



**Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
Wednesday, September 26, 2018**

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Another milestone for Mauer as he mulls retirement

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | September 25, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- Joe Mauer will wait until the offseason to announce whether he intends to keep playing or retire, but the possibility remains that this could be his last week in a Twins uniform.

Mauer, a six-time All-Star, three-time American League batting champ and the 2009 AL MVP, is wrapping up his 15th season with the Twins, and hasn't given an indication yet on his plans for the future. The 35-year-old St. Paul native will either remain with Minnesota or retire after a highly decorated career, but Twins manager Paul Molitor said he hasn't heard from Mauer about his eventual decision.

"It's always a little strange to answer when you don't know the future," Molitor said. "And so out of respect [for] Joe, you don't try to get too deep into that. But it's going to be fun to watch him play. I'm hoping there's a little sense of acknowledgement each and every time he steps on that field, from however many fans come out to games this week. But yeah, it's a little strange knowing that with everything kind of hanging in the balance, that we're going to watch Joe play this week."

Mauer reached yet another milestone against the Tigers on Tuesday, as he set the Twins franchise record for most times to reach base safely in a career, getting on base for the 3,073rd time with a leadoff single in the first. He passed Hall of Famer Harmon Killebrew's total of 3,072 times on base and received a standing ovation from the crowd at Target Field. He received the ball after the game and the Twins also will keep first base to add to their collection of artifacts.

"When you mention Harmon and you mention Kirby [Puckett] and mention Tony [Oliva], and some of the other greats, to be up there with them is very special and humbling," said Mauer, who reached base three times in a 4-2 loss. "It was a nice moment."

Mauer had a resurgent 2017, but hasn't been able to replicate that this season, hitting .278/.346/.375 with six homers and 25 doubles in 121 games, entering Tuesday. But he's still a Gold Glove-caliber defender at first and is universally respected in the clubhouse given his demeanor and all that he's accomplished over his career.

"The professionalism, the performance, the things he's done here in his hometown community for a number of years -- it's just been the full package," Molitor said. "Everything that we can ask for Joe, he's always been there to do it."

Mauer has reached several other milestones this year, including getting his 2,000th hit and scoring his 1,000th run. The former No. 1 overall pick in the 2001 Draft is a career .306/.388/.439 hitter with 143 homers, 426 doubles and 921 RBIs in 1,851 games. He also won five Silver Slugger Awards and three Gold Gloves back when he was catching before he suffered a career-altering concussion in 2013 that forced him to move to first base.

"Since Day 1, coming out as that No. 1 pick and his short ascent to the big leagues and the things he's been able to do, it's quite a resume," Molitor said. "We just have to find out whether we are getting near the end of it or if it is going to be extended."

Molitor, though, said he doesn't anticipate Mauer to do anything in the final week that will tip off his plans for the future such as a special salute to the crowd during the final game on Sunday.

"I don't even know if that's been talked about or in the works," Molitor said. "I don't think Joe is going to want to do anything that signifies his intention."

Mauer, though, said he plans to play every day this week, but likely not in both games of Friday's doubleheader.

"I've always prided myself on being available and getting out there and playing," Mauer said. "This will be no different. I'd like to play every one of them."

Worth noting

- Third baseman Miguel Sano still hasn't been ruled out from returning this week from his left knee injury, but they're still trying to find the source of his discomfort. Sano injured his knee sliding into second on Sept. 4 and returned in Detroit on Sept. 18, only to return to the Twin Cities for more testing.

"I'm not giving up," Molitor said. "Miggy is still not symptom-free from some of the things that are concerning so we're just going to continue to address that the best that we can. If I get something finalized about yes or no, I'll let you guys know as soon as I find out."

- Left fielder Eddie Rosario will miss the rest of the season with a left quad strain, which he aggravated in Detroit on Sept. 17. Rosario finishes with a .288/.323/.479 slash line with 24 homers and 77 RBIs in 138 games.

- Catcher Mitch Garver, who suffered a concussion on a foul tip on Sept. 12, passed his concussion protocol and could return as a designated hitter or pinch-hitter this week. But Molitor said Garver will not catch again this year.

Stewart stellar, but 'pen falters in loss to Tigers **Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | September 26, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS -- Rookie Kohl Stewart has continued to improve since making his Major League debut in mid-August, and has been adapting well to his role as a primary pitcher with the Twins using an opener before his recent outings.

Stewart recorded six shutout frames against the Tigers, but closer Trevor Hildenberger struggled again in a 4-2 loss in the series opener on Tuesday night at Target Field. Hildenberger surrendered back-to-back RBI singles to Nicholas Castellanos and Niko Goodrum in the eighth before Trevor May allowed two inherited runs to score on a two-out double from James McCann. Hildenberger has a 29.70 ERA over his last five outings, but manager Paul Molitor went with him despite Stewart having thrown 75 pitches.

"It's a fair question, as well as he pitched, and to get us that deep in the game with a one-run lead," Molitor said of the decision to pull Stewart. "He's done a nice job of adapting to the primary role of coming in, and the last few outings have been really good. But we felt we had a good chance of getting those last six outs out of the 'pen tonight, and kind of in sync with the whole opener format."

Stewart, who allowed an unearned run in Detroit on Sept. 17, improved his ERA to 3.68 in 36 2/3 innings and hasn't allowed more than three runs in any of his eight outings. He's been particularly impressive in his four appearances as the primary pitcher in relief, posting a 1.33 ERA with just three earned runs allowed in 20 1/3 innings. But both Molitor and Stewart believe his success is more tied to better command than simply attributing it to the opener strategy.

"I think I've just been executing better, to be honest," Stewart said. "First couple starts, I wasn't throwing strikes and I just didn't execute well."

Lefty Gabriel Moya, serving as the opener for the fifth time, pitched around a walk and an error for a scoreless first before handing it over to Stewart. Stewart surrendered just two hits and no walks with five strikeouts, giving up a single to JaCoby Jones in the second and a single to Jeimer Candelario in the sixth.

"As the game went on, I felt like I got into a bit of a zone," Stewart said. "I wanted to keep going. It's not my decision. My job is to take the ball and throw until they tell me to stop."

Minnesota's offense was quiet, but Joe Mauer reached a milestone with a leadoff single in the first to set the club record for most times reaching base safely in a career at 3,073 passing Harmon Killebrew. Mauer reached second on a wild pitch from right-hander Spencer Turnbull and scored

on a double from Jorge Polanco.

Mauer also singled in the eighth off reliever Joe Jimenez and scored on a one-out RBI single from Jake Cave. Minnesota loaded the bases with two outs, but Logan Forsythe lined out to center to end the potential rally.

Despite the loss, the Twins held a special ceremony in the clubhouse for Mauer after the game, making sure to acknowledge his latest impressive accomplishment in what could be his final week with the club.

"This one's certainly very significant when you think about the people that have put this uniform on in the past however many years it's been," Molitor said. "Harmon, the man he was, the player he was and to climb that last rung on the ladder, puts him in an exclusive category that he's the all-time Twins leader in most appearances on-base, and we recognized that postgame. I just really, really enjoy seeing our players reactions to some of the things that Joe's accomplishing."

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Right fielder Max Kepler made a great running catch in the second to rob Harold Castro of what would've been his first Major League hit. Kepler covered 73 feet in 4.3 seconds to make the inning-ending grab.

HE SAID IT

"Anything Joe does, I'm really proud for him and happy for him. Wonderful baseball player, one of the best I've been around. He's still playing and who knows what he's gonna do after this year. But when you play long enough, that's what they're always gonna say; you play long enough and you're gonna start setting records. But that kind of record and that kind of name -- that's putting yourself up there with one of the best players I've ever had the chance to see and meet in Harmon. When your name starts passing guys like that, that means you've done something." -- Former Twins manager and current Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire, on Mauer's accomplishment

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

The umpires made a critical review in the eighth, when Mikie Mahtook grounded into a potential inning-ending double play to shortstop but Forsythe didn't make the throw to first after a slide from Goodrum into second. The umpires checked to see if Goodrum made a bona fide slide into second and after a review, the call stood with no double play. Molitor, though, believed Goodrum overslid the bag and rolled, which didn't allow Forsythe to make the throw. If Forsythe attempted to throw, the call could've been different, Molitor said. After the replay, McCann hit his two-run double to break the game open.

"I was a little disturbed by it," Molitor said. "With this new rule in place, and the criteria of a bona fide slide, I don't feel that the slide met those things. There's things in there about having to try to make an attempt to make a throw, but we've clarified in the past that when certain things happen, the guy's not going to throw the ball."

UP NEXT

Right-hander Jake Odorizzi (7-10, 4.35 ERA) will make his final start of the season in the second game of the series on Wednesday at 7:10 p.m. CT at Target Field. Odorizzi has finished the year strong, posting 3.83 ERA in nine starts since Aug. 3. The Tigers counter with lefty Matthew Boyd (9-12, 4.16 ERA).

Joe Mauer breaks Harmon Killebrew's on-base record during Twins loss to Tigers **La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 26, 2018**

A single to left field. Ball taken out of play. Standing ovation. Tip of the helmet.

The final week of Joe Mauer's season has begun, and it started with a not-so-random act of Mauerness — his trademark opposite-field single, off Tigers righthander Spencer Turnbull to begin the bottom of the first inning Tuesday night.

While Mauer has routinely served the ball that way throughout his 15-year career, this particular one was more impactful. It was the 3,073rd time Mauer has reached base, breaking a tie with Hall of Famer Harmon Killebrew for the most in Twins history.

The ball was retrieved and tossed toward the Twins dugout for collection. The scoreboard noted the achievement, and fans from the announced crowd of 23,849 at Target Field rose for a standing ovation as Mauer tipped his helmet to all sides of the ballpark.

"That was good, to get on base there in the first inning," said Mauer, who has reached base 3,075 times in all — he was 2-for-4 with a walk and two runs scored in the Twins' 4-2 loss to Detroit. "That was a nice moment there, for sure."

Tigers catcher James McCann, in a classy move, stood between home plate and the pitcher's mound to hold up the game so Mauer could have a moment to acknowledge fans.

“That’s something he doesn’t have to do,” Mauer said, “but recognizing that situation, that’s a class act by a class guy. I’ve gotten to know him over the last couple of years. He’s a competitor and a good guy too.”

And that’s how Mauer’s final week of the season began. He has stated his desire to mull over retirement in the weeks after the season, raising the possibility these are the final games of his career. It likely won’t be the only time he tips his cap this week.

And after Mauer has stopped at least three times during home games this month to salute the crowd, Twins manager Paul Molitor hopes the first baseman, who is one extra-base hit away from 600 for his career, does it several more times this week.

“It’s going to be fun to watch him play,” Molitor said before the game. “I’m hoping there’s a little sense of acknowledgment each and every time he steps on that field, from however many fans come out to games this week.”

Mauer, 35, has not made up his mind on retirement, but some Twins fans might not take any chances and watch the three-time AL batting champion play one more time. His age, the fact he suffered another concussion during the season and the fact that his third child is due around Thanksgiving all will weigh in his decision.

“Yeah, it’s a little strange knowing that with everything kind of hanging in the balance, that we’re going to watch Joe play this week,” Molitor said.

The clubhouse was closed a little longer than normal following the game as the team celebrated Mauer’s milestone. Molitor spoke, and Mauer was given both the ball he hit for the single and the first base bag.

“I’ll have the team keep the base, and I’ll take the ball,” Mauer said. “It’s kind of fun to get some of these mementos from these days.”

But Molitor’s words will stick the most with Mauer, who now tops a list that includes Killebrew (3,072), Kirby Puckett, (2,810) and Rod Carew (2,718). Molitor touched on that during his speech.

“Mollie had a nice little thing here after,” Mauer said. “You mention Harmon and you mention Kirby and mention [Rod] and some of the other greats, to be up there with them is very special and humbling. It kind of really didn’t hit me until the second half. It was a nice moment.”

Trevor Hildenberger's September struggles continue as Twins fall to Detroit 4-2 **La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 26, 2018**

The Twins opened well, but the Tigers closed better.

After the Twins threw seven scoreless innings at Detroit, the Tigers jumped on the Twins bullpen in the eighth and held on for a 4-2 victory Tuesday night to open the second-to-last series of the season at Target Field.

Trevor Hildenberger gave up three hits and walk in the eighth, including RBI singles by Nick Castellanos and Niko Goodrum. He was replaced by Trevor May, who gave up a two-run double to James McCann.

Hildenberger, who has earned most of the Twins’ saves since Fernando Rodney was traded, has given up runs in five consecutive outings, posting a 29.73 ERA over that stretch. Manager Paul Molitor said Tuesday he will try different pitchers in different roles this week. So he inserted Hildenberger in the eighth instead of the ninth.

“We talked to the guys about doing some things differently this week, giving some people different opportunities to get outs in different slots,” Molitor said. “It’s just one of those things.”

Jake Cave hit an RBI single in the bottom of the inning, but Detroit got out of the eighth when Logan Forsythe flied out to center against Alex Wilson with the bases loaded.

For the second outing in a row against the Tigers, righthander Kohl Stewart and his opener, lefthander Gabriel Moya, worked it perfectly. Moya pitched a scoreless first, and after the Twins scored in the bottom of the inning on a Joe Mauer single and Jorge Polanco double, Stewart followed with six shutout innings.

Stewart, the fourth overall pick in the 2013 draft, looked composed and in control, lowering his ERA to 3.68. He gave up two hits and struck out five Tuesday. The 23-year-old has a 1.33 ERA over 20⅓ innings in four appearances this month, all as the “primary pitcher.”

“I think I’ve just been executing better, to be honest,” said Stewart, who had a 6.61 ERA in four August starts, including his first two against the Tigers. “First couple starts, I wasn’t throwing strikes and I just didn’t execute well. I think lately I’ve just been executing better.”

Berrios will take a break again

Righthander Jose Berrios is expected to make his final start of the season Friday when the Twins play a doubleheader with the Chicago White Sox. The All-Star will likely pitch more than 190 innings in a season for the first time in the majors — he pitched 192 innings in 2017 between the World Baseball Classic, Class AAA Rochester and the Twins — and has a chance to end the season with a sub-4.00 ERA for the second consecutive season.

Berrios, 24, confirmed he will not pitch in the Puerto Rican winter league this offseason. He has had a full workload and knows the Twins prefer he spend the offseason in his normal conditioning program to get ready for spring training.

He frequently has posted video on Twitter of his offseason workouts — last year, that included him pushing a small truck across a field.

“I’m going to take three weeks to rest, then start working out,” he said. “Three weeks is long enough. Then I get bored.”

Injury updates

- There remains a chance that catcher Mitch Garver will get a few at-bats during the final week of the season. Garver, out since Sept. 12 because of a concussion, won’t catch but is getting close to being able to play first base, serve as the designated hitter or pinch hit. The Twins were waiting for the go-ahead from MLB to use Garver.
- Molitor is holding out hope Miguel Sano can play this week. The third baseman has played only once since Sept. 5 because of a lower left leg contusion.
- Righthander Aaron Slegers, sidelined since July 11 by a sore right shoulder, was activated from the disabled list.

Twins postgame: Interference not called, and Molitor disagrees

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 25, 2018

Here are three quick thoughts following the Twins' 4-2 loss to Detroit:

MOLITOR HAS PROBLEMS WITH RULING: The Twins didn't look to have a chance at a double play in the eighth when Niko Goodrum was forced out at second, but Goodrum looked to come a little bit across the bag while sticking his leg out. Twins second baseman Logan Forsythe didn't attempt a throw as Goodrum collided with him, knocking him off of balance. Again, I don't know if he had a chance at a double play, but the slide looked illegal to me. The umpires decided to review the play (not a Twins challenge) but they decided that there was no interference. It looked so to me. Twins manager Paul Molitor was not happy with the decision. Umpire crew chief Larry Vanover even came over to Molitor to explain the decision - which you don't see very often after these replays. "Well, I was a little disturbed by it," Molitor said of the ruling. "With this new rule in place, and the criteria of a bona fide slide, I don't feel that the slide met those things. There's things in there about having to try to make an attempt to make a throw, but we've clarified in the past that when certain things happen, the guy's not going to throw the ball ... just throw it away and then have it not overturned, then you're stuck with the guy on third who's gonna score and everything else. I didn't like the explanation, I don't really agree with it, and I'm gonna follow up tomorrow with some people and see what I can get, if I can get a little bit more clarification on why they made the ruling that they did."

HILDY GETTING HIT: That's five straight shaky outings for reliever Trevor Hildenberger, who was charged with four earned runs during the game-changing eighth inning. His ERA over his last five outings is 29.73. When he's not throwing hittable pitches, he's getting outlasted during lengthy battles with hitters before yielding hits. Nothing is working right now. ""We talked to the guys about doing some things differently this week, giving some people different opportunities to get outs in different slots," Molitor said. "It's just one of those things. You throw a first pitch to a guy who you don't know a lot about and he gets a base hit. Some guys put together some good at-bats. The patience in particular after getting ahead and working a walk. We all know Castellanos is a pretty darn good hitter. We had a chance to contain at 2-1 and keep ourselves in the game but after the slide and McCann's good at-bat off Trevor, we couldn't make that up at the end." Not the way to finish a season. I think Hildenberger can be a solid set-up man, but he's got to learn the hitters so he can stay one step ahead of them.

GARDY ON MAUER: Didn't have time to get this in for the dead tree edition, but here's Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire on Joe Mauer passing Harmon Killebrew to become the Twins all-time leader in times reaching base: "Anything Joe does, I'm really proud for him and happy for him. Wonderful baseball player, one of the best I've been around and he's still playing. Who know what he's going to do after this year, but if you play long enough – that's what they're always going to say – if you play long enough you're going to start setting records. But that kind of record and that kind of name, that's putting yourself up there with one of the best players I've ever had the chance to see and meet in Harmon. When you're name starts passing guys like that, that means you've done something."

Tuesday's Twins-Detroit game recap

GAME RECAP

IMPACT PLAYER

Spencer Turnbull, Detroit

The righthander gave up a run right away but then shut down the Twins over six innings.

BY THE NUMBERS

5 Consecutive outings Trevor Hildenberger has given up at least one run.

12 Consecutive scoreless innings for Kohl Stewart against the Tigers.

10-7 The Twins' record vs. Detroit this season.

ON DECK

Twins righthander Jake Odorizzi will go for his season-high third consecutive quality start, while Detroit counters with lefthander Matthew Boyd.

Kohl Stewart continues turnaround season in 4-2 Twins loss to Detroit Tigers

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | September 25, 2018

Kohl Stewart didn't get his third career victory, but the Twins' rookie right-hander still added to his remarkable turnaround season with six more scoreless innings in Tuesday night's 4-2 loss to the Detroit Tigers.

Pushing his combined innings total to 145 1/3, including two minor league levels, Stewart followed opener Gabriel Moya to the mound and gave up just a pair of hits: JaCoby Jones' one-out single in the second and Jeimer Candelario's leadoff hit in the sixth.

Despite that dominance, Stewart was lifted at just 75 pitches by Twins manager Paul Molitor before a four-run Tigers seventh keyed by James McCann's two-run double off Trevor May. Stewart, the fourth overall pick in 2013, threw just 82 innings in 2017 because of nagging knee issues but could still start Sunday's season finale on normal rest.

"I want to keep going," Stewart said. "I just want to throw, you know? It's not my decision. My job is to take the ball and throw until they tell me to stop. Mollie said they were going to the bullpen there, and that's their call."

With a first-inning single to left, Joe Mauer moved past Harmon Killebrew for most times reaching base in Twins history. Mauer, who also singled in the eighth and walked in the ninth, has reached safely 3,075 times in his 15 seasons.

He's also two hits shy of another hall of famer, Duke Snider, on the all-time list. Mauer has 2,114 hits.

The Twins, who had taken six of seven from the Tigers, need one more win this week to avoid their sixth 90-loss season in the past eight years.

Since running into trouble in a four-run sixth against the New York Yankees on Sept. 11, Stewart has gone a dozen innings without allowing an earned run. He has 10 strikeouts in that span and just three walks, lowering his earned-run average to 3.68 in 36 2/3 big-league innings.

Stewart, who turns 24 in two weeks, also has shown the ability to handle the early-game entrance required by the opener/primary concept.

"Who's to say what he'd be doing if he got the ball from Pitch One?" Molitor said. "We consider that, but we're trying to see what kind of results we get out of putting this into practice. So far he's put himself on the map in terms of a guy who's showing he can get people out."

His rookie status intact in for next year, the Houston-reared right-hander faced the Tigers in half of his outings after being called up on Aug. 11. In those 19 innings against the 93-loss Tigers, Stewart has a 2.84 ERA.

Against all other big-league competition, his ERA is 4.58, but that includes five scoreless innings on the road against his hometown Astros on Sept. 4. For a \$4.54 million bonus recipient who was passed over by the entire industry last December in the Rule 5 draft, it's been quite the statement.

Tuesday, with a four-seam fastball up to 94 mph and much better command of his one-seam sinker at 91-92 mph, Stewart retired 11 straight during one stretch. He worked around a botched double-play ball by Logan Forsythe in the sixth to retire ex-teammate Niko Goodrum and Mikie Mahtook on harmless fly balls.

The one-seamer, a new pitch in Stewart's arsenal, betrayed him in outings of four and five walks against the Tigers (Aug. 18) and Yankees, but the pitch has been behaving better of late.

"It's a big part," he said. "That's what I do. I just sink it, and once I get ahead I try to put guys away. I think the couple starts where I've had a hard time, I haven't been in the zone. I have to establish that sinker over the plate. Once guys know I have that in my back pocket, I think I can go to my other stuff and continue to work it."

Torii Hunter example could provide template for Joe Mauer's final week of 2018

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | September 25, 2018

Twins manager Paul Molitor has been here before, trying to determine how the final weekend might look for a revered player considering retirement.

In 2015, it was Torii Hunter who sat out the final game after the Twins came up just short in their wild-card push. Hunter addressed the crowd on Fan Appreciation Day, so might Joe Mauer do the same come Sunday?

"I don't know that," Molitor said. "I don't even know if that's even been talked about or in the works in any capacity. I don't think Joe is going to want to do anything that might overly signify his intention."

While Hunter was 40 and went on to announce his retirement one month after the season ended, the 35-year-old Mauer plans to weigh his options in October as well. With the Chicago White Sox slated to start left-hander Carlos Rodon on Saturday and righty Dylan Covey on Sunday, odds are Mauer will play in the season finale, but he suggested a sprint to the finish line.

"I've always prided myself on being available and getting out there and playing," Mauer said after Tuesday's loss. "This will be no different. I'd like to play every one of them, We do have that doubleheader on Friday. We'll see when we get there. I plan on playing them all."

As for the Hunter comparison, Molitor suggested Mauer's uninterrupted service and his place on franchise lists creates some separation.

"Torii obviously was tremendously impactful here," Molitor said. "Not only in terms of how he played, but the stretch of years he had in participating and being a part of postseason teams. Then he left and had some success in other places and came back for the final hurrah, which turned out to be a good thing for him and for us."

Mauer, of course, has been with the Twins since they took him with the first overall pick in 2001. He singled to left in the first inning Tuesday, passing Harmon Killebrew atop the Twins' all-time list with 3,073 times on base.

"It's quite a resume," Molitor said. "The professionalism, the performance, the things he's done here in his hometown community for a number of years, it's just been the full package. We just have to find out whether we are getting near the end of it or if it is going to be extended."

SANO STILL OUT

Miguel Sano (left knee) remained out of the Twins' lineup Tuesday, but Molitor said he wasn't ruling out a return for the slugging third baseman before season's end.

"With Miggy still not symptom-free from some of the things that are concerning, we're just going to continue to address that the best that we can," Molitor said. "I'm not giving up."

While left fielder Eddie Rosario (strained quadriceps) won't play again this year, Mitch Garver (concussion) was awaiting final approval from Major League Baseball to return to game action.

Garver won't catch again in 2018, but he could get a few at-bats off the bench of as designated hitter once the final paperwork is filed.

BRIEFLY

Right-hander Aaron Slegers, who last pitched in the majors on July 10 due to a shoulder strain, was activated off the disabled list before Tuesday's game.

Reliever Addison Reed rejoined the club after his wife Cady gave birth last week to the couple's second child, another daughter. All is well with mother and baby.

Joe Mauer sets Twins' record for reaching base in loss
Associated Press | Fox Sports North | September 26, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — Harold Castro completed the minor league season and was home in Venezuela spending time with his son and focusing on the offseason when he got a surprise phone call to return and play with the Detroit Tigers.

Castro's first career hit started an eighth-inning rally that led the Tigers to a 4-2 victory over Minnesota on Tuesday in a game in which Joe Mauer set the Twins' record for reaching base.

"I was relaxing with my son," Castro said. "I was taking time with him because of eight months here. I was eating with him when I received the call to the major leagues."

Mauer singled in the first inning, reaching base for the 3,073 time in his career and surpassing Hall of Famer Harmon Killebrew. Mauer stood at first base and waved his hat to the home crowd after the feat was acknowledged on the Target Field video board.

"You mention Harmon and you mention Kirby (Puckett) and mention Tony (Oliva) and some of the other greats, to be up there with them is very special and humbling," Mauer said. "It kind of really didn't hit me until the second half. It was a nice moment."

Detroit selected Castro's contract from Triple-A Toledo last week and made the call to Venezuela for him to return and play the final week of the season. He made his first career start in his second game, and singled to start a four-run rally in the eighth inning for the Tigers.

Castro stole second base and scored on Nicholas Castellanos' RBI single. Niko Goodrum added an RBI single and James McCann capped the inning with a two-run double.

"We saw him in spring training, he can pick it," Detroit manager Ron Gardenhire said. "We needed an infielder desperately. Well, if we're going to make him go through all that, he's going to play. He's going to get a chance to play and then, lucky for us, he got his first major league hit."

Victor Alcantara (1-0) earned the win with a scoreless inning in relief of starter Spencer Turnbull, who allowed one run in six innings in his second major league start. Shane Greene earned his 32nd save.

Twins reliever Trevor Hildenberger (4-6) surrendered four runs and retired one batter while giving up three hits and a walk.

Mauer finished with two hits, a walk and two runs scored. Mauer could be playing his final homestand after 15 seasons with Minnesota. He is a free agent after the season and has said he'll decide after the season whether to retire.

"They grabbed the base and the ball," Mauer said of setting the record. "I was telling (senior director of communications Dustin Morse) that I'll have the team keep the base and I'll take the ball. It's kind of fun to get some of these mementos from these days."

POTENT PRIMARY

Kohl Stewart pitched six scoreless innings as the Twins' "primary" pitcher. He gave up two hits and struck out five batters after Gabriel Moya started and pitched one inning. Minnesota is 3-4 in games in which it's used an opener.

Stewart has thrown 12 straight scoreless innings and has allowed just three runs in 20 1/3 innings in four games as one of the team's primary pitchers.

"You're trying to get these guys out on positive notes, and he did really well," manager Paul Molitor said. "He's done a nice job of adapting to the primary role of coming in, and the last few outings have been really good."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Tigers: CF JaCoby Jones was back in the lineup after missing Sunday's game with a shoulder injury.

Twins: Molitor reiterated that OF Eddie Rosario's season is done because of a right quadriceps injury. ... Molitor is hopeful Miguel Sano, who has played just one game since Sept. 4 because of a bruised leg, can still return this season. ... C Mitch Garver has cleared concussion tests. Garver has been out since Sept. 12. ... RHP Aaron Slegers was activated off the disabled list after recovering from right shoulder inflammation.

UP NEXT

Right-hander Jake Odorizzi (7-10, 4.35 ERA) will make his 30th start of the season for Minnesota on Wednesday. Detroit will counter with left-hander Matt Boyd (9-12, 4.16), who is making his 31st start of the year in the middle of the three-game series. Odorizzi is coming off back-to-back quality starts for the first time this season after beating the Tigers on Sept. 18. He allowed two runs on four hits in 6 1/3 innings. Boyd had his shortest outing of the year in his last start, giving up five runs — two earned — in 1 1/3 innings against Kansas City. He's 1-2 with a 3.80 ERA against the Twins this season.

Twins, sans Sano, host Tigers

The Sports Xchange | Fox Sports North | September 26, 2018

Miguel Sano won't be in the Minnesota Twins' starting lineup Wednesday when they host the Detroit Tigers at Target Field, but manager Paul Molitor isn't ruling out a return before the regular season comes to an end this weekend.

Sano has been sidelined since suffering a left knee injury earlier this month at Houston. The injury was originally diagnosed as a bruised leg and an MRI showed no structural damage to the knee, which he had surgically repaired in November.

He's made progress in his recovery but still isn't 100 percent, so the Twins have been taking a patient approach with their third baseman.

"With Miggy still not symptom-free from some of the things that are concerning, we're just going to continue to address that the best that we can," Molitor said. "I'm not giving up."

The Twins will be without left fielder Eddie Rosario for the rest of the year while Mitch Garver has yet to be cleared after suffering a concussion. When he does return, the Twins won't use him at catcher but hope to get him some at-bats off the bench or as the designated hitter.

Right-hander Jake Odorizzi (7-10, 4.35 ERA) gets the start Wednesday. He's pitched well over the last few weeks, posting a 3.83 ERA over his last nine starts, including a two-run effort against Detroit his last time out. He needed 84 pitches to get through six innings.

"It's not ideal to have them your last couple games of the season," Odorizzi said of his string of good starts. "You prefer to have it to build on during the season. Nevertheless, I'm not going to get too picky. I'm just glad it's happening now."

"Getting early-count outs, executing pitches early, that's the big thing. Getting early-count outs, that's how you get deep in the game. Not trying to waste pitches. Just going after guys."

Odorizzi is 3-1 with a 3.15 ERA in seven career starts against the Tigers, including 1-0, 4.41 in three starts this season. Detroit's Nicholas Castellano, who is batting .301 with 22 home runs and 87 RBIs — all team highs — is 3-for-16 with four walks and four strikeouts versus Odorizzi.

The Tigers counter with left-hander Matthew Boyd (9-12). He is looking to bounce back after surrendering five runs (two earned) and six hits, including a pair of home runs over 1 1/3 innings in his last outing — his shortest start in two years.

"Gardy definitely made the right move getting me out of there," Boyd said. "I just didn't have anything out there."

Boyd has a 4.16 ERA in a team-leading 30 starts for Detroit this season but he's struggled on the road this season, going 3-9 with a 5.52 ERA away from Comerica Park, including a pair of losses in two starts at Minnesota.

He is 6-4 with a 3.93 ERA in 15 career starts versus Minnesota, including 1-2, 4.80 in four turns this season. Robbie Grossman is 6-for-23 with two home runs and seven walks versus Boyd.

The \$23 Million Question: Why Do Some Twins Fans Despise Hometown Hero Joe Mauer?

Gabriel Baumgaertner | Sports Illustrated | September 25, 2018

Gaze at the Minnesota Twins' all-time leaders, and Joe Mauer will be in 27 different categories. Nestled among franchise icons like Harmon Killebrew, Rod Carew and Kirby Puckett, Mauer sits near the top of the traditional categories (hits, on-base percentage, runs), the favored sabermetric stats (total WAR, weighted runs created, win probability added) and the ignominious distinctions (strikeouts, double plays grounded into, outs made). All of which is to say that Mauer is a lifelong Minnesota Twin, and his No. 7 will likely be retired sometime in the next decade. Mauer announced earlier this month that he will consider retirement in the offseason after 15 seasons in the big leagues

Add his records to his status as hometown hero—the St. Paul-raised three-sport prep star drafted first overall by the Twins—and you'd think his reputation would be pristine in a city fiercely defensive of its own.

That was all true until he made \$23 million per year.

A vocal subset of Twins fans want Mauer out, arguing that he is undeserving of the eight-year, \$184 million contract he signed in 2010. They cite statistics (he hasn't hit more than 11 homers since signing the contract after hitting 28 in 2009), his effort level (many questioned why he missed almost half the season with bilateral leg weakness in '11) and his personality (rote and stilted to many). Some think it's restricted to the darker corners of Twins internet. Others think it's more than a vocal minority.

Regardless, there is a group that holds Mauer in contempt despite his otherwise immense popularity in his hometown. One fan went as far to customize a t-shirt with \$23 MILLION rainbowing over Mauer's No. 7.

"Some of us started to call him 'Baby Jesus,'" says Andy Rennecke, a former sportswriter and Twins lifer who is a proud Mauer cynic. "It felt like you couldn't be critical of Joe because everybody felt like he walked on water. He was one of us. How dare anyone be critical of him."

To the outsider, it's hard to fathom why any fan would begrudge Mauer. His 2009 MVP campaign was one of the most astonishing seasons of any hitter over the last two decades (.365/.444/.587 with a 171 OPS+), and he's a six-time All-Star who has finished top-10 in the MVP voting four times. Last season, he .305/.384/.417 in 141 games to help the Twins to their first playoff appearance since 2010. He's remained with the Twins throughout several losing stretches instead of clamoring for a chance to compete for a World Series ring.

He might be most notable for fulfilling every positive stereotype of Minnesotans. When he was maybe the most sought-after athlete in the entire country as a five-star quarterback prospect committed to play at Florida State, Mauer maintained a slow-spoken and humble demeanor hardly befitting of a 6'4" superstar. During his career with the Twins, he's remained his assiduous self and used his social media presence mostly to be a doting dad. He used the same at-bat music—T.I.'s "What You Know"—for 13 consecutive seasons.

"Had [Mauer] left for the Red Sox or Yankees in 2010, those same fans who are calling for his head now would have burned down Target Field," says Aaron Gleeman, Editor-in-Chief of Baseball Prospectus and host of the Twins podcast Gleeman and the Geek. "There are all sorts of these inferiority complexes at play and there are some fans where no amount of context matters, they just like to get mad."

His laconic disposition doesn't endear himself to everyone, and those critics are further emboldened by the team's disappointing 2018 campaign. After reaching the AL Wild-Card Game last year against the Yankees, Minnesota is 72–83 as the season nears its conclusion. Mauer's fine if unremarkable season sits at .276/.344/.374 with six homers, his lowest total in a season which he's played over 100 games. Rennecke says the fan base didn't really sour on Mauer until 2011, when the \$23 million man played only 82 games because of bilateral leg weakness—an injury indecipherable and thus unacceptable to a lot of the fan base.

"Joe's personality lends itself to a lot of ridicule. He shows no emotions, he's always the same guy. He's almost like a robot," Rennecke says. "So, when he was suffering from a mysterious injury like "bilateral leg weakness" in 2011 and getting \$23 million per season while the team was tanking, fans started to rebel against him.

"In Minnesota, we're hardworking people and don't like it if you're being paid and you're not out there performing."

The calculus of fans like Rennecke is common and understandable on-face: The handsomely paid players should be stars on the field. Mauer was the team's best hitter, so he should have routinely hit over .300 with 20-plus homers and bundle of runs driven in. The simple view (or simplistic one, depending on your perspective) was that being a run creator was more important than being a patient hitter; swing at a pitch outside the zone if it means you could drive a run in. Emboldening to some fans and heretical to the sabermetric community, this view bears striking resemblance to the local criticism of Cincinnati's Joey Votto—another former MVP derided by some local fans, columnists and radio hosts for being too smart at the plate.

Mauer's average rarely dipped after the contract, but his only great power season came in 2009, and it sapped even further after he suffered a concussion in '11. This is what seems to miff Gleeman the most: He doesn't think Mauer's critics account for the severity of the season-ending concussion that the catcher sustained in August 2013. Mauer concluded the season hitting .324/.404/.476 with a 142 OPS+, almost perfectly in line with his career line of .323/.405/.468 and a 135 OPS+. Since the injury and subsequent move to first base in '14, though, Mauer's production dipped to .277/.358/.387 and a 104 OPS+.

"There was a perception that he tricked the Twins after the MVP season," Gleeman says. "But he stopped being a .320 hitter and became a .275 hitter after the concussion."

The Twins were also terrible after Mauer got paid. From 2011 to '18, the Twins endured four consecutive 90-plus loss seasons and a 103-loss year in '16, while compiling just two winning seasons and appearing in one playoff game. The Twins didn't surround Mauer with much talent, and the perception was that Mauer was hogging the money.

“Let’s look at the real thing, and that’s the W-L record. He’s a great player, a Twins Hall of Famer, but he’s also one of most overrated players of his generation,” Rennecke says. “He’s a singles hitter that turned one big year into a huge contract. He’s Minnesota’s Ryan Howard.”

Gleeman exudes an unabashed love for baseball and infectious friendliness, but the argument that Mauer’s bloated contract precluded the Twins from signing better players triggers an anxious calm. Part of me expected the Kill Bill Ironside Siren to begin playing before his answer.

“I think this is true of all sports and all fans in that they will very often side with the billionaires over the millionaires,” Gleeman says. “In Minnesota every dollar is treated as not another player, perception that \$23 million has kept them from signing others when the team has not filled their payroll base. The family that owns the Twins are multi-billionaires who own huge businesses around Minnesota. I don’t want them to go nuts, I just want them to spend 51% of their revenue. They don’t do that.”

Now that Mauer is a pending free agent, the question will be resolved soon. He might retire or he might sign with a team to be a DH or bench bat to try to make a deep run in the playoffs.

What’s clear, however, is that Mauer, once considered the franchise savior will likely finish his vaunted Twins career 0–10 in the playoffs. The question is whether that’s a fair basis to judge his 15 years as a member of the hometown team.

“The front office’s ineptitude is mainly the reason that the franchise has been in disarray since the beginning of 2011,” Rennecke says. “But, there’s Joe. He’s still here. And he’s the scapegoat ... like it or not.”

For most Twins fans, the end of the 2018 season might be the end for one of the city’s most beloved players. For Rennecke and the cynics, that annual \$23 million price tag will finally be off the books.