friday night, as Eduardo Escobar had two homers and four RBIs, while Eddie Rosario ripped an RBI single, was intentionally walked twice and made two impressive running catches in left.

The pair helped the offense to another big night, and this time it resulted in a much-needed 7-4 win over the Indians at Target Field. Minnesota had scored 16 combined runs over the previous two games, but lost both while trying to overcome large early deficits. The win helped the Twins move within 5 1/2 games of the Indians with two games left in the pivotal series.

"It was nice to see a little reversal in terms of how the game began," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "Getting the three-run homer right off the bat and Rosie's RBI single, it gave us some wiggle room, which you need against them."

Unlike their last two games, it was the Twins who jumped out to an early lead. Brian Dozier called a team meeting before the game to address the club's recent scuffles and promptly led off with a double that set the tone. Escobar provided the big blast with a three-run shot off right-hander Carlos Carrasco.

"That pitch was low," Carrasco said. "Escobar likes a low pitch. He got a little bit in front. I thought it was a fly ball, but no, that ball is still going."

With the fans in left field chanting his name, Rosario came to the plate with two runners on and two outs in the second, and he delivered with an RBI single into center. Minnesota tacked on two more runs in the fourth on an RBI double from Ryan LaMarre -- the first extra-base hit of his career -- before the Indians opted to intentionally walk Rosario to get to Miguel Sano. Sano, who had struck out in his previous two-bats, made them pay with an RBI double to left that knocked Carrasco from the game.

"Miggy hadn't seen a fastball in his first two at-bats, and he didn't look like he was going to be able to make an adjustment," Molitor said. "They took a shot at him, and he left his slider where he could handle it."

Escobar added an insurance run with a solo homer in the seventh off reliever Josh Tomlin. It was absolutely crushed, as it had an exit velocity of 107.8 mph and went a projected 443 feet, per Statcast™, making it the longest homer of the year by a Twins hitter, surpassing Sano's 440-foot shot on April 25. It was the third homer in two days for Escobar, who leads the club with 10 blasts and recorded his fourth career multihomer

game.

"I'm not a big guy," Escobar said. "For me, every time I go to home plate, I look at the ball and swing hard. I don't try to come to the plate looking for a home run. But it's just about seeing the ball and hitting it hard."

The offense was enough for right-hander Jose Berrios, who surrendered four runs on five hits and a walk with seven strikeouts in six innings to improve to 6-5 with a 3.86 ERA. Berrios gave up two runs in the third, keyed by a leadoff single from Yan Gomes and a double from Greg Allen.

Cleveland made it a two-run game with a two-run homer from Edwin Encarnacion off Berrios in the sixth. But relievers Trevor Hildenberger, Zach Duke and closer Fernando Rodney combined for three scoreless innings to snap a three-game losing streak.

"I felt good," Berrios said. "I thought I missed four pitches. The two hits in the third inning and then the sixth inning to Ramirez and Encarnacion. But I feel good about the rest of the game."

#### SOUND SMART

In Escobar's first five seasons in the Majors, he hit a combined 27 homers in 490 games. But dating back to last season, he has 31 homers in 179 games.

"You know he's going to take a good swing," Molitor said. "Anybody who has a tendency to pitch down in the zone, he has a chance because that's where a lot of his power comes from. The first homer was timely, and the second one was impressive."

#### YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Rosario made a highlight-reel catch in the fifth, robbing Allen of a hit with a running grab that saw the ball pop out of his glove twice before he finally corralled it. Berrios, a fellow Puerto Rico native, applauded at the mound after Rosario's catch. Rosario also made an impressive running catch in the second, racing to the left-field corner to take away a hit from Melky Cabrera.

"I always say he's an athlete," Berrios said. "It's always something new for us. It's a surprise every time. That's what we want to see for the rest of the season."

#### HE SAID IT

"We're still trying to tighten up and watching some of the things that are maybe not as apparent to people just following the ball, things we need to do. The guys were made aware of it and trying to take it to heart and apply it, as long as it doesn't make them more nervous trying not to make a mistake. There's got to be a little bit of freedom of being able to express yourself out there depending on what skills you can bring to the field. Good baseball isn't going to always translate into wins. It's kind of how you go about it from the first pitch to the end." -- Molitor, on the messages from recent team meetings

#### UP NEXT

Right-hander Lance Lynn (3-4, 5.94 ERA) will look to build on his recent success when he takes the mound against the Indians in the third game of the series on Saturday at 3:10 p.m. CT. Over his last two starts, Lynn has allowed a combined two runs over 12 2/3 innings. He had a 3.76 ERA in five starts in May. Right-hander Trevor Bauer (4-3, 2.61 ERA) starts for Cleveland.

#### **Twins taking conservative approach with Mauer**

**Jarrid Denney | MLB.com | June 1, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS -- As Joe Mauer continues to work his way back from the cervical neck strain that landed him on the 10-day DL on May 19, the Twins are making sure to take a conservative approach with his recovery process.

Mauer took batting practice and fielded ground balls prior to Minnesota's loss to the Indians on Thursday, but admitted to feeling concussion-like symptoms afterward. He sat through Minnesota's game on Thursday without experiencing further symptoms, but the Twins pumped the brakes on his rehab on Friday.

Mauer did not take batting practice, and the only activity he participated in on the field was catching throws behind a screen at first base when the Twins took infield practice.

"I don't know exactly where we're at with that today," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said of Mauer's activity on Friday. "I know Joe had his comments yesterday about some of the things that unfolded. Not overly surprised that a fuller day around a different environment had a little bit of an effect. So, yeah. We'll probably be a little bit smarter today."

"It's one of those things where I understand people are wondering when Joe is gonna play. In reality, given what he's dealing with, the timing is gonna be what it is. When he's ready, Joe will be the first guy to get back out there."

### Twins hold team meeting

Molitor said Friday that he met with his team prior to Thursday's batting practice with the intention of checking in on the Twins as a group. Molitor gathered the team at second base and said he addressed a specific point.

"Most of my meetings over the last three years have been relatively positive," Molitor said. "I try to find something to build on instead of tear down."

The Twins are 3-7 over their last 10 games. After falling behind early in each of their last two games, they rallied back before ultimately losing both games late. They are 3-12 in one-run games this season.

"Specifically, we talked about the way we've been losing games," Molitor said. "To me, it's not always about getting walked off, it's about something that happened in the third inning we screwed up that [lost] us a chance to score a run. So that was some of the things we talked about yesterday. The mindset of baserunning. There were some general things that were discussed."

### Vikings take their cuts

Four players from the Minnesota Vikings were in the building at Target Field on Friday, attempting to showcase their skills as multisport athletes.

Kirk Cousins, Everson Griffen, Stefon Diggs and Harrison Smith each got the chance to jump in the batter's box and take some swings -- to varying results.

"There's room for improvement," Smith joked. "[Griffen] is good. I had a feeling he'd be pretty good. He's an athletic dude."

Griffen and Cousins each have baseball backgrounds but ultimately went on to successful careers on the gridiron.

"I played all the way through high school," Cousins said. "My brother played in college and my dad's favorite sport was baseball. So growing up that was the sport that really was the focus until much later in high school. We were a good team in high school. We finished fifth in the state my junior year, and we were No. 1 my senior year for a large part of the season. I played a lot of baseball games, but by the end of high school it was pretty clear that football was the route for me. I always threw a football better than I threw a baseball, comparatively. I pitched, but I could never really get the velocity up. I was in the low 80s; I could never get to where to you needed to go to where you'd really be a great pitcher."

### **Rosario flourishing into All-Star candidate**

**Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | June 1, 2018**

As Twins manager Paul Molitor put it recently, it's hard to take your eyes off left fielder Eddie Rosario on a baseball field.

With his aggressive approach at the plate, on the bases and in the field, Rosario has become a must-watch player for the Twins. He's in the middle of a career year and is looking to get rewarded with his first trip to the All-Star Game.

"He's one of those don't-blink players," Molitor said. "You don't know what's going to happen at any moment when he's involved with a play."

Rosario is Minnesota's top All-Star candidate, and entering Friday's game against the Indians, is hitting .308/.333/.520 with nine homers, 15 doubles, 33 RBIs and five stolen bases in 52 games. His transformation into a top-caliber hitter began last year, when he hit .290/.328/.507 with 27 homers, 33 doubles and 78 RBIs.

"I like it when he's up there, I like it when he's aggressive," Molitor said. "Obviously, we talk so much about him trying to command the zone at least somewhat, and when he does that, he can be effective."

The other Twins on the ballot are first baseman Joe Mauer, second baseman Brian Dozier, shortstop Eduardo Escobar, third baseman Miguel Sano, center fielder Byron Buxton, right fielder Max Kepler, catcher Mitch Garver and designated hitter Logan Morrison.

Fans may cast votes for starters at MLB.com and all 30 club sites -- on computers, tablets and smartphones -- exclusively online using the 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Ballot until Thursday, July 5, at 10:59 p.m. CT. On smartphones and tablets, fans can also access the ballot via the MLB At Bat and MLB Ballpark mobile apps. Each fan can vote up to five times in any 24-hour period, for a maximum of 35 ballots cast.

Following the announcement of this year's All-Star starters, reserves and pitchers, fans should return to MLB.com and cast their 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Final Vote for the final player on each league's roster. Then on Tuesday, July 17, while watching the 2018 All-Star Game presented by Mastercard live on FOX, fans may visit MLB.com to submit their choices for the Ted Williams Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet with the 2018 MLB All-Star Game MVP Vote.

The 89th Midsummer Classic, at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C., will be televised nationally by FOX Sports; in Canada by Rogers Sportsnet and RDS; and worldwide by partners in more than 180 countries. FOX Deportes will provide Spanish-language coverage in the United States, while ESPN Radio and ESPN Radio Deportes will provide exclusive national radio coverage of the All-Star Game. MLB Network, MLB.com and SiriusXM also will provide comprehensive All-Star Week coverage. For more information about MLB All-Star Week and to purchase tickets, please visit AllStarGame.com and follow @MLB and @AllStarGame on social media.

### **Eduardo Escobar homers twice, drives in four as Twins top Cleveland 7-4**

**Chris Hine | Star Tribune | June 2, 2018**

There was a refrain ringing through Target Field on Friday night and, for once in an arduous season, it was pleasing to the ears of Twins fans.

The crowd would erupt into regular chants of “Eddie, Eddie,” typically starting in left field.

They were mainly for Eddie Rosario, who provided enough of a reason for them with an RBI single and two difficult catches in left field in his part of a much-needed 7-4 victory over the Cleveland Indians.

“We have a cult following going on out there in the bleachers,” manager Paul Molitor said.

But some chants were saved for Eduardo Escobar, who sneaked one home run over the hedges of the hanging right-field garden in the first inning for a three-run shot, then clobbered another blast — the longest homer of the Twins’ season — in the seventh.

It was all part of a night that finally went right for the Twins.

Some games, the Twins have the pitching but the hitting goes absent. More recently, the bats have come alive but the pitching decides to take a few days off. Friday, the Twins got enough of both.

Escobar provided the pop, Rosario the fizz with his glove while Jose Berrios kept the Indians calm enough to earn the victory, giving up four runs in six innings while striking out seven.

“This is the night you want to see — everybody pulling together,” Berrios said after improving to 6-5 on the season. “We got the win.”

A win that was only the Twins’ second in their past nine games, and one that was needed to restore some faith to a club that has seen its share of tribulations through the first two months of the season. There was a meeting Thursday that Molitor called, then another one Friday from second baseman Brian Dozier to keep the team focused despite its struggles. Friday’s performance was the response the Twins wanted to see.

“Everybody stay strong, play hard no matter what happens, that’s what’s most important, that was the message,” Escobar said. “So, you saw today, everybody ran hard, played hard. That’s what’s most important.”

Nobody got better results at the plate than Escobar, whose three-run shot in the first settled an on-edge crowd and earned a smattering of “Eddie, Eddie” chants for himself.

Then Rosario made a slick running catch of a Melky Cabrera fly ball in the second, knocked in a run in the bottom half, then again came up big with his glove in the fifth when he got a hand on a Greg Allen line drive and caught the ball on the bobble.

Cue more “Eddie, Eddie.”

“To get a glove on it with extension and maintain after the bobble, that takes some athleticism,” Molitor said.

It took some serious power off the bat of Escobar to help give the Twins an important insurance run after the Indians had pulled within 6-4. He connected on a sinker from Josh Tomlin and sent it flying 443 feet into the upper deck of right-center field.

“I’m just seeing the ball; it looks bigger than usual,” Escobar said. “The team tells you to relax and see the ball well and make good contact, you know?”

Curiously, there was no “Eddie, Eddie” chorus after Escobar’s home run.

Perhaps the crowd was tired of saying it.

**Twins notes: Pregame meeting at second base gets team's attention**  
**Chris Hine | Star Tribune | June 2, 2018**

Was it a meeting? A congregation. A conference? Twins manager Paul Molitor said he wasn't sure how to categorize the assembly he had with his team at second base before Thursday's game against the Indians.

But it was the kind of move Molitor felt he needed to make to remind the Twins about a few facets of their performance they needed to tighten as they entered this four-game series with the Cleveland Indians.

"There were some things I wanted to generally address but I also wanted to get specific about one thing that was lacking," Molitor said, without divulging what that "thing" was. "It was a combination of teaching and maybe just checking in with where we're at."

Some of the meeting focused on improving the baserunning. Molitor said he had the meeting not to dress down the team but to provide some constructive reinforcement.

"Most of my meetings over the last three years have been relatively positive," Molitor said. "I try to find something to build on instead of tear down. ... To me, it's not always about getting walked off, it's about something that happened in the third inning we screwed up that gave us a chance to score a run."

Second baseman Brian Dozier took another opportunity to build on the meeting Thursday, writing "5:30 clubhouse" on a whiteboard outside the clubhouse before Friday's game. Dozier said he did not like the connotation of the term "meeting."

"At this level, meetings are always considered a negative, but it also can be very positive," Dozier said. "You don't ever want to over 'meet,' so to speak. This has nothing to do with performance by any means. That's what gets blown out of proportion. It's little things behind the scenes to clean up."

Dozier wanted to make sure the team wasn't trying to do too much after its recent struggles. Molitor said sometimes the message coming from both players and coaches can drive home important points to younger players.

"It plays well when there are a lot of leadership guys in here who call people out when they need to get called out, picking guys up when they need to get picked up," Molitor said. "There are a lot of things players respond to from other players maybe as well, if not better, than a coach or a manager. Both can be fruitful."

Polanco back on field

Twins shortstop Jorge Polanco, serving an 80-game suspension for performance-enhancing drugs, is playing in a couple extended spring training games a week while working out on the other days.

Since Polanco is in Fort Myers, Fla., for a while — he can return to the Twins lineup July 2, barring rainouts — he is making the best of the situation.

The Twins designed a plan for him to improve his throwing. They hope his arm is a little stronger and more accurate once he returns to the lineup.

Lindor lighting it up

Shortstop Francisco Lindor carried the Indians on Thursday with two home runs and two doubles. It was his second game with that boxscore this year, making him only the fourth player ever to hit two doubles and two home runs twice in one season.

Twins starter Jake Odorizzi saw Lindor crush three different pitches of his — a four-seam fastball and splitter on the doubles and a slider on the home run.

"I tried doing something different the third at bat than I did the first two," Odorizzi said. "But it ended up being worse than the first two."

Staff writer La Velle E. Neal III contributed to this report.

**Twins have 20th pick in draft; Torii Hunter and Denard Span were taken at that spot**  
**Phil Miller | Star Tribune | June 2, 2018**

Some free advice for Derek Falvey: Take a center fielder.

The Twins have pick No. 20 in Monday's first round of the amateur draft, and it's the seventh time they'll choose from that spot. They've never chosen from another specific spot more than four times, so this is a weird habit.

It's a pretty successful one, though. No, they never took a pitcher who may make the Hall of Fame, like elite No. 20s Mike Mussina (1990 by Baltimore) or C.C. Sabathia (1998 by Cleveland). But if you rank (by career Wins Above Replacement) the 53 players chosen 20th since the draft began in 1965, the Twins have taken three of the top 10 (and traded for a fourth, Eric Milton). Trevor Plouffe, picked 20th in 2004, hit 96 homers in seven seasons with Minnesota. Eric Milton, chosen at 20 in 1996 by the Yankees but traded to the Twins as a minor leaguer in the Chuck Knoblauch trade, won 41 games in a three-year span with the Twins and made an All-Star team.

And the Twins hit the jackpot at No. 20 in 1993 and 2002, when they chose a couple of center fielders who manned the position for 17 seasons between them: Torii Hunter and Denard Span.

Sure, there have been misfires, too. Chris Parmelee, No. 20 in 2006, played parts of four seasons and had more strikeouts than hits, but at least he made the major leagues. The same can't be said for 20th-pick mistakes Bob Jones in 1966 or Johnny Ard in 1988.

Falvey, the Twins' chief baseball officer, won't say who the Twins will take 20th this year, mostly because he has no idea. "When you're picking past the top five picks, it's really hard to know," Falvey said. "My understanding of this year's draft is that it might be even harder to know, because it seems like there are a few guys up at the top that you feel pretty good about going early, but after that, it gets unclear who goes next."

The Twins' scouting staff has been in Minneapolis for a week, sharing evaluations, trying to divine the intentions of teams picking ahead of them, and ranking the prospects.

They've compiled their own mock drafts a couple of times already, "scenario planning," Falvey said, for reacting to what happens in the first 19 picks. "We'll say, assume the board goes this way — these five guys go off, these are the three players available to us," Falvey said. "Are we good what who we'll select there? Do we have the order right?"

There are plenty of opinions about that, of course, including several from outside experts who have compiled their own scouting reports. Baseball America, for instance, expects the Twins to select lefthanded pitcher Ryan Rolison of Mississippi, saying he "has been solid more than spectacular, but college lefties get taken high." The Twins know that's true — they chose lefty Tyler Jay from Illinois in 2015 with the sixth overall pick.

MLB.com's mock draft has Rolison taken eight picks before the Twins', and asserts that Minnesota will chose a righthander, Logan Gilbert of Stetson, noting that his velocity "is starting to tick back up."

ESPN.com's draft board agrees with the Rolison pick, saying he "came into the year as a top-10 possibility, and while his results haven't backed that up, his stuff has. A decent showing at the SEC Tournament [which Ole Miss won with Rolison pitching two hitless innings in the championship game] likely helped his stock."

Falvey said the Twins won't be picking based on what their current team needs, or what they feel is a weakness of their farm system. Give them the best player available, he said. "When we were picking No. 1 [last June], there was a lot of conversation [about] pitching vs. hitting. But those players' impact is so many years away, that planning for need, based on the amateur draft, can lead you down the wrong path," he said.

But the Twins will definitely use every tool they can to find the right player — including some fancy new hardware. The days of stenciling each player's name on a magnet and keeping them on a giant metal board are over.

"We've installed a big electronic board in there, with matched screens that allow for a video wall. It fits well for what we need," Falvey bragged. "A lot was made of the fact that the Vikings have one [at their new headquarters in Eagan]. Ours is bigger."

## Central Intelligence

Can you name the highest paid player on each AL Central team? Some may surprise you, and like Joe Mauer with the return of concussion symptoms, all have made news recently.

Indians: In the middle season of his three-year contract, which pays \$17 million this season and \$20 million next, the 35-year-old slugger has gone on a hot streak that coincides with his team's. Edwin Encarnacion batted .400, hit four home runs and racked up nine RBI during Cleveland's six-

game winning streak (through Thursday).

Royals: Kansas City chose to keep Alex Gordon, giving him a contract worth \$20 million this year and \$72 million total, rather than Lorenzo Cain or Eric Hosmer. Gordon responded by hitting .220 and .208 in the first two years of his big deal, but has somewhat rebounded in 2018. He's hitting .274 but has only eight extra-base hits.

Tigers: This one was easy. Miguel Cabrera is a two-time MVP and signed what was once baseball's biggest contract. Detroit will pay him \$30 each of the next four years, and \$32 for two more after that. Cabrera is hitting .323 with a .407 on-base, but he's also 35, has just three homers, and missed a month with a sore hamstring.

White Sox: James Shields has only one win and a 4.54 ERA in return for the \$16 million he earns in the final year of a \$75 million contract, but he improved in May, holding hitters to a .173 average and posting a 3.38 ERA. That gives Chicago hope it can find a trading partner interested in the free-agent-to-be.

### **Berrios does enough to get the win**

**Chris Hine | Star Tribune | June 1, 2018**

Following up the Twins' 7-4 victory over the Indians, a victory the Twins sorely needed

Berrios does enough: Jose Berrios stopped the recent run of woeful starting pitching and managed to get the win while compiling six innings with seven strikeouts and allowing four runs. Berrios threw 99 pitches – his third outing with that pitch count – with 69 strikes.

According to Statcast, he threw 28 curveballs and 63 fastballs. Berrios said he had what amounted to four “missed” pitches. One was a curveball he hung to Edwin Encarnacion, who clubbed a two-run home run to make it 6-4 in the sixth.

But Berrios was able to settle after the home run and get two more out to exit the inning before exiting the game.

“I had 100 pitches so (manager Paul Molitor) was taking me out after the sixth,” Berrios said. “But that's baseball. That's how many I throw in almost eight innings and they score two runs and we lose, but (Friday) they score four and we win. So that's what we want. We want to win, no matter what.”

Getting Lindor out: It may have seemed like an easy Twins victory, but there was a nervous moment in the seventh when Francisco Lindor came up as the tying run for the Indians. Greg Allen had just tripled off the wall in right-centerfield and Lindor, he of the two doubles and two home runs the night prior, sent a bit of fear through the Target Field crowd.

But reliever Tyler Hildenberger was able to induce a harmless ground out from Lindor. Edwin Encarnacion would give the Twins insurance with a home run in the bottom half of the inning.

Skol night: Friday was “Skol night” at Target Field ,with five Vikings, -- Kirk Cousins, Harrison Smith, Stefon Diggs, Adam Thielen and Everson Griffen -- taking batting practice before the game. The Twins accentuated every home run and strikeout with a Viking horn call and featured purple lighting in the upper deck.

### **Twins-Cleveland game recap**

**Staff Writer | Star Tribune | June 1, 2018**

#### **GAME RECAP**

#### **IMPACT PLAYER**

Eduardo Escobar, Twins

His three-run homer in the first inning gave the Twins an early cushion; his seventh-inning homer gave them some breathing room.

#### **BY THE NUMBERS**

10 Games it took for the Twins to get their first Target Field victory over the Indians last year. This year, it took them two.

#### **ON DECK**

Lance Lynn has won his past two starts, and his three victories have come against the Twins' other three AL Central opponents. He faces Trevor

Bauer.

### **Eduardo Escobar's two homers power Twins past Indians, 7-4**

**John Shipley | Pioneer Press | June 1, 2018**

Francisco Liriano was 4-7 with a 5.30 earned-run average, and an impending unrestricted free agent, when the Twins finally cut the cord on their former left-handed phenom and sent him to the Chicago White Sox at the 2012 trade deadline.

The return package was a small one, a utility infielder named Eduardo Escobar purported to be 5-foot-10. He's not, but he hasn't exactly been a utility infielder, either. Yes, he plays a good middle infield and third base, but he's become much more than a fill-in.

"He's proved his value around here," said Twins manager Paul Molitor, a roving instructor at the time of the trade who first saw Escobar as a member of the Triple-A Rochester Red Wings.

Liriano has been solid since leaving the Twins — 52-47 with a 3.87 ERA with Pittsburgh, Toronto, Houston and now Detroit — but the trade has been a good one for Minnesota, with whom Escobar has become a late-blooming, and unlikely, power hitter.

Escobar homered twice and drove in four runs on Friday as the Twins ended a three-game losing streak with a 7-4 victory over first-place Cleveland in front of a paid crowd of 30,171 on Friday night at Target Field.

His first-inning homer off Carlos Carrasco (6-4) gave the Twins a 3-0 lead; his second traveled 443 feet into the upper deck in right field for an important insurance run in the seventh — the longest homer of the season for any Twins player.

"The first one was timely," Molitor said. "The second one was impressive."

Jose Berrios (6-5) scattered five hits and fanned seven as the Twins pulled within 5.5 games of the Indians in the American League Central and evened an important four-game series 1-1.

In the teams' previous eight games, Cleveland was 6-2, the Twins 1-7 — despite scoring eight runs three times. Escobar is hitting .275 with three home runs and nine RBIs in his past seven games and now has a team-high 10 home runs and 30 RBIs, second on the Twins roster to only Eddie Rosario's 34.

"I'm just seeing the ball; it looks bigger than usual," Escobar said. "The team tells you to relax and see the ball well and make good contact, you know?"

In Escobar's first six major league seasons, he hit 27 home runs and drove in 151 runs in 490 games; since last season, he has 31 homers and 103 RBIs in 178 games. That's an impressive transformation for any hitter, but for one who stands about 5-8 and weighs 185 pounds, it's somewhat uncanny.

"There's just something about his bat-to-ball skills that are pretty impressive given the package that he's coming in," Molitor said. "That translates to some pretty amazing power."

Edwin Encarnacion hit his 14th home run with a man aboard in the sixth inning to pull the Indians within 6-4, but Berrios got the next two batters, Yonder Alonso and Melky Cabrera, to ground out to second to retain the Twins' lead. But Escobar answered with his mammoth blast in the seventh, and relievers Trevor Hildenberger, Zach Duke and Fernando Rodney each pitched a scoreless inning to nail down the victory.

Rodney earned his 12th save with a perfect ninth.

"I feel like the team's really coming around," said Ryan LaMarre, playing center in place of injured Byron Buxton (toe). LaMarre's fourth-inning double was his first major league extra-base hit and scored Robbie Grossman from first for a 5-2 lead. The Twins have scored 32 runs in their past five games (2-3).

"The offense is swinging better top to bottom, and our pitching's been there for a while now, so I feel like we're on the right track," LaMarre said.

### **Twins' Joe Mauer back to work after return of concussion symptoms**

**John Shipley | Pioneer Press | June 1, 2018**

Joe Mauer was back working at Target Field on Friday, a day after leaving a pregame workout with concussion symptoms.

Out since leaving midway through a May 18 game against the Milwaukee Brewers, Mauer took some infield practice and planned to hit during



batting practice before Friday night's game against the Cleveland Indians. It was his second day with the team since it returned from a six-game road trip through Seattle and Kansas City.

Mauer said Friday that he hoped to work without too much head movement, which he believes caused his symptoms to return after taking groundballs on Thursday, adding that he hoped to find "the threshold" between rehabbing and overdoing it.

Perhaps baseball's best catcher for the first nine years of his career, Mauer had to give up the position because of the concussion risk the position posed. A foul tip off the top of his catcher's helmet on Aug. 19, 2013, ended his season early, and he returned in 2014 as the Twins' everyday first baseman.

"We'll probably be a little bit smarter today," manager Paul Molitor said. "And it's one of those things where I understand people are wondering when Joe is going to play. In reality, given what he's dealing with, the timing is going to be what it is. When he's ready, Joe will be the first guy to get back out there."

Mauer was able to sit in the dugout for all of Thursday's 9-8 loss to the Indians, a positive step considering the noise of a home game. Sensitivity to noise and light are common concussion symptoms.

#### TEAM MEETING

On the heels of a 1-6 road trip, Molitor gathered his team at second base for a meeting before Thursday's game.

"I don't know how you'd categorize it, because there were some things I wanted to generally address. But I also wanted to get specific about one thing that was lacking," Molitor said. "A combination of teaching and maybe just checking in with where we're at kind of deal."

Molitor was named the American League manager of the year after the Twins earned the second AL wild card spot last season, and expectations were high for this season. But the Twins started Friday 6.5 games behind first-place Cleveland in the AL Central after losing seven of their previous eight games.

He called the decision to call a meeting "one of those feel things."

"Sometimes younger teams might need more, and sometimes just personality in the clubhouse and how I feel guys are running the ship in there amongst themselves," he said. "Sometimes that's not even a factor if I feel it's something that needs to be said. Most of my meetings over the last three years have been relatively positive. I try to find something to build on instead of tear down."

"When things get your attention enough, specifically, we talked about the way we've been losing games. To me, it's not always about getting walked off, it's about something that happened in the third inning we screwed up that would have given us a chance to score a run. So that was some of the things we talked about yesterday."

#### BRIEFLY

Vikings defensive end Everson Griffen threw the game's ceremonial first pitch to Miguel Sano.

#### **Zulgad: No more Mauer or Dozier? Twins infield could have very different look in 2019** **Judd Zulgad | ESPN 1500 | June 1, 2018**

If you haven't liked what the Twins have going in the infield so far this season, you will be happy to be know that those positions figure to have a very different look on Opening Day in 2019.

Expiring contracts and a prospect about ready to make the jump to the big leagues are the primary reasons for this.

Here's one guess about what Minnesota's infield might look like when next season gets underway.

First base

2018 Opening Day starter: Joe Mauer

Mauer has turned himself into a Gold Glove-caliber first baseman since moving from catcher, but he is in the final season of an eight-year, \$184 million contract that pays him \$23 million per season. Once one of the best hitters in baseball, Mauer got off to a solid start this year but again has been slowed by the concussion-like symptoms that caused him to be moved from catcher in 2014.

The most important thing for Mauer is to take care of himself and that could include a life outside of baseball. Mauer's health issues certainly will play a role in the Twins' decision-making process and if there was a temptation to sign the 35-year-old to a short-term contract extension that

could be impacted by this latest injury.

The Twins also have played veteran Logan Morrison at first base after he signed this spring. Morrison, who hit 38 home runs last year with Tampa Bay, has been a disappointment at the plate so far. He is playing under a one-year, \$6.5 million contract that has a vesting option that could make it a two-year, \$16.5 million deal. It would not be surprising if LoMo's stay in Minnesota is a short one.

Likely for 2019: Miguel Sano

Sano has played a few games at first base since returning from the disabled list last weekend in Seattle and it appears that a full-time move from third base is going to have to happen given Sano's size. Long-term he could end up as a designated hitter, but the guess here is the Twins would like to keep him in the field.

Sano isn't going to give you near the glove that Mauer does at first base, but he does have the potential to hit plenty of home runs. Unfortunately, Sano already has proven he's more than capable of striking out far too frequently.

Either Sano is eventually going to cut down on the strikeouts and also keep himself in better shape or there's a chance he's going to go down as a big-time bust. The Twins might make an effort to move him before that day comes, but, for now, the guess is he remains in a Twins uniform playing at first.

Second base

2018 Opening Day starter: Brian Dozier

It's fair obvious the Twins have other plans at second base.

Dozier is playing in the final season of a four-year, \$20 million contract that is paying him \$9 million this season. That makes him a bargain, considering he hit 42 and 34 home runs the past two years. Nonetheless, the Twins reportedly have not approached the 31-year-old about a contract extension and it appears unlikely they will do so.

Dozier likely will be traded by the Twins at the deadline, assuming Minnesota is out of the race, or he will be allowed to walk as a free agent this offseason.

Likely for 2019: Nick Gordon

Gordon is a shortstop but the Twins also used him at second base in spring training. The guess here is that's where he winds up long term.

Drafted fifth-overall by the Twins in 2014, Gordon recently was moved from Double-A Chattanooga to Triple-A Rochester and it seems likely he will be playing at Target Field before the 2018 season comes to an end.

Gordon, whose brother, Dee, plays for the Mariners, is hitting .282 in 11 games with the Red Wings after batting .333 with five home runs and 20 runs batted in in 42 games with Chattanooga.

Shortstop

2018 Opening Day starter: Eduardo Escobar

Acquired in the Francisco Liriano trade with the White Sox in 2012, Escobar has turned into a valuable utility player on the left side of the infield. He started on Opening Day at shortstop in place of the suspended Jorge Polanco but then shifted to third base when Sano suffered a hamstring injury.

Escobar is the type of player the Twins would like back, but it's going to depend on the cost. He will be a free agent after this season — he's playing on a one-year, \$4.85 million contract — and it's possible a team could come along offering more years and money than the Twins would be willing to pay the 29-year-old.

Likely for 2019: Jorge Polanco

Polanco would have been the Opening Day starter this season after making real progress in 2017. However, he's serving an 80-game suspension after testing positive for performance enhancing drugs. He will return on July 2 and figures to keep the job into next season.

Here's the catch.

Polanco, who hit .256/.313/.410 with 13 home runs, 74 RBIs and 13 stolen bases in 133 games last season, will only have the job until the Twins feel that Royce Lewis is ready to play in the big leagues. The top-overall pick in the 2017 draft by Minnesota, Lewis is hitting .312 with three home runs, 26 RBIs and 15 stolen bases at low Single-A Cedar Rapids. He should soon be moving to high Single-A Fort Myers.

Depending on how he progresses, Lewis, who will turn 19 on Tuesday, could find his way to Target Field at some point in 2019.

Third base

2018 Opening Day starter: Miguel Sano

As stated above, Sano is simply not a third baseman for the long term. Especially when all estimates put his weight at far closer to 300 pounds than the 260 he often has been listed at during his career.

Likely for 2019: Unknown

If Escobar returns to the Twins, this could be his spot to open the season. That certainly wouldn't be the worst thing. Escobar has pop in his bat as evidenced by the 21 home runs he hit in 2017 and the 10 he already has in 2018.

Ideally, Escobar could continue to back up both at shortstop and third, but being assured a regular job might be one reason Escobar is tempted to leave. If the Twins really want to keep him, they might tell Escobar the third base job is his to lose.

**Escobar hits pair of home runs in Twins' 7-4 win over Indians**  
**Associated Press | Fox Sports North | June 1, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS — Losing six of seven games had the Minnesota Twins searching for answers, with manager Paul Molitor addressing his team and second baseman Brian Dozier calling a meeting.

The two wanted to discuss the miscues that had plagued playoff-hopeful Minnesota this season. Eduardo Escobar and Jose Berrios then helped lift the Twins over the Cleveland Indians.

Escobar hit two homers and drove in four runs, Berrios pitched six effective innings and Minnesota pulled away for a 7-4 win Friday night.

"Everybody stay strong, that's the most important," Escobar said. "Play hard no matter what happens, it's the most important. Everybody working hard, so you see today everybody run hard, play hard."

Dozier opened the bottom of the first inning with a double off the right-field wall in a two-hit night. Escobar's three-run homer in the first started the scoring against Indians starter Carlos Carrasco (6-4).

Escobar added a solo shot, his 10th of the season, in the seventh as the Twins snapped a three-game losing streak. The 5-foot-10, 185-pound infielder has four multi-homer games in his career and two this season.

"I'm not a big guy," Escobar said. "I don't go to home plate and think about a home run. I concentrate, look at the ball, swing hard."

Edwin Encarnacion homered for Cleveland, which had its season-high six game-winning streak snapped.

Berrios (6-5) allowed four runs and five hits with seven strikeouts. Fernando Rodney secured his 12th save in 15 chances, which includes nine straight conversions.

"We're still trying to tighten up and watching some of the things that are maybe not as apparent to people just following the ball, things we need to do," Molitor said. "The guys were made aware of it and trying to take it to heart and apply it, and as long as it doesn't make them more nervous trying not to make a mistake."

Carrasco had his second-shortest outing of the season with 3 2/3 innings. Miguel Sano's RBI double chased Carrasco after the right-hander tied a season high with six runs on seven hits and three walks.

"He wasn't real crisp, kind of like the game in Milwaukee where he pitched himself into it," Indians manager Terry Francona said. "I thought they also went down and got a couple good pitches. Escobar went down to get a breaking ball a couple times. Really was a difference-maker for them, and it wasn't a bad pitch."

## NO RESPECT

Cleveland decided to walk Minnesota's Eddie Rosario intentionally twice to face Sano, who was hitting .226 with two home runs in 31 at-bats since being activated from the disabled list a week ago. Rosario entered the night hitting .308 with nine homers and a team-high 33 RBIs.

Carrasco reached a 2-0 count against Rosario in the fourth with a runner on third. Sano promptly lined a double to left to score one run after he struck out his first two times against Carrasco.

"I thought, 'I've got to get another strikeout,' but I threw the slider kind of inside-middle," Carrasco said. "He just got that pitch right there and hit a double and got another run right there. It is what it is. I should have thrown a better pitch inside of going inside-middle."

With another runner at third with two outs in the sixth, reliever Neil Ramirez gave Rosario the free pass before Sano flied out to right field.

## WATCH OUT

Carrasco was hit in the glove by a comebacker off the bat of Robbie Grossman in the fourth. Carrasco dropped to the ground quickly following Grossman's liner, but appeared to get his glove up in time to knock the ball down.

Logan Morrison had his bat snap on a foul ball in the fifth and the bat shard sailed directly behind him where Escobar just managed to dive out of the way.

## INDIANS MOVES

The Indians activated outfielder Bradley Zimmer from the disabled list before the game and optioned Thursday's starter, pitcher Shane Bieber, to Triple-A Columbus.

Zimmer, who wasn't in the lineup Friday, was on the DL since May 12 with a rib contusion. He's hit .224 this season with two home runs and nine RBIs in 32 games.

## TRAINER'S ROOM

Indians: OF Tyler Naquin (left hamstring strain) had a full workout at Double-A Akron on Friday and Francona said he'll likely be ready to play this weekend.

Twins: Molitor said the team is going to "be a little bit smarter today" about 1B Joe Mauer's workouts as he tries to recover from concussion symptoms. Mauer had trouble when working out before Thursday's game, but Molitor said he was able to stay at the park and for the entirety of the game. Mauer was also in the dugout on Friday.

## UP NEXT

Indians: RHP Trevor Bauer (4-3, 2.61) is scheduled to start Saturday's matinee. Bauer will be making the start on extended five days rest after throwing a career-high 127 pitches on May 27 against Houston.

Twins: RHP Lance Lynn (3-4, 5.94) counters for Minnesota. Lynn has won his last two starts while allowing two runs in 12 2/3 innings.

## **Preview: Twins vs. Indians**

**Associated Press | Fox Sports North | June 2, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS — Slowly but surely, the Cleveland Indians are returning to full strength.

Outfielder Bradley Zimmer came off the disabled list and returned to manager Terry Francona's lineup Friday night after missing the last two weeks with a left rib contusion.

Fellow outfielders Lonnie Chisenhall (right calf), Brandon Guyer (neck strain) and Tyler Naquin (left hamstring) have all made progress in their recoveries and could join him on the active roster soon, which will force Francona and the front office to make some difficult decisions.

"As we've seen, all kinds of stuff happens. So, if you try to get the perfect team and you let this guy go, you designate this guy, you do this, and then you look up a week from now and you go, 'Where's our outfielders?' So, you have to keep that in mind.

"Certainly, the goal is to win every game here, but I think you have to be mindful of the organization, like the health of the organization. And (the

front office leaders) are great about that. I think they've really helped me to understand probably maybe some of the bigger picture. Managers want the best team every day. That's the way it is."

Before the Indians get to that point, they have work to do against the Twins, who evened the four-game series between AL Central rivals with a victory Friday night that snapped Cleveland's six-game winning streak.

They've got a good shot at bouncing back Saturday with right-hander Trevor Bauer taking the mound.

Bauer struck out a season-high 13 in his last outing but took no decision after allowing four runs on five hits over 7 1/3 innings against the Astros, throwing a career-high 127 pitches in the process.

In 17 career appearances against the Twins, Bauer is 4-6 with a 4.85 ERA including a 3-1 mark and 3.71 ERA in four starts last season.

Minnesota goes for a series lead behind right-hander Lance Lynn, who's started to settle in after a rocky start to his Twins career.

He went 1-4 with a 7.47 ERA through his first eight starts with Minnesota but has held opponents to two earned runs over 12 2/3 innings in his last two starts, striking out nine with four walks.

The turnaround is just a starting point but is the result of extensive work with Twins pitching coach Garvin Alston.

"There's a combination of things that's going on," Alston said recently.

"His command, we talked about that and everybody knows about that. But also when he makes good pitches, balls are getting through. I can count of four or five different occasions where he made really good pitches and the balls just got through or the ball landed in front of the outfield. It's one of those things where it's the perfect storm for him right now and he's trying to turn it around."

Lynn struck out nine over six shutout innings in his lone start against Cleveland, back on May 12, 2015.

### **'5:30 clubhouse': Twins huddle in trust tree, then post one of season's best wins**

**Dan Hayes | The Athletic | June 2, 2018**

It isn't over the top, nor does it come with any animated displays of emotion. But Paul Molitor has internally continued to display a sense of urgency this week in hopes of preventing the Twins from a full-on collapse.

On Friday, for the second straight day, the Twins manager pulled his position players together to take the temperature of the room and to address several concerns, particularly on the bases. Brian Dozier also gathered the team after batting practice on Friday night, a day after Molitor met the same group on the field ahead of BP. While it wasn't picture-perfect, the Twins responded with their best victory in weeks, a 7-4 win over the Cleveland Indians at Target Field. Eduardo Escobar homered twice and drove in four runs, José Berríos and the bullpen pitched efficiently and the Twins defense made several nice plays in a complete victory.

"We're still trying to tighten up," Molitor said. "The guys were made aware of it and trying to take it to heart and apply it. And as long as it doesn't make them more nervous trying not to make a mistake, there's got to be a little bit of freedom of being able to express yourself out there depending on what skills you can bring to the field. Good baseball isn't going to always translate into wins. It's kind of how you go about it from the first pitch to the end."

The Twins were in need of a swift kick to their backsides.

Even though they're undermanned, they've managed to play in 15 one-run games this season. But a lack of attention to detail in minor situations — a poor decision on the bases or not properly backing up a play, etc. — has hurt the Twins time and again and winds up costing them. The club's three wins in one-run games (they're 3-12) is tied for the fewest in the majors.

The idea has been to emphasize how important those minor details are at a critical point in the season. Prior to Friday's victory, the Twins had lost three straight games in particularly cruel fashion, including a pair of comeback efforts that came up short, and a walk-off loss in 14 innings on Tuesday.

But Molitor and first baseman Logan Morrison said the focus has been more on details than underperformance. Recently, much of their poor play has been on the bases, where the Twins have given away too many outs for their comfort of late.

While the team's 15 outs on the bases is below the major-league average of 17, according to baseball-reference.com, the Twins have had seven runners picked off, which leads the American League and is tied for second-most in baseball behind the Washington Nationals (eight).

“We’ve made some mistakes on the bases in one-run games that have cost us,” Morrison said. “I’ve gotten picked off. ... Be aggressive until the balls tells us not to.

“There’s no panic, but just the sense it’s time to start winning some games.”

The tone of Molitor’s sessions is said to have been positive, but stern. The fourth-year manager understands his team has endured a lot this season, agreeing earlier this week that a series of injuries and Jorge Polanco’s 80-game suspension has been “more than most.” A firm believer in looking ahead and discarding the previous day’s result, Molitor has remained upbeat. One team member said Molitor always remains true to the game and is a constant motivator in the dugout.

But last year’s American League Manager of the Year also wants to stress that it’s time for the Twins to get it together.

“There were some things I wanted to generally address, but I also wanted to get specific about one thing that was lacking,” Molitor said before Friday’s win. “A combination of teaching and maybe just checking in with where we’re at.

“Most of my meetings over the last three years have been relatively positive. I try to find something to build on instead of tear down. When things get your attention enough, specifically, we talked about the way we’ve been losing games. To me, it’s not always about getting walked off, it’s about something that happened in the third inning we screwed up that gave us a chance to score a run.”

But the Twins also don’t want to hammer their players with the message so much that they’re afraid to make a mistake. The idea is to play free and easy and let your talent take over as opposed to tight, conservative and scared to screw up.

Left fielder Eddie Rosario demonstrated what Molitor meant in the fifth inning on Friday as he ran down a Greg Allen drive deep in the left-center field gap and held on for a juggling catch that brought a tip of the cap from Berríos, who pitched six solid innings.

Dozier said the Twins are “in the middle of the pack” when it comes to playing loose versus tight.

“When things aren’t going as planned as far as production, it’s very easy to revert back to pressing a lot rather than knowing the game is very difficult,” Dozier said. “When stuff gets magnified, like it kind of is right now, it’s my job and especially a few other guys in that clubhouse to kind of reassure the guys that this game is very difficult.”

Dozier said Molitor is good at picking spots of when to hold meetings. He’s the opposite of a micromanager, which is a good thing in baseball as constantly holding meetings is often frowned upon by players who believe they should be managing themselves.

When asked about Molitor’s Thursday meeting, Dozier wanted to first confirm that the manager had addressed the topic before speaking on it himself. Dozier noted that he thinks the term “meetings” can have a negative connotation. He believes it so much, Dozier wrote “5:30 clubhouse” on the dry erase board in the hallway instead of 5:30 meeting.

“You don’t want to over-meet so to speak,” Dozier said. “This has nothing to do with performance. It’s the little things behind the scenes that need to be cleaned up a little bit.

“We just want to make sure we clean up the little things ... that go unnoticed that could be inches away from winning the game. You always need reassurance and need a voice to say these things. It’s good.”

Escobar, who put the Twins ahead with a three-run, first-inning homer and added insurance with a 443-foot shot in the seventh, has liked the message he’s heard the past two days.

“Everybody stay strong, play hard no matter what happens, that’s what’s most important,” Escobar said. “That was the message. So, you saw today, everybody ran hard, played hard. That’s what’s most important.”

The effort wasn’t totally perfect. Allen tripled off the fence with two outs in the seventh inning, a ball that bounded away because center fielder Ryan LaMarre was too close to the wall to properly back up Max Kepler. Robbie Grossman also was overly aggressive on a Dozier single in the second inning as he slipped after a hard turn at second base and just made it back to the bag.

But the little things didn’t cost the Twins on Friday, and that’s a starting point.

“I don’t think we’re far away,” Morrison said. “But we’ve got to put it all together and we’ve got to put it all together for a stretch. We have the guys on the team to do it. We have the talent. It’s just being able to execute it.”