



**Minnesota Twins Daily Clips**  
**Thursday, May 10, 2018**

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**Inbox: Can Buxton get rolling upon DL return?**

**Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | May 9, 2018**

ANAHEIM -- After losing 12 out of 14 games, the Twins have bounced back to win five straight, and they enter Wednesday only a half-game back of the Indians in the American League Central.

The Twins will face a tough test this weekend with a four-game series against the Angels that begins Thursday, but they could get some help with Byron Buxton possibly returning from the 10-day disabled list for the series opener.

It's been a roller coaster of a season for Minnesota through 32 games, which brings plenty of questions for this week's Twins Inbox.

Rhett Bollinger  
@RhettBollinger

Looking to do an #MNTwins Inbox, so if you have any questions, send them my way.

Travis Aune  
@TravisAune  
will buxton have struggles with his timing coming off the DL?

The Twins have clearly missed Buxton, who hasn't played since April 12, as he was originally placed on the DL with migraines suffered in Puerto Rico after their previous three games were snowed out. In a stroke of bad luck, he suffered a hairline fracture to his left big toe in his lone rehab game with Class A Advanced Fort Myers on April 23.

Despite the long layoff, it appears Buxton will avoid a rehab assignment, as he means so much to Minnesota -- especially defensively -- and the club wants him back as soon as possible. But it is fair to wonder how he'll fare offensively with the long layoff, although he's been tracking pitches in the cages throughout his rehab and has been taking batting practice for the past week or so.

Buxton was hitting .195/.233/.244 in 11 games before going on the DL, and it might take some time to readjust to seeing Major League pitching. But there's no doubt his defense makes a huge difference for the Twins, and it's hard to fault them for wanting to get him in there once he's healthy enough to play.

Justin Behrend  
@oblongofficer1

Why was Fernando Romero not on the opening day roster/called up earlier? He had a great spring, great year in Chattanooga last year. Was it the team control like you see with top prospects or was Phil Hughes really a better option?

Fernando Romero has seemed to provide a spark for the Twins since getting called up, as he's been lights out, throwing 11 2/3 scoreless innings with 14 strikeouts in wins over the Blue Jays and Cardinals. The last starting pitcher to open with that many scoreless innings and punchouts through two career starts was Kaz Ishii with the Dodgers in 2002, according to Jayson Stark.

It's been an incredible start for Romero, who is ranked as Minnesota's No. 2 prospect and No. 65 overall prospect by MLB Pipeline. As for why he wasn't called up sooner, he has had to continue to improve his command -- he has walked six in two starts -- and he hadn't reached Triple-A Rochester before this season. The decision had nothing to do with service time, as Romero also walked 10 in 21 innings with Rochester in 2018. But it's clear he has the stuff to be a front-line starter and if he can keep it up, he'll be a huge boost to the rotation.

MrKrisko  
@Professorkrisko  
What's the hold up with Gonsalves & when do you expect his call up?#MNTwins #InItToWinIt

Lefty Stephen Gonsalves, the club's No. 3 prospect behind Romero, has also been impressive this year in the Minors, going 5-0 with a 1.30 ERA and 39 strikeouts in 34 2/3 innings between Double-A and Triple-A. Gonsalves appears big league ready, but the issue right now is there isn't an opening in the Twins' rotation. But he adds depth for Minnesota, who loves his upside as a lefty who can generate strikeouts with his plus-changeup and strong command.

Christian Delzer  
@cdelzer  
When Santana and May return, which pitchers are in trouble; Lynn, Hughes, or someone else? Crazy to think #MNTwins have this kind of pitching depth.

The Twins have more help on the way, as right-handers Ervin Santana and Trevor May should both be ready to return by the first week of June. Santana is coming back from surgery in February to remove calcium deposits from his right middle finger, and his return date won't be affected by his placement on the 60-day disabled list this week.

The big question is who Santana will replace in the rotation, but that decision is still far away. Right-hander Lance Lynn is the one who's scuffled the most, but he still has time to get back on track.

May, who is coming back from Tommy John surgery he underwent in March 2017, is continuing to get stretched out as a starter, but there might not be room for him in the rotation. The Twins could keep him at Triple-A for depth or decide to move him into relief to help the bullpen. Either way, it'll be another welcome addition for Minnesota, which is starting to get its pitching in order after a rough stretch.

Joe Cephecha  
@JoeCepps  
Will Nicolas Cage and Eduardo Escobar be starring in a movie anytime soon?

Thanks in advance.

Since meeting Nicolas Cage in Puerto Rico on April 18, Eduardo Escobar is hitting .338/.407/.701 with six homers, 10 doubles and 13 RBIs in 19 games.

Dustin Morse  
@morsecode  
Our guy @escobarmaracay hanging out with Nick Cage here in San Juan...

The chance meeting has revitalized Escobar's season, so if Cage wants a similar boost to his great acting career, it might be worth teaming up with the shortstop.

### **Wednesday's top prospect performers** **William Boor | MLB.com | May 10, 2018**

• No. 79 overall prospect Nick Gordon (Twins' No. 4) hit his third homer of the season -- and his first since April 18 -- in Double-A Chattanooga's

win over Jackson. Gordon, who also doubled twice and finished 3-for-4, is hitting .339 through 31 games in his second go-around with the Lookouts.

## **Many Twins players embrace extra-innings rules changes, but not what's happening in the minors**

**Phil Miller | Star Tribune | May 10, 2018**

Tyler Duffey had a pretty quiet inning last month in Gwinnett County, Ga. Called upon to relieve, Duffey struck out the first two hitters he faced, got a hard ground ball that sneaked through the hole at short for a single and ended the inning on a tapper to the first baseman. “About as smooth an inning as you could ask for from a pitcher,” Duffey said. “But I gave up a run.”

Yes, Duffey was pitching the 14th inning of a Rochester 7-6 victory over the Stripers, and it was being played under the new rules being used at all levels of the minors: Each inning beyond nine begins with a runner standing on second base; in Duffey’s case, Gwinnett shortstop Sean Kazmar Jr., who made the final out of the 13th, sprinted home to score on the only hit of the inning.

“Doesn’t seem fair,” said Duffey, the Twins righthander who is currently back at Class AAA. “Doesn’t seem like baseball.”

That’s a common complaint as minor league baseball implements the experimental rules, designed to address what some consider a scourge and others view as a blessing: extra innings.

Ballparks empty and viewers tune out when games drag into the night. Baseball’s great quality is that there is no clock on the game — but that doesn’t always feel like a benefit when the Twins and Indians play 5 hours, 13 minutes to decide a 2-1 game, as they did in San Juan, Puerto Rico, last month. “I know fans get tired. It’s funny, to us on the field, the game is actually more exciting when it can end at any moment,” Duffey said. “But you can tell fans don’t always feel it. Or just don’t want to watch a game that long.”

Broadcast partners can grow antsy, too, knowing that unlike football or basketball, their audience shrinks, not expands, when a game goes longer than expected. “For us in the booth, extra innings are a lot of fun. Things get a little zany, really informal,” said Jessica Mendoza, an ESPN analyst on “Sunday Night Baseball” who was on the air for nearly five hours last Sunday because of a couple of rain delays and a 14-inning game between the Cubs and Cardinals. “But I know that the programming [department] would prefer nine-inning games.”

Many Twins embrace Tyler Duffey’s take on teams starting extra innings with a runner on second: “Doesn’t seem like baseball.” But it is in the

Even Paul Molitor, whose team played the Cardinals the next night, felt his attention wane. “I stayed with it for a while,” Molitor said. “What time did it end, anyway?”

It’s an issue that other sports have tackled in years past, some of them by altering the playing style of their games. Until 1996, college football leagues traditionally declared a tie rather than play overtime; when fan discontent grew too big to ignore, the sport implemented a sudden-death rule that turns a game of field possession into showdown of short drives.

Hockey faced a dilemma more akin to baseball, given that scoring can dry up for long stretches, and most fans grow weary, not absorbed, as extra periods drag on, at least during the regular season. The NHL added an overtime period in 1983, and changed it to a 4-on-4 matchup in 1999. When that didn’t eliminate ties, the league adopted a penalty-shot shootout to decide games, much to the horror of traditionalists, in 2005.

Major League Baseball would probably face even more withering criticism if it attempted to limit extra innings — as professional leagues in Japan and South Korea do by declaring games a tie after 12 innings — or artificially trigger more offense, as with the minor league rule. “Certainly the purists are not going to be favorable to making adjustments to create situations to score,” said Molitor, who considers himself one of those purists. Extra innings have “been a part of the game for a long time. As much as it hurts you at times, I would be opposed.”

Even Commissioner Rob Manfred, who supports examining a variety of methods to make the game more appealing to casual fans, said of the man-on-second rule, “I don’t see it as a rule we’re going to bring to Major League Baseball.”

But some players are more open-minded about considering extra-inning alterations, for a variety of minor reasons — and one big one.

“The one thing I don’t like about extra innings at this level,” said Twins reliever Zach Duke, “is that it seems like when we have a long one, someone always loses their job.”

That’s because as baseball has evolved in the analytics age, relievers are used for shorter stints and rarely more than two days at a time. When bullpens have to cover several more innings than expected, teams summon help from the minor leagues and option someone out. David Hale, for instance, was claimed off waivers by the Twins on April 26, then pitched three innings in his debut on April 27 — and, because the bullpen was overworked and needed another fresh arm, was immediately designated for assignment.

“The carry-over is just so significant” for bullpens, agreed Molitor, whose roster briefly carried 14 pitchers in the wake of a 16-inning loss at Washington in 2016, sending down Byron Buxton to do it. “It’s tough to absorb extra innings when you’re trying to keep your pen fresh.”

“That’s the toughest part of it, especially at the big leagues,” Duffey said. “When you have a long game, something has to give, rosterwise, and you can feel it.”

Twins players don’t believe the man-on-second rule is an answer, though. The rule is also used in international play and in the World Baseball Classic, and it makes sense at a minor league level, where the goal is development and overworking pitchers is counterproductive. Though as Matt Magill points out, it helps a reliever learn how to enter a game with runners on base and pressure at its highest.

“I understand what they’re trying to do because of the way games are getting. Extra innings get long and the bullpen takes the brunt of it,” righthander Lance Lynn said. “I don’t know what the answer is, but this ain’t it. Bunt, fly ball, that’s a run? You’ve got to earn runs, that’s what this game is about.”

Other players made other suggestions, some crazier than others. Designate a 26th roster spot for an emergency-use pitcher, perhaps only for extra innings, one said, though the logistics of keeping that pitcher’s arm strong may be a problem. Take one defender off the field each inning. Start each batter with a 1-1 count. Stage a home-run derby, ala hockey.

“I’m all for trying to find better ways to enhance the game, make it better, make it more appealing, more fun,” Brian Dozier said. “The players are open-minded, we really are, about making changes. Just don’t hurt the integrity of the game.”

Otherwise? “Let’s just go play slow-pitch softball, I guess,” Lynn growled.

**Back in the neighborhood: Return to WCCO a treat for Twins Territory**  
**Dennis Brackin | Star Tribune | May 10, 2018**

Listening to Twins games on 50,000-watt WCCO-AM radio around the campfire in northern Minnesota is among Tim Pelton’s favorite childhood memories. Pelton’s memories of listening to Twins games in recent years are a little less favorable: He commutes regularly between his Owatonna home and Mankato, a relatively short trek that the last couple of years required him to switch stations to hear games during his drive.

So Pelton was among the many Minnesotans who were happy — and for many, a little nostalgic — when the Twins this season returned to WCCO and its strong signal after an 11-year sojourn that took the club’s broadcasts first to KSTP-AM and then the past five years to KQGO-FM (GO 96.3), owned by the Pohlada family, which also owns the Twins.

“With WCCO carrying the games again, I can listen to one station the whole time,” said Pelton, 58, adding he has finally ditched “the pocket schedules” he carried in his car to seek out local stations broadcasting the games. There are now family camping trips with his wife and children, campfires and Twins games on WCCO.

The return to WCCO feels like coming home to fans of Pelton’s generation. WCCO was the first radio home of the Twins when the franchise moved from Washington, D.C., before the 1961 season. Clark Griffith — son of the late Calvin Griffith, the owner who made the decision to move to Minnesota from the nation’s capital — said the reputation and commitment of WCCO and major advertiser Hamm’s Beer were “very important in the decision” to relocate in the Upper Midwest.

The relationship with WCCO, he said, “was enormous, because they were so dominant in the market, and they also had a great signal” that brought Twins games to at least 13 states and parts of Canada. WCCO, he said, helped the Twins establish a claim to being the major league team of the Upper Midwest.

‘The Good Neighbor’

The signal helped build a strong bond between the team and its fans, Twins officials say. Jim Kaat, a star pitcher for the Twins during the 1960s, remembers winter caravans around the Upper Midwest that highlighted the power of the radio station.

“Even if you were out in Pella, Iowa, you would be able to pick up WCCO radio and find out what was going on in the world,” Kaat said.

For whatever the reason, WCCO really seemed like “The Good Neighbor,” as it billed itself. Maybe it was the quality of the baseball announcers, men such as Bob Wolff, Ray Scott, Herb Carneal and of course Halsey Hall, a character of legendary proportions who once flicked cigar ashes into a press box wastebasket during a broadcast and had flames jumping skyward.

Kaat said The Good Neighbor slogan had more than a ring of truth to it. On Opening Day 1965, Kaat — scheduled to be the starting pitcher —

was stranded across the flooded Minnesota River from Metropolitan Stadium with three other teammates who lived in Burnsville. Kaat made a couple of calls to try to reach former teammate Paul Giel, then the WCCO sports director. Giel quickly dispatched the WCCO helicopter to pick up the four players in time for the day's game, in which Kaat went nine innings in a 5-4, 11-inning victory over the Yankees.

"The thing we turned to for everything ... was WCCO," Kaat said.

The radio station was responsible for developing more than a few baseball fans. Carol Meyer, who retired this year as an Eden Prairie elementary school principal, was raised on a farm in Pierz, Minn., with her four siblings. To this day, she says, everyone in her family remains loyal Twins fans, which she traces to their childhood days listening to WCCO.

"Really, the only media we had was WCCO and the Twins — that's how we developed our love for the Twins," she said. "Everywhere we went, the radio was part of our day. If we were working on the farm, we took our radio with us. If we were in the buildings, we had the radio on.

"If someone asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up — I would say I wanted to run the Twins organization."

Twins President Dave St. Peter said it's become clear in hindsight that many fans view the Twins and WCCO "as a sacred partnership, one that in some ways defines summertime in Minnesota."

Moving around the dial

But that warm, fuzzy relationship was jolted when the Twins opted to leave The Good Neighbor for KSTP before the 2007 season, a move that predictably stunned many longtime fans raised on the guttural musings of Hall. But Twins officials wanted a new approach — a chance to take the complete broadcasts, from production to advertising sales to personnel decisions in-house. Lindsey Peterson, WCCO program director the past 17 years, said that business model in 2007 "did not fit" network parent CBS' vision.

Twins officials say CBS seemed intent on downplaying sports broadcasting. And so the Twins shopped for a new radio home, landing first on KSTP for six seasons and then KQGO. KSTP lacked WCCO's signal strength, a shortcoming that became even more glaring with the move to KQGO. The latter had been a novel experiment, moving to an alternative rock FM music station that catered to young adults. The hope of the station and the Twins was that the move would help attract young fans to baseball broadcasts, and baseball fans to the music. Suffice to say it didn't work.

"To be honest, GO didn't want the Twins on the station anymore," Twins owner Jim Pohlad said. "[Baseball] confused their message, being a music station. ... They were trying to establish a format, and it becomes disruptive."

That led the Twins back to WCCO, which in 2017 was bought by Entercom Communication, whose top officials had a long-range view of the importance of sports broadcasts that appealed to the Twins. The Twins moved back with full control of game coverage, without paying for any airtime, St. Peter said.

What does the station net?

"The most important thing is bringing back people who maybe stopped listening to us when the Twins left," Peterson said.

Clark Griffith said he could have told anyone willing to listen what was going to happen when the Twins left 'CCO in 2007. Griffith said he was at the time "very eager to get competition going in the radio marketplace," and considered KSTP or buying an FM station.

"I did a lot of work trying to find an alternative, and found out something very strange — 830, being on the lower end of the analog band, had a very broad signal that carried very far."

Not so for KSTP, he said, or for most FM stations.

"Inevitably in my mind, it's physics of the radio game" that kept the Twins on WCCO during the Griffith reign, Clark said. "It's kind of funny to me the Twins went through the very same sequence."

'Where baseball should be'

Kent Hrbek, who was raised in Bloomington as a die-hard Twins fan long before the first baseman helped the franchise win World Series titles in 1987 and 1991, said the station's strength is such that his uncle in Denver could sit in his car and listen to Twins games on WCCO during Hrbek's career.

“When [the Twins] left WCCO, a lot of people had their transistor radios sitting on the fridge and kitchen counters and didn’t know how to change the channels because they just left it on WCCO,” Hrbek said. “That’s how you found the Twins.”

The Twins departure ultimately forced baseball fans to learn how to navigate the radio dial.

Meyer said when she drove to Pierz to visit her relatives in recent years, she had to switch her dial three times to listen to the Twins.

Scott Johnson of Aitkin, Minn., is another who travels for work. He said he grew weary of searching the dial to find the Twins, so the return to WCCO “does matter to me.” It matters, too, even on games he attends at Target Field, because part of the entertainment was once listening to the postgame on WCCO. That was barely possible the past few years, he said, because “you’d lose [the signal] just a ways out of town.”

Many fans — probably more than WCCO or Twins officials could have imagined — have always linked the team and station. Peterson said that for the 11 years the Twins were on other stations, he received at least “daily phone calls” asking why the Twins were no longer on WCCO.

“It was the only station my mom and dad listened to in the car,” Hrbek said. “To me, it’s where baseball should be.”

For Meyer, the move back comes with some emotion, as well as the benefits of a strong signal.

“Part of it is nostalgia,” she said. “Part of my roots are that the Twins and WCCO are together. They’re back where they belong again.”

### **Twins free agents needed extra time to hit their stride**

**Sid Hartman | Star Tribune | May 10, 2018**

For Twins Chief Baseball Officer Derek Falvey, the first 32 games of the season have been a bit of a waiting game when it comes to production from some of his biggest free-agent signings.

First baseman/designated hitter Logan Morrison is hitting only .183, the third-worst average on the team among position players.

Starter Lance Lynn has a 7.28 ERA, the second worst on the team, trailing only outfielder Ryan LaMarre.

Closer Fernando Rodney has only three more saves (five) than losses (two) while posting a 3.86 ERA.

There have been some positives. Starter Jake Odorizzi is 3-2 and has posted a 3.83 ERA. Zach Duke and Addison Reed have been as advertised out of the bullpen, with Duke averaging 13.89 strikeouts per nine innings and Reed averaging 9.68.

And yet, while it was especially difficult waiting for those players to produce when the Twins were losing 12 of 14 games from late April to early May, it appears things might be turning around.

Odorizzi won his third game of the season Tuesday when the Twins drubbed St. Louis 7-1, their fifth consecutive victory and sixth in seven games. Morrison hit leadoff, recorded an RBI single and has a hit in eight of his past 10 games, including two homers.

Lynn had his best start of the season Saturday against the White Sox, striking out seven and allowing two runs over six innings.

At 15-17, the Twins are one game out of first place in the American League Central and have one fewer loss than the first-place Cleveland Indians.

### **Established players**

Falvey said when you consider the early-season struggles of some of his free-agent pickups, you have to trust their history of performance.

“When you have guys who are established like Lance and Jake and guys that have been around awhile, you give them a little bit more leeway because they are working through some things,” Falvey said. “I think in Lance’s case, the late start into spring training kind of had him a little behind schedule. He’d be the last guy to make an excuse, but I think what we try and do is assess the process.”

“Look at the pitches, look at where he’s going, make sure the delivery is in the right spot, make sure we know the plan is in place. We don’t rest. We don’t wait. We certainly work with a player, but we don’t want to panic, either.”

When it comes to veteran hitters such as Morrison, who is hitting .267 over his past 17 games after hitting .081 through his first 12, and Robbie Grossman, who has hit .316 in the past 11 games after starting the season only 4-for-37 (.108), Falvey viewed them with the same patience.

“I think you’re seeing from Logan what you saw from Lance — got a little bit of a late start in spring training, changing a role a little bit going to the DH,” Falvey said. “I think the first few weeks you really saw Logan trying to make an impression here and show that he can be an impact bat. Sometimes people put too much pressure on themselves. I think that over the last maybe 50 plate appearances, you’re seeing a comfort level and seeing him be who he has been. That is all we’ll ask of him.”

Falvey said everyone around the club thinks Rodney will continue to improve. After Rodney posted a 6.75 ERA through his first eight games, he has had five scoreless appearances with three saves.

“Fernando has thrown the ball really well,” Falvey said. “One of the things we talked a little bit about is his history. He gets off to some slower starts but pitches well through the course of the year. I think he has thrown the ball well. We trust him. Paul [Molitor] trusts him. I’m excited about the back end of our bullpen as we move forward.”

Ready to return?

The word around the Twins is that center fielder Byron Buxton could be activated Thursday after missing 20 games. The continued absence of Buxton, third baseman Miguel Sano, starter Ervin Santana, shortstop Jorge Polanco and now catcher Jason Castro has surely had an impact on the Twins’ slower start.

“It has been a tough stretch, and last year one of the things that helped us early is we stayed healthy — particularly on the position player front — for quite some time,” Falvey said. “This year it hasn’t quite worked out that way.”

Falvey said Buxton continues to progress and it’s just a question of improving his side-to-side movement.

Castro’s diagnosis of a meniscus tear in his right knee is not as bad as it sounds, and Falvey said Castro could be back after 10 days and a cortisone shot.

The team moved Santana to the 60-day disabled list, but Falvey said he expects Santana to return in either late May or early June.

And Sano?

“Sano continues to progress from his hamstring injury,” he said. “We’re hopeful as we keep getting through this road trip that he’s here doing his work in Minnesota and he’s going to get himself to a good place.”

Juggling the staff

The Twins used a franchise-record 36 pitchers over the course of last season, and this year they have already used 20. Falvey said that’s going to become more routine throughout baseball as travel gets easier for minor leaguers to go up and down.

“You’re looking for advantages over the course of 162 games, and you can’t take any one game for granted,” Falvey said. “When you have the ability to go get a fresh arm in the bullpen to help with more options over a tough stretch, you go and do it. We have great resources with making sure we are able to do that now, and it’s something I know we’ll tap into moving forward.”

Yes, it was a rocky start for the Twins this season, but with a chance to have Buxton, Sano and Santana back by the end of this month, there’s no doubt things are looking up for Falvey and the team.

Jottings

- A lot of attention went to Joe Mauer collecting his 2,000th career hit earlier this season, but it’s amazing to note former Twins catcher A.J. Pierzynski recorded 2,043 hits in his career, still 27 ahead of Mauer. Of course, Mauer’s career batting average is .308 compared to Pierzynski at .280.
- Three Minnesota kids are ranked in the top 150 of the 2019 basketball class, according to Rivals.com. Forward Matthew Hurt of Rochester John Marshall is No. 5, Hopkins forward Zeke Nnaji is No. 45 and DeLaSalle guard Tyrell Terry is No. 114. The Gophers also recently offered a scholarship to Lakeville North guard Tyler Wahl in that same class.
- While the Vikings continue efforts to build offensive line depth, maybe the most important roster battle will be to see if 2016 first-round draft pick Laquon Treadwell can crack into the top three receivers spots with Stefon Diggs and Adam Thielen, or if newly signed Kendall Wright will take that slot position.

**Twins-L.A. Angels series preview**  
**Phil Miller | Star Tribune | May 9, 2018**

**FOUR-GAME SERIES AT ANGEL STADIUM**

Thursday, 9:07 p.m. • Fox Sports 1, 830-AM

RHP Jose Berrios (3-3, 3.98) vs. RHP Garrett Richards (4-1, 3.93)

Friday, 9:07 p.m. • FSN, 830-AM

RHP Lance Lynn (1-3, 7.28) vs. LHP Tyler Skaggs (3-3, 3.08)

Saturday, 8:07 p.m. • FSN, 830-AM

RHP Kyle Gibson (1-1, 3.49) vs. TBA

Sunday, 3:07 p.m. • FSN, 830-AM

RHP Fernando Romero (2-0, 0.00) vs. RHP Shohei Ohtani (3-1, 4.10)

**Twins update**

They have won five games in a row and are one game behind Cleveland for the AL Central lead. ... They won the season series in 2016 and 2017, and took three of four in Anaheim last year. ... They are 8-10 on the road, 5-1 on their current trip. ... They are 3-2 against the AL West. ... Romero is the seventh pitcher in MLB history to pitch at least five shutout innings with five or more strikeouts in each of his first two big-league starts. But a batter has reached base in 11 of the 12 innings he has started. ... Each team has a catcher who played on the other team: Bobby Wilson, an Angel from 2008-12, now backs up Mitch Garver, while Rene Rivera, a Twin in 2011, backs up Martin Maldonado.

**Angels update**

They are 6-2 in May, having just completed a 3-2 road trip to Seattle and Colorado, and are a half-game behind Houston for first place in the AL West. ... They are 8-10 at home, 5-1 against AL Central teams. ... CF Mike Trout leads the AL in on-base percentage (.453) and walks (29) and is second in slugging percentage (.703) and home runs (12). He has stolen seven bases, fourth most in the AL. The two-time MVP is batting .310 with five home runs in 32 games against the Twins. ... Rookie Shohei Ohtani serves as a DH roughly four times a week and is batting .333 with four home runs. As a pitcher, he has three quality starts among his five appearances.

**'Pretty crazy, huh?' Jaime Garcia looks back at his six days with Twins**  
**Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | May 9, 2018**

Jaime Garcia has no hard feelings toward the Twins, even if they did turn him into the answer to a trivia question in a span of six days last July.

To prove it, the veteran left-hander nearly signed back with them as a free agent this offseason.

This was before the Twins acquired Jake Odorizzi via trade four days into spring training and later signed Lance Lynn, Garcia's former teammate with the St. Louis Cardinals, as a free agent 17 days before Opening Day. Garcia eventually signed a one-year, \$10 million deal that includes a club option with the Toronto Blue Jays on Feb. 15, two days before the Odorizzi deal was finalized with the Tampa Bay Rays.

So, what about the Twins?

"There were some talks," Garcia, 31, said during a recent visit to Target Field.

Did the Twins show serious interest, as the Pioneer Press reported in early February?

"Yeah," Garcia said.

Did a deal come close to happening?

"Yeah," he said, a thin smile broadening.



How crazy would that have been? One wonders what the Twins' sale pitch was after they flipped Garcia to the New York Yankees last July 30, six days after acquiring him from the Atlanta Braves.

"They didn't have to do that, man," said Garcia, who has a 6.00 earned-run average through six starts with the Blue Jays. "I like it here (in the Twin Cities). I told my agent (Mike Moyer) if they had interest I'd be willing to listen. It was definitely a priority of mine. They treated me so nice. I like the guys over there."

He paused and smiled again at the sheer insanity of his Twins experience.

"Obviously I can't say much about the city because I wasn't here," he said. "Even though I was there for a little bit, I was very impressed with the guys, the veterans and the younger guys, how they carried themselves. All I can say is I'm very thankful to the Twins organization for the little time that I was there."

#### RUMORS SWIRL

You probably remember some of the broad strokes of the Twins' brief interlude with Garcia.

First, they reportedly were closing in on a deal that would have brought him north for hard-throwing reliever Nick Burdi, then just two months removed from Tommy John surgery. When the Braves were alarmed by something in Burdi's medical report, the deal fell through and the teams went back to their neutral corners.

In the meantime, with all those rumors swirling, Garcia took the mound at Dodger Stadium on July 21 and won his 18th and final start with the Braves. He worked seven strong innings to beat the pennant-bound Los Angeles Dodgers and then found himself right back in the visiting clubhouse on July 25 after the Twins and Braves hammered out a modified deal a day earlier.

Triple-A catcher Anthony Recker was added along with Garcia, and the Twins substituted rookie-level right-hander Huascar Ynoa, whom they had signed for \$800,000 at age 16 out of the Dominican Republic.

The Twins, giving Garcia a chance to clear his spinning brain, pushed back his scheduled start two days to a Friday night in Oakland. Their wild-card chances hanging by a thread after getting swept by the Dodgers, they watched as Garcia struck out seven in 6 2/3 innings to pace a 6-3 victory over the A's.

It would be the Twins' only win during an eight-game spiral that coincided with the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline. When they suffered their third walk-off loss in a span of four games that Saturday night in Oakland — with all-star closer Brandon Kintzler deemed off limits as the Twins' front office weighed its trade options — the New York Yankees jumped back into the Garcia mix.

Reports began to circulate in the wee hours Sunday morning that Garcia could be headed to the Bronx. He immediately reached out to Moyer.

"When I heard something about the Yankees, my agent said, 'You're staying in Minnesota. This doesn't happen,' " Garcia said. "I remember I was flying home to get my stuff. (Moyer) said, 'No, that doesn't happen.' It just doesn't happen."

#### 'HAD A BLAST'

It happened to Garcia. The Yankees agreed to send a pair of pitching prospects to the Twins for two months of Garcia: right-hander Zack Littell, on his way to a 19-1 season in Class A and Double-A, and left-hander Dietrich Enns.

Garcia went 0-3 with a 4.82 ERA in eight starts for the Yankees, including a no-decision against the Twins on Sept. 18 at Yankee Stadium in which he tied a season high with nine strikeouts while giving up just one unearned run.

He worked 2 2/3 scoreless innings in middle relief in the opener of the division series against the Cleveland Indians, but didn't pitch again in the postseason.

"I was so thankful for the Yankees organization, but I don't know, man, they already had their staff," Garcia said. "They kind of had their deal. I can't say anything bad about the Yankees. I was able to be in the playoffs and compete."

He shook his head after being told the Twins had just designated Enns for assignment a few hours earlier. Enns later cleared waivers and was outrighted to Triple-A.

"Hopefully it works out for everybody," Garcia said. "I was just excited to compete with the Twins. All I know is, the eight days I was there, I had a blast with the guys. I really enjoyed being a part of that team for eight days."

It was actually six days. Or, depending on what time he flew back to Atlanta on Saturday, it could have been four days of interaction.

“Pretty crazy, huh?” Garcia said. “I was curious: Has it ever happened to where a starting pitcher pitches for a team, wins a game and never went into the home clubhouse? I mean, never met the home clubbie, never been in their clubhouse, never been in their facility, didn’t have a locker — nothing.”

In combined Twins and Washington Senators history, Garcia is the only pitcher to earn the win in his only appearance for the franchise. Just five other Twins have made a single start before moving on: Rich Yett (1985), Mike Smith (2006), Matt Fox (2010) and two more from last season, Nick Tevesch and Tim Melville.

According to Baseball-Reference.com’s Play Index, just nine other pitchers in American League history started and won their only career appearance for a team. It has happened just two other times in the expansion era: Yankees lefty Brandon Claussen in 2003 and Angels lefty Brad Mills in 2012.

Claussen, whose only Yankees start came at Shea Stadium in the second game of a doubleheader against the New York Mets, was sent down and traded a month later to the Cincinnati Reds for current Yankees manager Aaron Boone.

Mills and five other win-and-done AL pitchers — Jake Striker (1959 Indians), Earl Huckleberry (1935 Athletics), Hal Schwenk (1913 Browns), King Brady (1908 Red Sox) and Doc McMahon (1908 Red Sox) — made their sole appearances at home.

Harry Smith, a 23-year-old right-hander, started and won the season finale for the 1912 Chicago White Sox in Detroit, and Jake Volz of the 1901 Red Sox won his sole start at an unknown location.

“Mine is unique,” Garcia said. “I just mean, like, literally just one guy gets traded to a team, makes a start and then gets traded away. Has that ever happened?”

It happened to Jaime Garcia.

### **Here’s a reason to make your pitch to watch Twins-Angels matchup on Sunday**

**Judd Zulgad | ESPN 1500 | May 9, 2018**

The forecast for the Twin Cities on Sunday calls for warming temperatures, reaching a high of 72 degrees, and partly cloudy skies. In other words, a nice day to get outside.

But if you’re a Twins fan you might want to start thinking up excuses for why you’re going to have to spend the late afternoon sitting on the couch and watching television. After all, we don’t get pitching match-ups like this too often.

The Los Angeles Angels have been keeping Japanese two-way star Shohei Ohtani on a once-a-week pitching schedule, and according to the Star Tribune, they have informed the Twins he will start Sunday (3:07 p.m. first pitch) in Anaheim. The Twins’ scheduled starter for that day is rookie righthander Fernando Romero, who has displayed electric stuff in winning his first two big-league outings and hasn’t given up a run.

All 30 big-league teams expressed interest in Ohtani when he made himself available last winter, but the process proved to be a unique one because it was more about a fit for the player than it was about money. The Twins were very interested in landing Ohtani but they did not make the list of seven finalists that included the Dodgers, Giants, Rangers, Mariners, Cubs, Padres and Angels.

The Angels paid a \$20-million posting fee to the Nippon-Ham Fighters, who had been Ohtani’s Japanese League team, and were expected to pay Ohtani a \$2.315-million signing bonus that came from their international bonus pool, according to the Los Angeles Times. Ohtani is guaranteed a salary of no more than the major league minimum of \$545,000 for the next three years.

Ohtani, a righthanded pitcher, is 3-1 with a 4.10 earned-run average in five starts this season. The 23-year-old bats lefthanded and is hitting .333/.385/.617 with four home runs and 14 runs batted in in 17 games. He’s expected to serve as Los Angeles’ designated hitter Thursday or Friday, according to the Star Tribune.

So which Twins player would be a candidate to both serve as a pitcher and DH on the days he wasn’t on the mound? Derek Wetmore addresses that subject here.

## **Just for fun: Which Twins player would be best suited to hit and pitch?**

**Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | May 9, 2018**

The Twins are scheduled to face Angels' rookie pitcher Shohei Ohtani on Sunday, and they could have their hands full. During the rest of the weekend series the Twins could face Angels' rookie DH Shohei Ohtani and, again, they might have their hands full.

Ohtani made the first part of the MLB offseason one of the most intriguing in recent memory. The mystery man eventually chose the Halos — after the Twins had expressed interest and considered the two-way star from Japan a top priority.

Ohtani was fascinating for a number of reasons, chief among them is the fact that basically nobody thrives on the mound and in the batter's box. Even Madison Bumgarner has his limitations.

You'd be forgiven if you rolled your eyes when publications began dubbing Ohtani the "Babe Ruth of Japan." Pretty lofty standards for a guy who'd yet to face Major League pitching or MLB hitters.

But Ohtani has been pretty great since his Angels debut. And he's sparked all kinds of interest around a pretty good Angels team. We ran into a fun one on Twitter this Wednesday afternoon.

Kris Atteberry of Twins Radio Network put out a poll asking the simple question. Which Twins player would make the best (hypothetical) two-way player? The options he provided were Joe Mauer, Byron Buxton, J.O. Berrios and Eduardo Escobar.

Kris Atteberry

@tteberry

In advance of @twins series vs @Angels @TwinsRadio asked Twins players who they would pick as their best two-way player to both pitch & hit...who would you pick?

Joe Mauer

Jose Berrios

Byron Buxton

Eduardo Escobar

I've got a slightly different list, and I'll admit that I didn't spend hours researching the topic. No deep-dive analytics here.

I'm going to remove Eduardo Escobar, even though he's a fine candidate. He's crushing it at the plate this year for the Twins, and he's proven doubly valuable for becoming the crisis fill-in at shortstop and more recently the third baseman after the Twins lost 80 games of Jorge Polanco and who-knows-how-many games of Miguel Sano. Escobar has also filled in on the mound, but it isn't like it was a really serious venture. He was a mop-up guy when the Twins wanted to save some bullets from their relievers.

I also have to admit a bit of a bias here. It seems to me that it'd be easier for a position player/hitter to make the transition to the mound, rather than the other way around. J.O. Berrios was a top shortstop coming up through the ranks in Puerto Rico. As soon as the Twins used a supplementary first-round draft pick to get him in the 2012 draft (the Buxton draft), then he was a pitcher and has never looked back. I'd say that's working out pretty well for him. I just wonder how difficult it would be to add hitting back into the equation after years away from that side of the game. Great athlete, superior dedication as far as I can tell. Berrios would just have a taller mountain to climb than guys trying to go the other way, in my opinion.

If Aaron Hicks was still in Minnesota he'd be the fairly easy choice. He's already made it as a hitter and outfielder, and the reports on him as a high school draft prospect had him throwing a fastball in the mid-to-upper-90's. So it seems like he could handle the challenge better than most. Likewise, if the Twins used their first overall draft choice last year on Hunter Greene or Brendan McKay instead of Royce Lewis, this question might take a different turn.

As it is, I'm going to give you three guys that I'd like to see try. I don't think any would succeed, necessarily. Ohtani's early accomplishments are truly rare and special. I'm just saying I'd like to see them try.

3) Miguel Sano: Maybe the strongest throwing arm among infielders on the Twins right now. He's not in the Best Shape of His Life, but he does have some sneaky athleticism for a guy of his significant stature. Slim down 40 pounds for the pitching duties and that athleticism should get even better. But if not, Bartolo Colon taught us last summer that watching that kind of athlete can be an interesting ride, even when the results aren't particularly great.

2) Byron Buxton: I don't know what the secondary stuff would be like but he's probably got the strongest position-player arm in the organization. Accurate, too. Plus his incredible athleticism is on display every day in centerfield.

1) Joe Mauer: We forget it sometimes because he's hidden at first base, but Joe Mauer has a great arm. That same arm (and athleticism) got him a college scholarship offer to play football at Florida State. The Twins drafted him first overall out of high school and he signed and turned pro. If the whole baseball thing hadn't worked out maybe he would have had to settle for being an NFL quarterback one day.

### **Preview: Twins at Angels**

**STATS | Fox Sports North | May 10, 2018**

The Minnesota Twins will try to continue their recent success against the Los Angeles Angels when they open a four-game series Thursday night at Angel Stadium.

The Twins have won nine of their past 13 meetings against the Angels over the past two seasons, and come into this series on a roll, having won five in a row.

The Twins (15-17) have scored at least four runs in their past nine games, helping them pull within a game of the Cleveland Indians for first place in the American League Central.

"Now that the weather's gotten warm, we're feeling pretty good at the plate," Minnesota right fielder Robbie Grossman told reporters after a 7-1 victory at the St. Louis Cardinals on Tuesday. "Every part of this team has it going now."

The Angels (22-14) are coming off a two-game split at the Colorado Rockies.

Los Angeles ended Colorado's six-game winning streak with an 8-0 win on Wednesday afternoon. Angels third baseman Zack Cozart replaced Ian Kinsler in the leadoff spot and went 2-for-4 with a double and home run.

Justin Upton and Rene Rivera also homered for Los Angeles.

The Rockies and Twins are two of the five teams that have entered a series against the Angels this season riding a winning streak of at least four games.

The Yankees had a six-game winning streak and the Boston Red Sox had won four in a row when they came to Anaheim last month. The defending World Series champion Houston Astros had won six straight before the Angels came to town and won two of three April 23-25.

In the series opener against Minnesota, the Angels are scheduled to face right-hander Jose Berrios (3-3, 3.98 ERA) for the second time in his three-year career.

Berrios pitched six innings at Angel Stadium on June 4, allowing two runs and six hits in the 3-2 win, part of his 7-1 start to last season.

Berrios has never faced Angels sluggers Mike Trout or Albert Pujols. Kinsler has seen Berrios the most of any current member of Los Angeles, and he's 2-for-9 in his career with a home run.

Berrios gave up a two-run homer in the first inning of his most recent start, the eighth straight inning he allowed at least one run, but bounced back and allowed two runs over the next five innings to earn the win in a 6-4 victory against the Chicago White Sox.

The Angels will counter with right-hander Garrett Richards (4-1, 3.93 ERA).

Richards is coming off his best outing of the season, throwing 6 2/3 shutout innings in a 5-0 win at the Seattle Mariners on Friday. That followed his worst start of the season, when he gave up nine runs (five earned) and five hits in 1 2/3 innings of an 11-1 loss against the visiting Yankees on April 28.

Richards told reporters after his most recent start that he's been working closely with pitching coach Charles Nagy.

"It's rhythm and tempo and mechanical stuff," he said. "My mindset is still there. I'm trying to attack guys and fill up the zone and get ahead in counts. Nothing's changed as far as that goes, just really kind of finding a happy medium with my tempo going toward the plate to help me be a little more consistent."

Richards is 2-1 in his career against the Twins with a 2.61 ERA. He last faced them on April 15, 2016, allowing two runs and four hits in six innings of a 5-4 loss in which he did not receive a decision.

## **MLB Power Rankings: Yankees, Red Sox, Astros vie for top spot; Dodgers fall out of top 10**

**Ryan Fagan | Sporting | May 9, 2018**

### 22. Minnesota Twins (16)

Minnesota signed a couple of free agents for far below what most people thought they'd get at the beginning of the offseason, but neither Logan Morrison (.503 OPS) nor Lance Lynn (8.37 ERA) has been very good. Add Byron Buxton's injury and a closer (Fernando Rodney) who has an equal number of converted and blown saves (three each) and you have a team that's struggled massively out of the gate.

## **How an NFL mistake five years ago helped prep Daniel Adler for the Twins**

**Dan Hayes | The Athletic | May 10, 2018**

In the Jacksonville Jaguars' 2013 season opener, Daniel Adler made a mistake he thought he'd never live down.

With 12:17 left in the second quarter, Jaguars quarterback Blaine Gabbert threw a deep pass down the sideline to Cecil Shorts on first-and-10 from their own 19. Kansas City cornerback Brandon Flowers broke up the play, but in Adler's estimation, it appeared Shorts had possession of the ball.

At the time, Adler was a 26-year-old in his second season in charge of the team's new research and development department that was created specifically for him. One of his duties was to wear a headset and assist the coaching staff with game-day management and replay challenges. He pushed for the Jaguars to challenge the incompleteness, and Gus Bradley — in his first game as an NFL head coach — acquiesced.

About the same time the time red challenge flag hit the ground, Adler realized his mistake. It was a 50-50 play and upon further examination, Jacksonville discovered the call could potentially be overturned with possession going to Kansas City.

Ultimately, replay referees determined the original call was correct and the Jaguars only lost a timeout as a result. Jacksonville went on to lose 28-2, the play having no bearing on the outcome.

Still, the mistake hit Adler hard.

"I was terrified," Adler said. "There was a moment there I was sweating. ... It's bad enough to waste a challenge. But to actually put your team at risk, I was humiliated."

Nearly five years later, Daniel Adler has once again been tasked with building up a research and development program, though this one has a little less profile than the Jaguars.

The Twins hired Adler, now 31, last August as the director of baseball operations and asked him to strengthen an already-existing R&D department. His experience and willingness to fail for the greater good have the Twins of the belief that Adler is the right man to help them get up to speed analytically.

"This is very much a work in progress trying to figure out the right ways," Adler said, noting they're working under the concept "of failing quickly and trying to figure out what works and what doesn't. We're going to try out a lot of stuff. It's really exciting."

Adler compares the buildup of the Twins' R&D department as being similar to working at a startup company. He was one of the first employees in the door after Derek Falvey and Thad Levine spent 2017 scouring baseball ops and looking for ways to augment the department.

What they discovered was a steady foundation, particularly in IT and development, but an organization that was overall thin on skillsets. They hired Adler, an economics major with an MBA from Harvard Business School and a JD from Harvard Law, to help complete the task.

While the Twins will acknowledge that they've bulked up baseball ops, including the addition of ex-Tampa Bay Rays pitching analyst Josh Kalk, they are protective of how many other hires they made and who they are. However, it's believed the team has made between 5-10 hires along with a number of minor-league additions, all in the name of integrating more information into the organization.

"He's extremely intelligent," Falvey said. "He cares very much about learning and growing and leading. Daniel has been a resource in every area. Research and development. Recent arbitration process. He's continuing to learn the baseball side. But I think the development principles he brings from another sport are the same."

Adler and Falvey were familiar from the Twins' chief baseball officer's days in Cleveland, where Adler had a connection to Mark Shapiro.

When he was an intern for the New England Patriots in the summer of 2005, Adler often drove around Shapiro's sister, who was married to defensive coordinator Eric Mangini, in a golf cart.

Sometime later, Adler reached out to Shapiro, then the GM of the Indians, who gave Adler a brief tour of Progressive Field before dumping him off on Mike Chernoff. Chernoff, the Indians' current GM, and Adler immediately connected. They realized they read a lot of the same books and thought similarly. Chernoff also realized Adler — then 18 and just out of high school — asked good questions.

“He was just interested in the types of challenges we face as a baseball team and find a way to help people, support people,” Chernoff said. “Problem solving and critical thinking.”

They remained in touch and thought of each other as a good resource to bounce ideas off one another. Every time Adler returned home to Cleveland, he would drop in on the front offices of the team for which he grew up rooting. Chernoff said he always kept an eye out for a potential baseball job for Adler, who got to know Falvey, too.

Upon graduation from Harvard last year, Adler looked for teams that might be in need of his skillset. He thought the Twins could be a fit, and Chernoff suggested him to Falvey.

“I really believed in what they're building and was really attracted to the challenge here,” Adler said.

Adler had similar thoughts about the Jaguars when he was hired in 2012, but was admittedly nervous. Whereas baseball has accepted analytics for a much longer time and is generally open to the concept, the NFL has only begun to adopt them in recent years. Adler's role running a department of 2-4 in Jacksonville was met with some skepticism by the coaching staff.

It wasn't his first time working in football or even the NFL. Adler worked as an assistant for the Harvard football program, as an operations intern for the Patriots and as an administration analyst for the Cleveland Browns from 2007-08.

But in this case, the added task of advising the coaching staff on the headset during games provided a more intense challenge.

“He was in a tough spot because the position had basically been created for him,” said then-Jaguars quarterback coach Frank Scelfo. “There was a lack of trust. Everybody was kind of skeptical.”

Adler prides himself on his sound decision-making, normally boasting strong data to back his decisions. That made his mistake in the 2013 opener that much tougher to take.

With minimal time to make the call, Adler went with his gut in ordering up the challenge and misfired. He said the disappointment and shame would have been on his mind for weeks if it weren't for Scelfo.

Scelfo — who in January was hired as the head coach at Southeastern Louisiana — had taken an interest in Adler. He's intrigued by the use of analytics in football and appreciated the depth and detail of Adler's work.

The two lived in the same building and often discussed the role of analytics in football away from the field. Scelfo considers Adler a trail blazer for the way he thought about football game management and still employs some of the techniques they discussed. When he discovered how poorly Adler was handling the mistake, Scelfo took him aside.

“He missed on one and that just crushed him,” Scelfo said. “Things happen so fast and sometimes you make a decision based on an educated choice. It wasn't the right one that time. I was just trying to tell him, you're going to make 98 percent of them. But those two percent, you can't just keep thinking about. You've got to move on.”

Adler appreciates the compassion and empathy Scelfo showed him that afternoon.

He also has a new admiration for coaches who have to make judgment calls on the fly, understanding how difficult decisions become any time a clock is involved.

“Up until that point I had watched as a fan,” Adler said. “You watch decisions you might take issue with and definitely think. ‘I could do a better job.’ When you're actually there and it's live and it's going down really quickly, you realize it's not like playing Madden where you press a button and it automatically happens.”

Having less fear of making a mistake could pay huge dividends to Adler and the Twins as they push forward with research and development. They know how critical trial and error is going to be to the process as baseball continues to find new ways to measure the sport analytically. Being unafraid to make a mistake is the only way to operate.

“We’re going to benefit greatly from these things,” Adler said. “Whether it’s new technology or a new (theory), there are a lot of unanswered questions and trial and error is a good way to find out. We shouldn’t be random guessing. I think we can make some educated decisions and see how they play out.”