



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
Saturday July 7, 2018

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Kepler, Lynn lead Twins to victory vs. Orioles

Jarrid Denney | MLB.com | July 6, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- Max Kepler's mother, Kathy, didn't have the heart to tell her son her flight had been delayed on Thursday and she had missed his game.

But after she endured a nine-hour layover and a 5 a.m. flight departure to make sure she arrived in Minneapolis in time for Friday's first pitch, Max made sure his mother's trip from Berlin was one to remember.

Kepler crushed a 427-foot, two-run homer in the fourth inning to highlight a Minnesota offensive outburst as the Twins topped the Orioles, 6-2, at Target Field.

"That one was for me," Kathy Kepler said, smiling as she and her husband Marek watched from their seats behind home plate.

Kepler's parents live in Berlin but make an effort to travel to the U.S. at least once per season to watch Max play. Max's father had arrived in Minneapolis on July 4, but Kathy was visiting family in Fort Myers, Fla., and planned to get in a day later.

Her Thursday departing flight was delayed, though, and eventually canceled. She ended up staying overnight at Southwest Florida International Airport before taking the earliest available flight into Minneapolis on Friday morning.

Both jet-lagged and weary-eyed, Kepler's parents found plenty of energy when their son smashed his first homer since June 20.

"I was expecting to see her after yesterday's game, and she wasn't there," Max said. "I got the news that they had some flight difficulties and she got stuck overnight. But I was playing yesterday, in my mind, that my mom is here and it's good. It gives me a little bit of a boost, you know? Having gone through a little bit of a struggle lately, that my parents are [here] and they supply that energy."

The Twins jumped on Baltimore's Dylan Bundy for three runs in the first inning and tacked on three more in the fourth to chase the Baltimore starter. The Twins led off the first with three straight singles, and Brian Dozier's liner to left gave the Twins a 2-0 lead before Bundy had secured an out.

Before the Twins went to work at the plate, though, the game nearly took on a very different tone. Orioles third baseman Tim Beckham jumped on the first pitch of the game from Minnesota starter Lance Lynn and drilled it on a rope to dead center. But Jake Cave made a leaping catch at the

wall to pull back what would have been a homer.

"One pitch, one out," Lynn said. "That's a heck of a catch. I definitely didn't want to start the game by giving up a solo home run. One heck of a play, and I was able to get into a rhythm after that."

After Cave's defensive gem, Lynn settled right in. He tossed six innings of one-run baseball and struck out three. He ran into some trouble in the sixth inning when he surrendered a leadoff walk to Manny Machado and then gave up back-to-back singles to Mark Trumbo and Chris Davis for the first Baltimore run of the game.

But after a Twins mound visit, Lynn buckled down and rolled Jonathan Schoop into a double play, and then, on his 105th and final pitch of the night, got Trey Mancini to ground out to end the inning.

"It looks like he's really got command of his fastball," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said of Lynn. "He can notch it up when he needs to. We saw the velocity when he reached back and hit the mid-90's. It was just a good effort overall. I was kinda hoping he would get a little bit deeper; went through a long inning there in the sixth. But to minimize there, after they had something going, to one run was pretty impressive."

While Lynn held the Orioles in check, the Minnesota offense continued to give him support. Jorge Polanco laid down a drag bunt on a 2-0 count in the fourth inning to beat a heavy infield shift, and Kepler followed with his scorching homer that landed in the upper deck in right-center field.

"That was so great," Kathy Kepler said. "We were just so happy we could be here for him and see this."

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

The Orioles cut into Minnesota's lead in the seventh inning when Caleb Joseph scored on a Logan Morrison throwing error, and it appeared they were set to trim the Twins' lead even thinner. Machado roped a single to shallow left field that sent Beckham sprinting home, but Eddie Rosario came up throwing and delivered a strike to gun down Beckham for the second out of the inning.

UP NEXT

The Twins will continue their four-game set with the Orioles on Saturday at 1:10 p.m. CT. Minnesota will send Kyle Gibson to the mound in search of his third win of the season. The 30-year-old righty held the Brewers to three runs over five innings his last time out on July 2. For Baltimore, Kevin Gausman (4-6, 4.05 ERA) will get the nod.

Motter activated from DL, optioned to Double-A **Jarrid Denney | MLB.com | July 6, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS -- Twins utilityman Taylor Motter has been activated from the 7-day disabled list and optioned to Double-A Chattanooga, the Twins announced on Friday.

The club had planned to send Motter to Triple-A Rochester, but since the Triple-A All-Star break takes place from July 9-11, Motter elected to head to Double-A in order to get more game reps.

"I'm glad he's doing better," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said. "We all know the collision in Chicago was violent. He recovered well, and it's one of those things where he hasn't played in a week. We thought it would be good to get him down there and back to playing and see. ... He is ready to get back to work."

Motter is hitless and has driven in one run in seven games with the Twins this season while filling in all over the infield and occasionally playing some outfield. He hit .267 in seven games with the Mariners before being designated for assignment on May 27.

Santana continues rehab

As Ervin Santana continues to work his way back from a finger injury on his throwing hand, the Twins are making a slight adjustment to his rehab trajectory.

Santana threw four innings and struck out two batters while surrendering a pair of runs in an outing for Class A Fort Myers on Thursday. His next outing will come on July 10 at Double-A Chattanooga in order to accommodate the organization's schedule. The Twins originally intended for Santana's next outing to be with Triple-A Rochester, but the Red Wings will be on their All-Star break.

"We all saw the numbers," Molitor said. "A tick up in velocity. He gave up a semi-bloop single that was followed by a first-pitch home run. Those were his blemishes. His slider was a little inconsistent, but he had some really good ones. The change, they said, had some really good movement underneath the fastball."

Torii Hunter gets managerial chance

The rosters and coachings staffs for the 2018 Futures Game were announced Friday, and the Twins will be well-represented.

Minnesota prospects Alex Kirilloff, who is ranked No. 3 on the club's top-30 list according to MLB Pipeline, will represent the U.S. Team. Lewis Thorpe (No. 11) will represent the World Team.

Hunter, who currently works as a baseball operations special assistant for Minnesota, will manage Team USA and he is bringing plenty of familiar faces with him. LaTroy Hawkins, Matthew LeCroy and Steve Singleton will all be part of Hunter's coaching staff for the game.

Hawkins is also a special assistant to the Twins, while Singleton is a Minor League hitting coach with the club. LeCroy, who played for the Twins from 2000-2005, manages the Harrisburg Senators in the Nationals' Minor League system.

"It's a great experience," Molitor said of managing the Futures Game. "I can tell you because I did it in 2002. Just all the things that come with those three or four days and leading up to it and the couple days after it. ... I think the people who have a chance to play for him in that game will not forget the experience."

Tim Beckham could only salute Jake Cave after being robbed of a first-pitch homer on Friday
Andrew Mearns and Jarrid Denney | MLB.com | July 6, 2018

The slumping Orioles had hoped to get off on the right foot during their game on Friday night against the Twins. Leadoff hitter Tim Beckham gave his best effort, crushing the very first pitch from Lance Lynn a long way to center field.

Unfortunately for the O's, the flaw in their strategy was that Beckham hit it right to the man who had just stolen an extra-base hit from Chris Davis the night before -- Jake Cave:

Sure enough, Cave brought this drive back, too, robbing Beckham of his first homer since March 31.

He had been raring to go. "You've got to be ready, because that kind of stuff happens," Cave said to MLB.com's Jarrid Denney about his preparation. "I'm ready out there, from first pitch to last pitch. You never know what's going to happen."

So Cave was pretty pumped up as he fired the ball back in:

Lynn was quite relieved that Cave kept the Twins from immediately trailing, 1-0. "One pitch, one out. That's a heck of a catch," he said. "I definitely didn't want to start the game by giving up a solo home run. One heck of a play and I was able to get into a rhythm after that."

After Cave's robbery, Lynn settled in and got the win for six innings of one-run ball. The Twins prevailed, 6-2.

As for Beckham? He had to offer some kudos:

Cave didn't see Beckham's salute until watching video after the game, but he appreciated the compliment. "That's pretty cool for him to do that," said Cave. "I'm sure he's made a lot of great plays against guys in his career, so he knows what it feels like to do something like that."

The Allegory of Jake Cave clearly needs more study -- his pursuit of fly balls is relentless.

Lance Lynn solid, outfielders excel as Twins beat Orioles again
Phil Miller | Star Tribune | July 7, 2018

OK, so where's Jake Cave's bobblehead?

For the second night in a row, Cave caught the spirit of the Twins' "Nothing Falls but Raindrops" philosophy of outfielding, mostly by catching a fly ball — on the first pitch of the game — that had cleared the center field wall. Thus inspired, his fellow outfielders joined in, Max Kepler with a 400-foot home run, Eddie Rosario with two hits and a howitzer of a throw to prevent another run, and the Twins enjoyed a 6-2 victory over the Baltimore Orioles at Target Field.

"I'm having a lot of fun. I play as hard as I can, like I try to always do," said Cave, who has done a reasonable impression, in Byron Buxton's absence, of his Platinum Glove-winning teammate, immortalized this season, like Kepler and Rosario, in bobblehead form. "Sometimes when you do that, you put yourself in good position to make good plays."

This one was so good, the player he victimized, Orioles third baseman Tim Beckham, tipped his helmet in Cave's direction as he turned toward the dugout. Beckham belted the first pitch out of Lance Lynn's hand, a low four-seam fastball, toward the grass berm 400 feet from home plate. Cave tore after it, timed his jump perfectly, and pulled the ball back.

“I kind of just saw a ball go up and reacted. Pretty sure I had a good bead on it, though,” Cave said of the first homer-robbing catch of his professional career. “It’s up there with actually hitting a home run. It’s cool to be able to help the pitcher like that and take one back.”

Lynn appreciated the help, and responded with six solid innings, giving up one run on six singles and a walk. “It looks like he’s really got command of his fastball. He can notch it up when he needs to,” manager Paul Molitor said. “We saw the velocity when he reached back and hit the mid-90s. It was just a good effort overall.”

Even better: The Twins staked Lynn to a six-run lead. Three consecutive singles to start the game produced a run right away, and an error by Beckham helped make it a three-run inning.

The Twins added three more in the fourth, two coming when Kepler, with his parents visiting from Berlin, connected on a Dylan Bundy changeup that landed in the right-center seats. Cave followed with a single, and he eventually scored on Joe Mauer’s single that chased Bundy.

The Orioles tried to rally once Lynn departed, but Rosario took care of that. With runners on first and second, a run in and one out in the seventh, Manny Machado hit a sharp single to left off Ryan Pressly — so sharp, Rosario assumed Beckham would stop at third.

“Usually I hear guys yelling ‘home, home, home,’ but I didn’t” this time, Rosario said. “But I look up and I saw the third base coach sending him home, so I was like, ‘I’m not going to lose this opportunity.’ ”

His throw was perfect, a one-hopper that easily beat Beckham at the plate. It was Rosario’s seventh assist of 2018, and he celebrated by pretending to blow smoke away from the fingers on his right hand.

“Sometimes when I have a hard throw, good throw, the fans they feel good, and they say good job,” Rosario said of the gesture. “I have fun with them.”

He is hoping for even more fun Sunday, when the All-Star team is announced. Being part of that would be even better than having a bobblehead, he said.

“Everybody that plays this game wants to be an All-Star. I set a goal that I proposed for myself before the season started,” Rosario said. “I don’t know what will happen.”

For now, just winning back-to-back games, the first time the Twins have done that since June 19-20, is fun enough.

“We still play hard,” Rosario said. “Cave is doing a good job at the plate, and catching the ball at the wall. It’s really impressive.”

Impressive enough to get his own bobblehead?

“Maybe next year,” Rosario said with a smile.

Postgame: Molitor admires Polanco's smart bunt; double play bails out Lynn
Phil Miller | Star Tribune | July 7, 2018

Three extras from the Twins’ — what’s it called again? — winning streak:

When Jorge Polanco came to the plate in the fourth inning, he noticed third baseman Tim Beckham playing back. So he placed a bunt about 40 feet up the line, where neither Beckham nor pitcher Dylan Bundy could reach it in time.

The next batter, Max Kepler, smashed a Bundy pitch more than 400 feet, a two-run homer that gave the Twins a 5-0 lead.

Twins manager Paul Molitor savored the sequence — and not necessarily the part of it you might expect.

“As much as I love the long ball,” Molitor said after the game, “I don’t want to see Polanco’s bunt get overlooked. The intelligence that he brings to the field and starting a rally in that fashion, it was really good to see.”

XXX

Lance Lynn got some help from his defense, starting with the game’s very first pitch, which would have been a home run had Jake Cave not leapt to pull it back. But an even bigger play came in the sixth inning, when Lynn was wearing down during a long Baltimore inning.

Lynn walked Manny Machado to open the inning, then gave up consecutive singles to Mark Trumbo and Chris Davis, the latter scoring Machado. Up came Jonathan Schoop, who proceeded to get into a drawn-out battle with the Twins righthander.

After fouling off a couple of pitches, Schoop took three straight balls, then spoiled pitch after pitch from Lynn.

“It was a good battle,” Lynn said. “He’s a tough guy to strike out. He covers a lot of the plate, both sides.”

Finally, on the 10th pitch of the at-bat, Schoop hit a sharp grounder to Polanco at shortstop, and the Twins turned a double play that short-circuited the Orioles’ hopes of a big inning. Trey Mancini grounded out moments later, and Lynn had escaped.

“A big play on the defensive side, getting the double play after they had a little something going there,” Molitor said. “To minimize there, after they had something going, to one run was pretty impressive.”

XXX

One good at-bat doesn’t necessarily change the ones that come after it. But Molitor hopes that Kepler’s home run, after batting only .204 in May and .163 in June, might help the young outfielder turn things around.

“At times, I think it has been wearing on him. He gets caught in between trying to get aggressive or being patient,” the manager said. “Sometimes [big hits] can help you calm down. He got what looked like a changeup to me, and he was all over that. It was good to see. You get a couple of good at-bats, and get that feel back, hopefully.”

Friday's Twins-Baltimore game recap
Staff Report | Star Tribune | July 6, 2018

GAME RECAP

IMPACT PLAYER

Max Kepler, Twins

Extended the Twins’ lead to 5-0 when he jumped on a Dylan Bundy changeup and launched it to right field for his ninth home run of the season.

BY THE NUMBERS

4 Home runs for Kepler against righthanders this season, one fewer than he has against lefthanders.

6 Quality starts for Lance Lynn this season, though this was his first in four starts after he had five in a row.

.571 Mitch Garver’s batting average his past 10 games after the Twins catcher went 2-for-2 with a walk.

ON DECK

Kyle Gibson beat Baltimore in his first start of the season. He has won only once since, but he will attempt to give the Twins a series victory on Saturday when he faces the Orioles’ Kevin Gausman.

La Velle E. Neal's Sunday Insider: Will trade speculation disrupt Twins in July?
La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | July 6, 2018

July baseball can be an exciting time for some teams, trying times for others — and noisy for both.

If a team is in contention, or even on the fringe of it, trade talk can excite a clubhouse. That’s good noise. Players want to track rumors about who is joining the playoff cause.

If you’re the Twins — after the front office has indicated its intention to sell and regroup for 2019 — trade deadline anxiety could sweep through the clubhouse.

The Twins ability to focus will be tested this month as several players are sure to see their names mentioned as trade targets, and possibly dealt.

Second baseman Brian Dozier, who said during spring training that he didn’t “want to become a trade show” can’t avoid that now.

“As far as all the stuff that is coming up, we’re not playing our best baseball coming up to what possibly could happen with moves,” Dozier said. “Bad timing again.”

Dozier, Eduardo Escobar, Zach Duke, Kyle Gibson, Fernando Rodney and Lance Lynn are among Twins who could attract varying levels of interest from contenders before the July 31 nonwaiver trade deadline. It’s an indictment of a team that expected to be successful this season but has been inconsistent. Injuries, and a PED suspension handed to Jorge Polanco, have kept their best lineup off the field. But the hole they have dug themselves — they are 11½ out of first place in the AL Central — looks too deep to get out of.

The situation could be fluid over the next few weeks, and Twins players might want to stock up on earplugs.

“You’ve got to try to focus on what’s going on in the locker room,” said Gibson, whose start on Tuesday against Milwaukee was watched by a scout from the Yankees. “You have enough to worry about in here.”

How bad can it get? The Tampa Bay Rays spent the offseason moving good players, leading to an uproar among players and fans. Rays icon Evan Longoria was dealt to San Francisco. Brad Boxberger and Steven Souza were dealt as well. And Corey Dickerson, an All-Star in 2017, was designated for assignment, upsetting many.

Wait, there was one more deal. Jake Odorizzi was traded too — to the Twins.

“It can mess with clubhouse chemistry if you have pillars you have built around for a while,” Odorizzi said, “if they are the ones going it definitely sends a ripple through the locker room.”

The Twins have some experience dealing with trade season. They were buyers for about a week last July, dealing for lefthander Jaime Garcia. Suddenly, after a few losses the last week of the month, Garcia was spun off to the Yankees and Brandon Kintzler was traded to the Nationals.

This year, with a larger deficit, it would take a drastic reversal of fortune to convince the front office to add and not sell. So players should prepare for the worst.

Odorizzi, 28, has already been traded three times in his career. He’s learned that in addition to playing for a team, you are playing for your career. Remembering that can help fight off trade deadline anxiety this month.

“Your job is here,” he said. “If you get traded, your job is somewhere else. If not, then you don’t have a job.”

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

INDIANS: Cody Allen has never saved more than 34 games in a season, but he’s now tops among great Indians closers. He earned the save on Wednesday to become Cleveland’s all-time saves leader. Not Jose Mesa. Not Doug Jones. Not Bob Wickman. Cody Allen. “This will be one of those trademark moments,” said Allen, who entered the weekend with 140 saves in his career.

ROYALS: Alex Gordon stole home on Wednesday, the first Kansas City player to do so since 2015. But it wasn’t pretty. He was on third when teammate Hunter Dozier, who was on first, took off for second. Gordon got caught too far off the bag, but Cleveland’s Jose Ramirez fell down while catching the throw to third. Gordon then scampered home.

TIGERS: The Tigers will be in major sell mode before the July 31 nonwaiver trade deadline. Nicholas Castellanos and Francisco Liriano could be a couple of players on the move as Detroit looks to add younger talent and build for the future. They could move Michael Fulmer in the right deal.

WHITE SOX: While Trevor Larnach signed with the Twins on Thursday, his friend and Oregon State teammate Nick Madrigal inked his deal with Chicago. Madrigal, a middle infielder, was the fourth overall pick and signed for \$6,411,400. Madrigal didn’t waste time, playing for the White Sox entry in the Arizona rookie league Thursday night.

THE 3-2 PITCH

Here are three observations ...

- It could be a real buyer’s market this trade season, as more teams seem are open to pulling the plug and hitting the reset button for 2019. There should be at least nine AL teams looking to sell, and Oakland could make it 10.
- I agree. The Cubs’ Javier Baez is the most exciting player in baseball right now.

- I disagree. The Mets should hold onto Noah Syndergaard but see what they can get for Jacob deGrom.

... and two predictions

- Eduardo Escobar, Zach Duke, Fernando Rodney and Lance Lynn will be dealt before the trade deadline, but Brian Dozier will not.
- The Nationals will not only get on track but will zip past the Braves and Phillies and win the National League East.

Lance Lynn helps his trade stock in Twins' 6-2 win over Orioles

Andy Greder | Pioneer Press | July 6, 2018

Lance Lynn didn't hurt his prospective trade value Friday.

After the Twins' 1-8 road trip through the Fourth of July, the trajectory of their season turned from eyeing the playoffs to sizing up a sell-off, and Lynn climbed onto a short list of potential departures before the July 31 deadline.

The right-hander allowed six hits and one run over six innings in a 6-2 win over the Orioles at Target Field. Although he did need 105 pitches and still failed to reach the seventh inning for the first time this season, he did inch his earned-run average down to 5.21 and improve to 6-7 in a turbulent season.

"Could have been better, but for the most part it went well," Lynn said.

If the front office offloads the rest of his one-year, \$12-million contract or he sticks round for the duration, the Twins will take his performance Friday. While not dazzling, Lynn saw a drastic improvement from the third-shortest start of his seven-year career, when he allowed seven runs across 1 2/3 innings during an 11-10 loss to the Cubs on Sunday.

"I think you have to say that these past couple outings, the Wrigley (Field) appearance was more of a hiccup," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "Because he's been fairly steady for us. It looks like he's really got command of his fastball. He can notch it up when he needs to. We saw the velocity when he reached back and hit the mid-90's. It was just a good effort overall."

Minnesota (37-48) has consecutive victories for the first time since June 19-20. The Twins haven't won three or more in a row since June 1-5 and will have a chance Saturday as they continue the four-game series against a Baltimore team with the worst record in the majors.

Before Friday's game, Molitor acknowledged that Thursday's 5-2 victory over the Orioles "feels like there was a little bit of a burden lifted, you know, enduring not only the six (losses) in a row, but the trip in its entirety."

Jake Cave's leaping catch saved Lynn's first pitch from being a Tim Beckman solo home run to straight-away center — Cave's second jumping catch in as many games.

"That's a heck of a catch," Lynn said. "I definitely didn't want to start the game by giving up a solo home run. One heck of a play, and I was able to get into a rhythm after that."

The Twins jumped on Orioles starter Dylan Bundy in the bottom of the first and knocked him out after nine hits and six runs through 3 1/3 innings.

The Twins' top of the order strung together singles from Joe Mauer, Eddie Rosario and Brian Dozier, with all three coming around to score thanks to a single by Dozier, an Orioles error and a single from Jorge Polanco.

Lynn pitched out of a bases-loaded jam in the fourth, and Polanco bunted in front of Max Kepler's two-run homer to right-center in the bottom of the inning to make it 5-0. Kepler's parents traveled from Germany to watch him play.

"It's awesome," Kepler said. "I feel like they are my lucky charms."

Lynn departed after Chris Davis' RBI single scored Manny Machado in the sixth. After Lynn, Matt Belisle gave up a run in the seventh, while Ryan Pressly and Fernando Rodney closed the door to end the game.

Addison Reed, traded three times, offers deadline advice for Twins teammates

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | July 6, 2018

Addison Reed was 24 the first time he was traded. That happened in mid-December of 2013, two weeks before his birthday and 69 saves into his

pitching career with the Chicago White Sox.

He was dealt straight-up to the Arizona Diamondbacks for minor-league third baseman Matt Davidson.

“I’d say the first time was definitely the weirdest,” said Reed, halfway through the first season of a two-year, \$16.75 million deal with the Twins.

Less than two seasons later, Reed was on the move again. This time it was Aug. 30, 2015, when the Diamondbacks shipped him to the New York Mets as part of a waiver deal with two minor-league pitchers.

That time was a little easier to process than the first deal. He was 26.

“Oh, for sure,” he said. “Especially if you’re a guy who has come up with a team and this is the only team you know. It can be a little tough just because you’re so comfortable, so familiar with everything. Then you have to learn a whole new system.”

After helping the Mets reach the World Series for the first time in a decade and a half, Reed spent all of 2016 in the Big Apple, returning to the postseason. Last July, however, the Mets were out of contention and looking to tweak their roster again.

At the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline, Reed was dealt once more. This time it was the Boston Red Sox who acquired him for the stretch drive, a prospective free agent on an expiring contract with valuable postseason experience.

That meant he was headed back to the American League, but by now Reed knew the drill.

“The second and third times it happened, (getting traded) was just part of the business,” Reed said. “When it’s all said and done, it would be kind of cool to say you played for multiple teams, seeing how different organizations work.”

BRACING FOR CHANGE

Having fallen out of postseason contention by Independence Day, the Twins will spend the rest of this month fielding offers for such prospective free agents as Brian Dozier, Eduardo Escobar, Lance Lynn and Zach Duke.

Of that group, Escobar was traded to the Twins as a fledgling utility man in July 2012, back when he was Reed’s teammate with the White Sox, while Duke also was dealt away from the White Sox to the St. Louis Cardinals at the July 31 deadline in 2016 (for outfielder Charlie Tilson).

Dozier, however, has spent his entire career with the Twins, somehow making it through a rumor-filled offseason of 2016-17. Lynn, a mid-March signing amid the great free-agent freeze-out of 2017-18, spent his first professional decade with the Cardinals but soon could be on the move again.

Franchise first baseman Joe Mauer is on an expiring contract as well, but with a full no-trade clause and a third child on the way in November, it’s unclear whether the 35-year-old St. Paul product would even entertain playing for another club.

With so much uncertainty swirling around this disappointing Twins season, Reed finds himself in the role of valued resource officer. Having gone through multiple trades and already on his fifth different team at age 29, he can help Twins teammates with less stability navigate the sport’s cruelest month.

“I’m sure there’s guys in this room that are uncertain what team you’re going to be on here in a couple weeks,” Reed said as he stood in the middle of the Twins’ clubhouse. “It’s one of those things where you have absolutely no control over it. You have no say whether you’re going to get traded or not. You just have to go out there and play for whatever uniform you’re wearing.”

Closely following the 24/7 news cycle and keeping your agent on speed dial does no good this time of year. Just when you think you’ve got your next stop figured out, thanks to roster reconnaissance and helpful tidbits from coaches and players across the way, you’re sure to be stunned by how things actually turn out.

“There are always teams that will be linked to you,” Reed said. “I’ve seen guys that expected to be traded to a team, and they were — and I’ve had guys who wouldn’t have expected to be traded to a team and it was a team that their name hasn’t even been linked to ever in their career. There’s nothing you can do to control it.”

‘NOTHING CHANGES’

When a team collapses the way the Twins have for the second time in three years, it’s not just the pending free agents who must wonder about their status.

Virtually everyone on the Twins’ roster could be involved in a trade, especially when the second-year brain trust of chief baseball officer Derek

Falvey and general manager Thad Levine has yet to sign a single young piece to a multiyear deal.

Reed is happy to share his input with younger teammates as well.

“Don’t put any added pressure on yourself,” he said. “Just do what you’ve been doing, and you’ll be fine. Nothing changes. Obviously a big change happens when you switch uniforms, but other than that it’s a game. The game the other 29 teams are playing is the same as the one we’re playing here. You can’t think too much about it.”

Trying to throw a little harder or hit the ball a little farther, whether to impress rival scouts in advance of a trade or to wow new bosses after being dealt, is never a good idea.

“That’s what you can’t do,” Reed said. “You can’t change the way you go about things. You’re up here for a reason. You’re up here because you’re doing well enough to be in the big leagues. The second you try to over-perform or perform to other people’s standards, that’s when you get in trouble. Go out and do your thing and everything will work out.”

Emotions can’t be allowed to enter the equation.

“I know some guys kind of take it personal,” Reed said. “They think they were traded because their team doesn’t like them, whatever it may be. You just have to put that aside and realize the reason you’re getting traded is because some team does want you.”

And, more often than not, that new team trusts the newly acquired player to perform under the pressure of a pennant race.

“That doesn’t mean that your (current team) doesn’t want you,” said Reed, who has pitched in the three postseasons. “It probably just means you’re out of it and your team probably is not performing the way it was expected. You can’t take it personal at all. That’s the last thing you should do.”

The ripple effect, of course, goes well beyond the player getting traded. Families, friends, neighbors and agents all must sweep into action to make the in-season transition as smooth as possible.

There again, Reed can speak from experience.

“When they call you in the office and let you know, that’s when you start thinking about how you’re going to get there, how you’re going to move your stuff,” Reed said. “That’s the tough part, especially getting traded on the road. You have nothing. It’s not like you can say, ‘I need a week to go pack stuff up.’ You have to hop on a plane and go to whatever team you’re going to.”

Technically, players have 72 hours to report to their new clubs, but few take advantage of that window.

“That’s probably the trickiest part, especially guys with kids and people who have been in the same spot for four or five years,” Reed said. “They’ve accumulated quite a bit of stuff. I’ve been fortunate enough to have a good support system every time I’ve gotten traded. My wife (Cady) did a heck of a job getting everything set up and packing. There was nothing I could do. I was hopping on a plane and meeting a new team somewhere.”

Zulgad: Twins should give Joe Mauer chance to play for a contender

Judd Zulgad | ESPN 1500 | July 6, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — As Joe Mauer’s performance began to decline in the midst of his eight-year, \$184 million contract, an anti-Mauer faction of Minnesota sports fans began to call for the Twins to trade the St. Paul native.

This was a ridiculous request given that Mauer’s \$23-million per year deal included a no-trade clause. Mauer, who had been moved from catcher to first base after the 2013 season because of concussion issues, was calling the shots and he was going nowhere.

Mauer still maintains that power but for the first time since he signed his mega-contract in March 2010 it is no longer ridiculous to consider that Mauer could be dealt.

This season has been a massive disappointment for the Twins. They entered Friday night’s game against visiting Baltimore sitting 12-games under .500 (36-48) and 11.5 games back of division-leading Cleveland in the putrid American League Central.

If the Twins had any thought of making a run at the Indians, that came to an end during a 1-9 road trip that saw them win one of three against the White Sox before getting swept by the Cubs and Brewers. Don’t let anyone tell you different: The Twins season is over and they are going to be sellers as the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline nears.

They have plenty to offer.

The list of trade candidates includes infielders Brian Dozier, Eduardo Escobar and Logan Morrison, righthanded starter Lance Lynn, lefthanded reliever Zach Duke and closer Fernando Rodney. Dozier, Escobar, Duke and Lynn will be free agents after the season. The Twins hold an option — and a buyout — on the contracts of Rodney and Morrison, if he fails to reach 600 plate appearances.

Mauer also is in the final season of his contract and it's unclear how much longer he will play. The top-overall pick in the 2001 MLB amateur draft, Mauer is in his 15th season playing for his hometown team. He should be remembered as one of the greatest catchers to ever play the game — he won three batting titles and an MVP award — but unfortunately he is just as likely to be remembered for having his career derailed by injury.

His latest battle with concussion-like symptoms occurred in mid-May when he attempted to make a diving catch of a foul ball in Anaheim. Mauer was placed on the disabled list a few days later and did not come off the DL until June 15 in Cleveland.

Mauer was batting .283/.404/.355 with a home run and 11 RBIs in 38 games when he was injured. He entered Friday hitting .194/.225/.328 with a homer and 10 RBIs in 18 games since his return, but his bat has shown a bit more life since he went 5-for-11 with a homer and eight RBIs at Wrigley Field.

The Twins have an opportunity to do Mauer a favor here — especially if the brain trust of Derek Falvey and Thad Levine aren't going to bring him back — by offering him the chance to go to a contending team to finish the season. All Mauer has to do is give the Twins the OK to shop him.

Jon Paul Morosi of MLB.com recently reported that Mauer's agent, Ron Shapiro, declined to comment when asked how his client plans to utilize his no-trade protection. Potential landing spots for Mauer could include the Yankees, Mariners or Cardinals to name three.

Falvey would not get a big return for Mauer but he certainly could get a prospect. Mauer still has the ability to get on base, he takes quality at-bats and he has turned himself into one of the better fielding first basemen in the big leagues. These would be qualities a contending team would welcome.

Mauer has appeared in 10 postseason games with the Twins, including last season's wild card loss to the Yankees and three AL Division series.

At some point, he will have his No. 7 retired by the Twins and there would appear to be a good chance that there will be a No. 7 gate at Target Field and a statue of him outside the stadium. He will be remembered as a Twin — even if he doesn't finish in Minnesota — and one day his production as a catcher will be fully appreciated by Twins fans.

But Mauer is running out of chances to get a World Series ring and it seems only fair that if the Twins can put him in a position to be part of a championship this fall that they at least give him that opportunity.

Kepler homers in Twins' 6-2 win over Orioles **Associated Press | Fox Sports North | July 7, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS — The first pitch set the tone for Minnesota.

Jake Cave robbed Tim Beckham of a home run, helping Lance Lynn bounce back from two poor starts, and Max Kepler homered to lead the Twins to a 6-2 victory over the Baltimore Orioles on Friday night.

Beckham drilled Lynn's first offering to the deepest part of Target Field, but Cave raced to the wall, leapt, reached back and caught the ball while fully extended to deny a home run.

"It's up there with actually hitting a home run, it's cool to be able to help the pitcher like that and take one back," Cave said.

Beckham tipped his cap to the Twins' rookie.

"That's pretty cool for him to do that. I'm sure he's made a lot of great plays against guys in his career, so he knows what it feels like to do something like that," Cave said.

It was the second straight day Cave made a fully extended catch at the wall. He robbed Chris Davis in right-center Thursday.

"I definitely didn't want to start the game by giving up a solo home run. One heck of a play and I was able to get into a rhythm after that," Lynn

said.

Lynn (6-7) allowed six hits and one earned run in six innings as he continued his up-and-down season. He allowed 11 earned runs in 6 2/3 innings over his previous two starts, including seven in 1 2/3 innings last Sunday at Wrigley Field. His ERA was 1.74 ERA in six starts from May 22 to June 20, but 7.47 in his first eight starts of the season.

“You’re gonna have your good ones and your bad ones,” he said.

Up 6-0, Lynn needed 27 pitches to get through the sixth when Baltimore scored its first run, including 10 against Jonathan Schoop, an at-bat that ended in a double play.

“I threw a couple pitches that I thought he’d do that earlier,” Lynn said. “He covers a lot of the plate both sides and he finally hit a ball and we were able to turn it.”

Caleb Joseph had a season-high three hits for the Orioles, losers of four straight and 11 of 12.

In his first start since going on the disabled list June 23 with a left ankle sprain, Baltimore’s Dylan Bundy (6-8) allowed nine hits and five earned runs in 3 1/3 innings. It is his second-shortest start of the season. The right-hander allowed seven runs without recording an out May 8 vs. Kansas City.

Brian Dozier and Jorge Polanco had RBI singles in the first inning as Minnesota jumped out to a 3-0 lead, increasing Bundy’s opening frame ERA to 9.00. It is 3.13 in innings two through nine.

Kepler made it 5-0 in the fourth with a two-run homer to right field.

“If anything, I was trying to miss low and it ended up right down the middle and he was able to hit it out. That was pretty much how the whole game was, throwing stuff right down the middle,” Bundy said.

BALANCED ATTACK

Polanco, Joe Mauer, Eddie Rosario and Mitch Garver each had two hits for the Twins, who have won two straight after a six-game skid.

FRY IS FINE

In his third career game, Baltimore reliever Paul Fry struck out four and did not allow a hit in 2 1-3 innings. The left-hander was called up June 29.

“Pitching looks easy when you locate a fastball and spin a ball for a strike anytime in the count, but it’s not that easy. He was in a really good place today and you could tell,” said manager Buck Showalter.

TRAINERS ROOM

Orioles: To make room for Bundy, RHP David Hess was optioned to Triple-A Norfolk. . INF Luis Sardiñas (left ankle sprain) was reinstated from the 60-day disabled list. He cleared waivers and was assigned outright to Norfolk.

Twins: Manager Paul Molitor said there is a “really good chance” INF Ehire Adrianza, out since July 2 with a left hamstring strain, will be ready to play when he can come off the DL next Thursday. . INF/OF Taylor Motter was activated off the 7-day DL (concussion-like symptoms) and optioned to Double-A Chattanooga.

UP NEXT

A pair of right-handers are scheduled to start Saturday with Baltimore’s Kevin Gausman (4-6, 4.05) facing Minnesota’s Kyle Gibson (2-6, 3.58). Gausman has allowed two or fewer runs in four straight starts. Gibson has allowed more than three earned runs just once in his last nine turns.

Preview: Twins vs. Orioles

Associated Press | Fox Sports North | July 7, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — Kevin Gausman has been one of the few bright spots in an otherwise dismal season for the Baltimore Orioles, who bring the worst record in baseball to Target Field on Saturday as they continue a four-game series with the Minnesota Twins.

Gausman takes the mound with a 2.76 ERA in his last five outings and is fresh off perhaps one of his best starts of the year. He held the Los Angeles to one run and two hits and didn't walk a batter in eight innings on July 2 for his first victory since May 11 — a span of nine starts — and is now 4-6 with a 4.05 ERA this season.

"I felt like early on in the season, I kind of put together a little bit better of a month, but I feel like I'm throwing the ball well," Gausman said. "I feel really good in my delivery, and ever since I went hands over the head,

"I feel like this has just been night and day, able to command the ball and really all my off-speed pitches. That's the key word — consistency. You're always trying to be the same guy every five days."

Orioles manager Buck Showalter thinks Gausman's success this season is overlooked in part because of the team's record, but also because of the competition he has faced.

"I don't chuckle or eye-roll or any of that stuff," Showalter said. "When I hear people kind of negative, Kevin has cut his teeth in the American League East and he's kind of a good hardened to it. This guy doesn't dwell around too much on successes and failures."

Success has been hard to come by for the Orioles lately and failure has been plentiful.

Baltimore's loss Friday night in Minnesota extended its losing streak to four games. The Orioles have dropped 11 of their last 12 games and 22 of their last 27 overall while winning only two in their last seven series.

They'll try to turn that around Saturday against Twins right-hander Kyle Gibson, who has been the poster child for lack of run support this season.

He has allowed more than three runs in a game just once since May 18 — a span of eight starts — but has taken the victory just twice. In the six other games, the Twins have averaged just 1.8 runs.

Gibson hasn't let the tough luck get to him.

"We'll start being on the right side of these games," Gibson said. "We've just been running into some pitchers throwing the ball well and caught a couple tough breaks offensively."

His last two starts haven't been among his best. He allowed a season-high five runs and 11 hits against the White Sox on June 27 in Chicago and the Milwaukee Brewers followed by tagging him for four (three earned) in five innings earlier this week in Milwaukee.

Saturday will mark Gibson's ninth career start against the Orioles. In the eight previous meetings, he's 3-2 with a 5.06 ERA.

He faced them once already this season, throwing six no-hit innings with six strikeouts on March 31 in Baltimore.

With travel-weary parents looking on, Max Kepler blasts a homer in Twins win **Nick Kelly | The Athletic | July 7, 2018**

No one may have needed Max Kepler's two-run home run Friday night more than his parents, Kathy Kepler and Marek Rozycki.

Both struggled to keep their eyes open sitting in Section 113 of Target Field during the Twins' game against the Orioles. Rozycki had flown to Minneapolis two days before from Iceland after a trip for work to South Korea. Kathy Kepler arrived in Minneapolis on Friday morning after technical problems delayed her flight from Fort Myers, Florida. It forced her to sit in the Florida airport for 11 hours.

Then came Kepler's blast in the fourth inning.

"It was great when Max hit a home run because this crowd woke me up," Rozycki said from his seat during the sixth inning. "I hope he hits another one so that I stay awake."

Alas, Max had just the one in the Twins' 6-2 win, their second straight victory after a 1-8 road trip.

Kathy Kepler said it was "always surreal" to see her son play. It's something his parents do once a year, traveling from their home in Berlin, Germany, to watch him play for about 10 days. They will stay in the U.S. until the All-Star break.

Kepler's fourth-inning shot to the upper deck that gave the Twins a 5-0 lead was not the first home run his parents have watched him hit in person. But it served as another reminder of how his diverse upbringing in Germany helped him reach professional baseball while his American mother and Polish father watched from the stands.

“It’s awesome,” Max Kepler said. “I feel like they are my lucky charms.”

They are the ones who taught him how to approach professional sports despite neither having a background in baseball. Kepler’s parents drew on their training as professional ballet dancers.

They met at the Berlin Ballet Company in the early 1980s. Kathy Kepler, who grew up in Texas, auditioned for the company when it came to San Antonio.

“I thought I would only go there for a year,” she said.

She’s still there.

As a young kid, Kepler watched his father perform from backstage. Kepler’s ballet performances never left his living room, though.

“We tried to introduce him, but he said no,” Rozycki said. “He was seven when he said, ‘No way.’”

Kepler instead filled his schedule with a multitude of sports from soccer and skiing to baseball and swimming. His mother had him in the pool when he was only eight weeks old. Kathy Kepler didn’t want him to have the same fear of water with which she grew up. So she signed him up for classes.

Neither she nor her husband had a background in many of these sports. But that didn’t stop them from teaching him how to take care of his body. They helped him with leg cramps, how to properly warm up, how to eat healthy and more.

That has not stopped even now that Kepler’s 25. During the hot days in Chicago this past week that surpassed 100 degrees, his parents still checked in on him to ensure he was hydrated. Kathy Kepler said her son needed an IV because of the heat in Chicago.

“It’s just taking care of yourself when things get hard because it’s not easy,” she said.

That’s the same in ballet and baseball, Rozycki said. The same goes for discipline, work and analyzing mistakes when they occur.

Rozycki can’t help his son much in the department of analyzing baseball mistakes. He admits he doesn’t understand much about the sport.

His wife interjects to correct him.

“You know a lot about baseball,” she tells him.

“I don’t,” he says.

“You do,” she responds before turning back around. “He has learned so much.”

Max Kepler said his father has transferred to become a baseball fan more so than soccer, his original favorite sport. Rozycki tries to watch every Kepler at-bat from Berlin despite the time zone difference that forces him to stay up in the early hours of the morning if he wants to watch his son.

“I have asked him how he does it,” Kepler said. “He says he wakes up for my at-bats. He snoozes most of the time otherwise. It’s impressive.”

Rozycki said he’s proud of his son for reaching the highest level of baseball, which Rozycki tries to learn more about each day. But he’s often more interested in the physical aspect of preparation that professional athletes in the U.S. experience.

“In sports, there is a lot more money to research about the ball game than in dance,” said Rozycki, who now teaches ballet. “I am keeping my eyes on it and trying to transfer the information to dance. It is always very useful to learn because sports are very advanced in using all the knowledge about physical elements thanks to so much information that is accessible today.”

One life lesson they strived to instill in Max: if you’re going to do something, give 100 percent. That manifested itself often in sports, but this mentality didn’t stop there. Kathy Kepler said that it even meant that if he’s going to watch a movie, focus on the movie. Don’t do something else.

If the sixth inning is any indication, they practice this approach, too. When Kepler stepped to the plate, they paused the interview to watch their son.

“They were there for me whenever I needed them,” Kepler said. “Whenever I needed a ride to practice, they were there. Whenever I needed help

with school, they were there. They were always there. They were the most supportive parents I could ask for.”

Twins earn first back-to-back wins since June 19-20

If not for Kepler’s ninth home run of the year, Jake Cave might have turned in the play of the night.

Tim Beckham sent a pitch to deep center on the first pitch of the game, but Cave leaped and robbed him of a home run.

“It was pretty cool,” Cave said. “It’s up there with actually hitting a home run, it’s cool to be able to help the pitcher like that and take one back.”

Instead of a 1-0 lead for the Orioles, Cave gave Minnesota an early jolt that ended in a victory over Baltimore. The Twins improved to 37-48, still 11.5 games behind first-place Cleveland in the AL Central as the July 31 trade deadline approaches.

Minnesota’s bats joined in on the strong start. Hits from Joe Mauer, Brian Dozier and Jorge Polanco gave the Twins a 3-0 lead in the first that they never relinquished.

Starting pitcher Lance Lynn improved to 6-7 as he gave up six hits over six innings, with one earned run and three strikeouts.

“It looks like he’s really got command of his fastball,” manager Paul Molitor said. “He can notch it up when he needs to. We saw the velocity when he reached back and hit the mid-90’s. It was just a good effort overall.”

Taylor Motter optioned to Double-A

Taylor Motter, who the Twins activated from the seven-day disabled list Friday, will head to Double-A Chattanooga instead of Triple-A Rochester.

Minnesota sent him down two levels because the Twins and Motter want him to play. If he went to Rochester, he would not get as much playing time because the Triple-A All-Star break spans Monday through Wednesday.

“I’m glad he’s doing better,” Molitor said pregame. “We all know the collision in Chicago was violent. He recovered well and it’s one of those things where he hasn’t played in a week. We thought it would be good to get him down there and back to playing and see. ... He is ready to get back to work.”