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**May makes first start in Tommy John rehab**

**Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | May 12, 2018**

ANAHEIM -- Twins right-hander Trevor SMay took a big step in his recovery from last year's Tommy John surgery, beginning his Minor League rehab assignment by throwing three scoreless innings with Class A Advanced Fort Myers on Saturday.

May, who underwent the surgery in March 2017, had previously been pitching in extended spring training but officially began his 30-day rehab assignment on Saturday. He allowed one hit, walked three and struck out five while throwing 58 pitches against Dunedin.

May is expected to continue to rehab with Fort Myers before moving up to Triple-A Rochester later this month. The Twins will stretch him out as a starter to keep their options open, although there remains a chance he could rejoin Minnesota as a reliever. He's eligible to be reinstated from the 60-day disabled list on May 28 and is expected to be ready to return by early June.

May, 28, has a career 5.14 ERA with 214 strikeouts and 65 walks in 203 innings. He hasn't started since the 2015 season, but the Twins were stretching him out to start again last spring before he sustained a torn ulnar collateral ligament while pitching an exhibition game against Team USA prior to the 2017 World Baseball Classic.

**Injury updates**

- Catcher Jason Castro, who is on the 10-day DL with a torn meniscus in his right knee, will head to Colorado for a second opinion on his right knee from Dr. Robert LaParade. Castro is eligible to return from the DL on Tuesday, and the Twins were originally hopeful he could return by then, but Castro hasn't progressed as well as the Twins had hoped. Castro received a cortisone shot in his right knee, but the issue hasn't gone away.

Castro has had several injuries to his right knee in the past, including missing the 2011 season with a torn ACL and undergoing arthroscopic surgery after the '13 season.

- Right-hander Ervin Santana, recovering from surgery to remove calcium deposits from his right middle finger, threw a 50-pitch bullpen session while incorporating sliders for the first time on Saturday.

He'll progress to throwing to hitters on Monday and Thursday in Fort Myers before moving on to a start in extended spring training on May 21 and in a rehab start on May 26. Santana isn't eligible to return until May 28, and if all continues to go well, he is expected back in early June.

- Third baseman Miguel Sano continued to test out his strained left hamstring by hitting, running and fielding at Angel Stadium on Saturday, but Twins manager Paul Molitor said it wasn't at the same intensity as the previous two days. Sano continues to have soreness in his hamstring and Molitor said a return or a rehab assignment isn't imminent.

### **Buxton crashes into wall making 4-star catch**

**Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | May 12, 2018**

ANAHEIM -- Twins center fielder Byron Buxton made his first four-star catch of the year on Saturday, robbing Ian Kinsler of extra bases with a running grab in right-center field before running into the wall in the fourth inning of a 5-3 win in extras over the Angels.

Buxton, who returned from the 10-day disabled list on Thursday after missing time with migraines and a hairline fracture in his big left toe, made the most of his first four-star catch opportunity of the year. Buxton needed to cover 77 feet in five seconds, giving it a catch probability of 44 percent.

"He made a really nice catch," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "That ball was smoked and he somehow caught it before he hit the wall. We were all happy to see him hit a wall. We were looking forward to that."

Buxton already has one five-star catch this season and led the Majors in four-star catches last season, converting an astounding 26 of 28 opportunities for a 92.9 percent success rate that was 11.4 percent higher than the next best outfielder.

Buxton also recorded his first hit since coming off the DL, roping an RBI double to left field off right-hander Nick Tropeano to help spark a three-run rally in the third.

### **Twins top Angels in 12 for 7th win in last 8**

**Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | May 12, 2018**

ANAHEIM -- With starting catcher Jason Castro out with a torn meniscus in his right knee, rookie Mitch Garver has taken over behind the plate and has continued to come up with key hits.

Garver came up with a clutch hit for a second straight night, lacing a go-ahead RBI double down the left-field line to lift the Twins to a 5-3 win over the Angels in 12 innings on Saturday night at Angel Stadium. It marked the seventh win in eight games for Minnesota and the 12th straight game the Twins scored at least four runs.

"I think he's getting more comfortable at this level, both behind the plate and with his at-bats," Twins manager Paul Molitor said of Garver, who is hitting .269/.333/.442. "To be able to hit that ball down the line and get a big hit like that has to be a big boost for him, especially after what he did last night, too."

Garver, who hit a game-tying RBI single as part of Minnesota's three-run ninth in their comeback win on Friday, ripped a 1-2 changeup from reliever Noe Ramirez into the left-field corner to score Eddie Rosario from first after he reached on an infield single. Gregorio Petit provided an insurance run with an RBI single into center to score Garver and help the Twins to a 7-2 record on their road trip that ends Sunday.

"It's huge -- this is a long road trip for us," Garver said. "Pulling out these wins and hopefully taking the series tomorrow, that's a huge boost for us, coming home for a long homestand. They're a tough team. Gosh, that lineup is stacked over there. So to come up with two wins here is pretty good."

Those were the first runs scored by the Twins since the third inning. Center fielder Byron Buxton, who returned from the 10-day disabled list on Thursday, helped spark a three-run rally in the third with his first hit since coming off the DL. He roped an RBI double to left off right-hander Nick Tropeano after Logan Morrison walked and Ehire Adrianza singled to open the third. Buxton was 0-for-5 with four strikeouts since coming off the DL prior to that at-bat. After Buxton's double, Joe Mauer singled to right to set up a sacrifice fly from Brian Dozier on a deep drive to center field.

The Twins, though, couldn't hold a one-run lead in the seventh, as reliever Ryan Pressly was hurt by a leadoff walk to No. 8 hitter Kole Calhoun. Justin Upton cashed in with a two-out RBI single to left to tie the game. The Twins nearly nabbed Mike Trout at third base before the run scored to end the inning, but Trout made a nifty slide to avoid the tag.

Right-hander Kyle Gibson was stuck with another no-decision as a result, going six innings, allowing two runs on three hits and four walks with six strikeouts to lower his ERA to 3.43. He's now struck out 50 batters in 44 2/3 innings despite entering the year with a career strikeout rate of 6.2 batters per nine innings.

After Minnesota's three-run third, the Angels got on the board in the bottom of the inning on an RBI groundout from Upton, who beat out a potential inning-ending double play. They scored again in the sixth on a sacrifice fly from Luis Valbuena after right fielder Max Kepler couldn't come up with a diving attempt on a sinking liner from Andrelton Simmons that ended up as a tough-luck triple.

"A couple breaks here and there, extra innings wouldn't have been necessary," Gibson said. "Kep dove and couldn't come up with it but it was a heck of an effort. Outside of that, I felt pretty good."

Gibson, though, was helped by a great catch from Buxton to rob Ian Kinsler of extra-bases on a hard-hit liner to right-center. Buxton crashed into the wall as he made the running grab, but avoided injury.

#### MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Hildenberger escapes jam: The Angels had the chance to win on a walk-off hit in the 11th, when the Twins opted to load the bases with two outs and Trout at third. After intentionally walking both Albert Pujols and Simmons, Trevor Hildenberger got Jefry Marte to hit a comebacker to the mound to end the scoring threat.

"We walked the Hall of Famer and the guy hitting [.345] and went after the guy we could attack and force to put the ball in play," Hildenberger said. "Mollie put me in a position where I had to throw strikes and I appreciate that vote of confidence."

#### SOUND SMART

Mauer did something rare when he swung at a 3-0 pitch from Ramirez in the 10th, as it was only the seventh time in his 15-year career he put a ball in play on a 3-0 count. Mauer grounded out to second with Ian Kinsler making a diving stop, dropping Mauer to 2-for-7 on balls in play on 3-0 pitches in his career with 304 walks.

#### YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Buxton's catch to rob Kinsler in the fourth was a four-star catch, according to Statcast™, as it had a catch probability of 44 percent. He needed to cover 77 feet in five seconds to make the play. It was his first four-star opportunity and catch of the season.

"He made a really nice catch," Molitor said. "That ball was smoked and he somehow caught it before he hit the wall. We were all happy to see him hit a wall. We were looking forward to that."

#### MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

The Twins were helped by replay in the 12th, as Calhoun was originally ruled safe at first on a potential 3-6-3 double play, but after a review, the call was reversed and Calhoun was out for a big double play for closer Fernando Rodney, who went on to convert his seventh save.

#### UP NEXT

In what could be a pitchers' duel between two hard-throwing rookies, the Twins will turn to right-hander Fernando Romero (2-0, 0.00 ERA) in the series finale against the Angels on Sunday, with first pitch set for 3:07 p.m. CT. Shohei Ohtani (3-1, 4.10 ERA) will start for the Halos. Romero has yet to allow a run in his first two starts, while striking out 14 in 11 2/3 innings. Ohtani went 3-for-8 with a homer and a double against the Twins as a hitter this year, but he'll face Minnesota as a starting pitcher for the first time.

#### **Twins' Paul Molitor, Gophers' John Anderson have had a lasting friendship** **Hartman | Star Tribune | May 12, 2018**

When you look at the field leaders of the Twins and Gophers baseball teams, it's amazing to think they are former college teammates who first met over 43 years ago in Paul Molitor and John Anderson.

Anderson had the Gophers sitting in first place in the Big Ten standings entering the weekend and ranked No. 15 in the country according to Baseball America.

Meanwhile Molitor, the 2017 AL Manager of the Year, has turned the Twins' season around after a horrid stretch in which they lost 13 of 15 games. With a three-run ninth inning to beat the Angels 5-4 Friday, they stood at -16-18 going into Saturday night's game in Anaheim, Calif.

Anderson was a pitcher for the Gophers in 1974-75 before an injury derailed his playing career. Coach Dick Siebert kept Anderson on as a student coach.

Anderson recalled the first time he met Molitor on the Minnesota campus in the fall of 1974.

“Paul was a freshman and I had transferred here from Hibbing Community College. That was the first time we met,” Anderson said. “Then we were teammates here at the university through the 1977 season, when he left and signed with the Milwaukee Brewers.

“Our friendship, and connection, a lifelong friendship started here at the university and has continued. When I was named head coach here in the fall of 1981, Paul reached out to me and said that he’d do anything he could to support the program and assist me.”

That 1977 squad was the last one at Minnesota to advance to the College World Series. Molitor was named an All-America as he hit .325, stole 20 bases and scored 35 runs.

Molitor played for the Gophers from 1975 to 1977, making the All-America team in 1976 as well. He finished his career with a .350 batting average and then-school records in runs (112), triples (11), hits (159), home runs (18), total bases (254), RBI (99) and stolen bases (52).

“We continued our friendship over the last 40 years here. That friendship has grown into a situation where we’ve become close friends and supported each other in our endeavors and our careers,” Anderson said. “Paul has given back a great deal to this baseball program and the university.”

Molitor stayed connected

Anderson has put together an incredible run of success with the Gophers, including 10 Big Ten titles, with a potential 11th this season, and over 1,200 wins.

But the Gophers have often needed their former players to step up and help with fundraising, and Anderson talked about Molitor’s help.

“That’s how our friendship has grown over the years, I think, is basically through the baseball program. He followed our program and I continue to stay in touch with him as he’s playing professionally and had some connections in the offseason,” Anderson said. “Obviously the old Pro-Alumni game we used to have at the Metrodome — when he was living in Toronto and Milwaukee he would come back for that event and we’d have different opportunities throughout the course of the year to connect.”

Anderson continued: “I think really from Paul’s standpoint it was his desire to stay connected to the university and the baseball program and support it in any way possible. He always told me that if he could help to reach out to me and, ‘If I can’t I’ll say no. And if I can I’ll say yes.’” Honestly, he has very rarely said no any time we have asked him for some kind of help and support.”

Success is no surprise

While Molitor has had some ups and downs as the Twins manager, Anderson said when the Twins made the hire after the 2014 season, he had no doubts it was the right one.

“So many of the little things he picks up on so quickly, I was always amazed when I was around him [at the U],” Anderson said. “After he finished playing, and before he got back involved with the Twins, he would come out and watch us practice or watch us play games.

“I would always tell him, ‘Tell me what you see.’ And I was amazed at some of the things he picked up on that most of us wouldn’t even think about in terms of his baseball IQ and what was going on out there between the white lines.”

Still, Anderson said that what is going to continue to make Molitor a great manager is that he can connect with the players and the front office on a personal level.

“I think he has done a fantastic job in the Twins organization with the teams he has had, of really building a special clubhouse and the chemistry in that clubhouse and building a winning culture there,” Anderson said. “I think that’s a big part of managing in Major League Baseball in the 21st century, your ability to connect with people and build quality relationships. He is awesome at that.”

## JOTTINGS

- Gophers football coach P.J. Fleck said that while the team will have more depth this year, that doesn’t mean it will have more experience. “We have nine total scholarship seniors, which is not a lot. We have to rely on our youth, our inexperience, and our depth is going to be full of young guys to really provide that type of boost for us.”
- Fleck has 11 verbal commitments for the Class of 2019, a class that ranks No. 15 in the country, according to 247sports.com. That’s third in the Big Ten behind Michigan (No. 8) and Ohio State (No. 9).
- Fleck talked about how the Gophers need to get more players into the NFL, noting they have had only 13 picks over the past 13 drafts: “We have to up that. That’s one of the reasons I came here. We haven’t had an offensive lineman drafted in 12 years.”

- Vikings tight end Kyle Rudolph said he is excited about new offensive coordinator John DeFilippo. "The success that he's had with tight ends that he's been around, it's exciting," Rudolph said. "We have a ton of playmakers on offense and he's mentioned multiple times that he's going to get the ball in everybody's hands."
- Gophers baseball coach John Anderson on Eli Wilson, the son of former Gophers and major league catcher Dan Wilson: "Last year he shared the [catching] duties with Cole McDevitt, and I think another big story line here with regards to how well we've pitched has been Eli Wilson's development behind the plate. He's much stronger than a year ago. He calls the game for us. We do not call pitches. He has done an incredible job of handling the pitching staff."
- Torii Hunter Jr., the son of the Twins great, played football at Notre Dame but is now making a name playing baseball in the minor leagues for the Angels. Hunter Jr. entered Saturday hitting .284 with 20 runs and nine stolen bases in 28 games for Class A Burlington.

**Before Garver's clutch hit, Molitor made a big decision**  
**La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | May 12, 2018**

Quick night in the clubhouse as the Twins want to get back to the hotel so they can rest for Sunday's series finale against the Angels. And there's a lot on the line, as much as there can be in a May game.

The Twins have a chance to go 8-2 on this road trip.

They have a chance to return to .500, at 18-18, for the first time since April 22.

They can take three of four on the road from the Angels.

And they can stay close to Cleveland in the AL Central. The Indians won on Saturday.

They've arrived at this point with a comeback win on Friday and an extra-inning win on Saturday. And they did it on the road, which is a sign of a good team.

"It's huge," said catcher Mitch Garver, whose RBI double in the 12th was the game-winning hit. "This is a long road trip for us. Three cities is a lot. You get towards the end and guys are tired. They are missing home and want to get back. Pulling out those wins hopefully taking the series tomorrow, that's a huge boost for us heading home for a long homestand. And it's a tough team to pitch against and a tough team to hit against."

One thing from tonight's game, and then we all can go to bed.

When Mike Trout reached third base in the 11th inning after advancing on Justin Upton's flyout for the second out, Garver went to the mound to speak with reliever Trevor Hildenberger to come up with a strategy against Albert Pujols. But they turned around and saw that Pujols was being intentionally walked. Manager Paul Molitor's plan overrode theirs.

"And then [Andrelton] Simmons comes up and it's the same thing," Garver said. "We're kind of going through the same plan and then he's on first base as well. I look at Hildy and I'm like, 'Hey, here we go. This is the time. This is gut check.'"

Molitor did not want Pujols, who is not as great as he once was but still dangerous, and Simmons, batting .351 entering the game, to beat him. So he walked both to set up a force play at any base.

Also, Hildenberger was pitching for the third consecutive game. Molitor wanted to use the few pitches Hildenberger had against reserve Jeffrey Marte, who had entered the game in the ninth inning. Molitor bounced the idea off his coaches, then went for it.

"I had a Hall of Famer and a guy who is leading the league in hitting," Molitor said. "And I went for the guy who just came into the game a couple innings ago."

A wild pitch — possible with Hildenberger's funky stuff — and the game is over. A walk, and the game is over. Another hit batter, as Hildenberger did with his very first pitch of the inning to Zack Cozart, and the game is over.

But Hildenberger felt the urgency to throw strikes and got Marte to tap back to him to end the inning.

"Mollie put me in a position where I had to throw strikes and I appreciate that vote of confidence," Hildenberger said. "Challenge a guy and try to have him put it on the ground. That's why we loaded the bases. Luckily it worked out for us."

Things worked out for the second straight night. What tricks do the Twins have up their sleeves for Sunday's finale? We'll find out in a few hours.....

## **Twins-Angels rookie showdown between Fernando Romero, Shohei Ohtani draws attention**

**La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | May 12, 2018**

ANAHEIM, CALIF. – There will be nasty pitches thrown, eliciting awkward swings. Hitters will look overmatched. Oohs and aahs will be heard throughout the crowd.

And the Twins expect Shohei Ohtani to throw a few nice pitches himself.

That's generally been their reaction when asked about Sunday's matchup of young guns. Ohtani, 23, has been the talk of baseball because of his two-way talents. But the Twins would rather talk up their guy, Fernando Romero, who has begun his major league career with 11 $\frac{2}{3}$  scoreless innings while featuring a 98-mile-per-hour fastball and a vicious slider.

"It's going to be good just to see two young guys go at it," Twins outfielder Robbie Grossman said. "The little we saw of Romero in spring training was exciting, and it is exciting to have him up here and for him to contribute like he has.

"Ohtani, it's his first year in the league, and it is exciting to see new guys."

Romero, also 23, shut out the Blue Jays for 5 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings in his major league debut May 2, then followed that with six shutout innings against the Cardinals on Monday. Sunday's meeting will be his biggest test yet — even without Ohtani involved.

But Romero ended up drawing the fire-throwing Japanese righthander in the Mother's Day matchup, giving Sunday's game even more flavor.

Ohtani became a star in Japan by both hitting and pitching at a standout level, and now he has made the leap to North America, entering Saturday night's game batting .348 with five home runs and 16 RBI at the plate while going 3-1 with a 4.10 ERA on the mound. He was named AL rookie of the month for April. The Twins will face him, his 100-mph fastball and dominating split-fingered pitch Sunday, but they already saw him hit a homer against them Thursday.

"Just watching Ohtani hit is pretty impressive," Twins second baseman Brian Dozier said. "I watched his batting practice on Friday and it was pretty special. I didn't know the guy can run, too. I say let him hit while he pitches."

Ohtani's starts have become must-see events, as he has been a phenomenon in every sense.

"He's definitely opened the conversation," Grossman said. "It will be interesting to see how long that lasts. Not only this year, but as the years go on."

Romero has held opponents to a .184 batting average while striking out 14 in his 11 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings. He might have the biggest arm the Twins have ever produced in a starting pitcher.

"You never know what you are going to get from guys making their debut," Dozier said. "How you react to walks and giving up a couple hits. He bounces right back and fills up the zone. His ball runs all over the place and gives hitters fits.

"Aside from his stuff, he's very, very comfortable. That says a lot, doing it on this level."

The hype doesn't appear to faze Romero, who needs six more shutout innings to set a Twins record for most scoreless innings to begin a career. He is prepared for whatever the atmosphere is Sunday.

"I'll be ready to face batters," Romero said. "I've got no excuse to not go forward. I can't wait for the day to get here."

A long injury update

The Twins provided updates on a number of injured players on Saturday.

The most concerning is the plight of catcher Jason Castro, on the disabled list because of a torn right meniscus. Castro is headed Monday to Vail, Colo., where he will be examined by Dr. Robert LaPrade of the Steadman Clinic. Castro initially injured his knee April 20 at Tampa Bay. He took off a game before returning to action but had more problems with it, leading to him landing on the disabled list.

But his rehabilitation has hit a snag of some sort.

"Not progressing as much as we had hoped," manager Paul Molitor said. "It looks like we're going to send him out for another opinion on Monday, given his history. We want to make sure we do this thing right."

Castro, batting .143 with a homer and three RBI, missed all of 2011 with Houston when he tore the meniscus and ACL in the knee, requiring surgery. He missed 30 games in 2012 with more problems in the knee, then had a cyst in the knee drained in September 2013, then had minor arthroscopic surgery in the knee later that month.

All-Star righthander Ervin Santana, who had surgery on his right middle finger, will face hitters on Monday and Thursday in Fort Myers, Fla. If that goes well, he will pitch in an extended spring training game May 21, then begin an official minor league rehabilitation assignment on May 26.

The Twins have not decided how many rehab starts Santana will need before he is activated. The Twins hope Santana can throw four innings or 60 pitches in his first rehab start.

“You can talk about if you want him up here for five [innings] and 75 [pitches] or you want to do another one in the minor leagues,” Molitor said.

In his last bullpen outing Thursday, Santana threw 50 pitches, including eight to 10 sliders, Molitor said. The slider is the pitch Santana needs his middle finger to spin properly.

Righthander Trevor May (elbow surgery) started for Class A Fort Myers on Saturday night, striking out five in three scoreless innings. He gave up one hit and three walks, and his fastball hit 93 miles per hour at Dunedin.

Third baseman Miguel Sano (left hamstring) worked out, hit and took some more grounders Saturday in Anaheim, but not at the intensity as the past couple of days. Sano is not totally pain free yet, Molitor said, so the Twins are being careful with him. Sunday’s plan is to reduce his workload again, then increase his activities Monday when the Twins open a homestand.

When asked if the past few days have been positive with Sano, Molitor said: “I think to get him out on the field doing more baseball things was good. I don’t know how to measure it other than that. We have to see how he progresses. Obviously, I’m a little apprehensive with a guy with hamstring history, that body type and all those types of things.”

Molitor added there is still a way to go with Sano before he can play a full game.

**Twins outfielders look down (at their positioning cards) before they look up**  
**Chris Hine | Star Tribune | May 12, 2018**

The influence of analytics continues expansion into baseball, as evidenced by a growing reliance on outfield positioning charts. But baseball instinct remains part of the equation.

Between hitters, you might catch Twins outfielders pulling something out of their back pockets. It’s a card, and on this card are commands that read like orders you would give in a game of Battleship.

They might say: “L5, D4” or “R3, S2” or “G4, D1.”

Those letters and numbers are the code for how the outfielders should position themselves against the hitter.

“If you see us moving around like robots out there, that’s what we’re doing, looking at the cards,” outfielder Ryan LaMarre said. “It’s nice to know that they already have a spot for you and this is where you’re supposed to be.”

The players may look like robots as they stagger around the outfield, but the idea behind the cards isn’t to strip away their human instincts and turn them into data-driven machines. The cards are new tools for saving runs, and some of the clearest signs yet that analytics have infiltrated actual game play.

The cards’ instructions are based on analyses of where hitters are likely to place the ball depending on who is pitching. With players hitting more fly balls, in attempts to hit more home runs, outfield positioning is quickly gaining in importance.

“What’s on there is what I consider the ‘all things being equal’ positioning for each hitter versus right- and lefthanded pitchers ...” outfielder coach Jeff Pickler said. “There is obviously room for game situations and how they feel to adjust off those things, but that’s what’s on the card.”

The why behind the where

That last part is important to note. Pickler and the Twins coaching staff do not want players to feel as if they are beholden to the cards, and they do their best to tell players why they are moving to a certain spot instead of just telling them to move without any explanation.

Some, like LaMarre and Robbie Grossman, are strict adherents to the card.

“I’d say 99 percent of the time I play the card,” Grossman said.

Center fielder Byron Buxton tries to mix what the card says with what his instincts are telling him, while also considering how the hitter has performed that day or that series.

“I’m way too aggressive to want to listen to a sheet of paper,” Buxton said. “If I miss a ball listening to the sheet of paper when in my head I’m like, ‘Man, I know I should play him here, but this paper says here,’ and he hits it exactly to where I could’ve caught the ball — that would definitely frustrate me as an outfielder.”

Buxton will sometimes deviate from the board game-like instructions, and his league-leading speed certainly helps him compensate if he’s caught out of position.

The letters and numbers are fairly easy to grasp. S and D mean “shallow” and “deep.” So S2 would mean take two steps in from a designated center point. D3 means take three steps back. If you’re a corner outfielder, G means “gap.” So G3 would mean take three steps toward center while L means “line,” so move so many steps toward the line. If you’re playing center, L and R indicate left and right movements.

The game situation can also dictate where Pickler positions outfielders. If there’s one out and a runner on first, the Twins want to keep that runner from making it to third on a single and position accordingly.

Buxton said the outfielders and coaching staff will discuss their concerns and reach a consensus on how to attack certain hitters. Those interactions also allow the coaching staff to better show the players the data that goes into the cards.

“I would say that if there’s too much player feel, then we risk being flighty. And if there’s not enough player feel, we risk being too rigid and data-driven,” Pickler said. “We try to balance that on a case-by-case basis. ... It’s a 360-degree view of positioning, not just, ‘Hey, just do what the card says, man.’ ”

Certain margin of error

This battlefield is where teams try to gain an analytics advantage — implementing the data and getting players to understand and act on it. It’s easy to collect data. It’s a whole other ballgame to use it without overwhelming the players.

“Sometimes you can take in a lot more information than what you want to,” Buxton said, “when they could’ve just told you a couple of things like, ‘He hits the ball here, he does this.’ But then you could come up in your head with another two questions to ask them off what they told you.

“Or you could say, ‘Well, this card told me to play him here, so why should I listen to this?’ You trick yourself into not wanting to do what it says. We just got to be able to take in advice.”

The cards aren’t prophetic, and that’s why Buxton also likes to factor instinct into his positioning.

“A guy could’ve struggled last series and this series something could have clicked for him,” Buxton said. “Analytics could tell us to play left-center because he was struggling the last three games — and then he’s [hitting] the ball to the other side, getting extra-base hits.”

Pickler said the cards are the best way for the Twins to “play odds,” adding that the Twins don’t overreact if the cards give them bad advice for a few games.

“You have to be mindful that being off also has a lot of noise built into it,” Pickler said. “There’s some randomness. You can’t get overly carried away when you have a good week or overly carried away when you have a bad week.”

One day in spring training, LaMarre used his card to get in position and then Pickler moved him a few more steps. LaMarre didn’t have a good view of the ball coming off the bat and was unsure of the position, but then: “There were two line drives in a row I didn’t have to move for.

“As soon as I caught it and threw it in I just tipped my hat to Pickler and told him, ‘I trust you.’ ”

That’s what the cards inevitably boil down to: trust. From the players, in the front office, coaching staff and analytics team. From the coaches, in the players and their instincts and input. All in the collaborative spirit of creating an outfield that will save runs.

“Looking at how technology works these days, to tell you where a guy is going to hit the ball is kind of crazy,” Buxton said.

Well, not every time. But that’s the fun of baseball.

## **Mitch Garver delivers late again as Twins topple Angels in extra innings**

**La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | May 12, 2018**

ANAHEIM, CALIF. – For the second consecutive night, Mitch Garver stepped up in the clutch for the Twins.

After hitting a tying single to right on Friday during a comeback victory, Garver's RBI double in the 12th inning Saturday drove in Eddie Rosario with the winning run in a 5-3 victory over the Angels.

Rosario led off the inning by reaching on an infield hit off righthander Noe Ramirez, working his third inning of relief for Los Angeles. Garver followed with a double into the left field corner, and Rosario raced home from first.

Gregorio Petit, who entered the game in the bottom of the 10th as a defensive replacement, added an RBI single, scoring Garver.

Fernando Rodney pitched the 12th to pick up his seventh save, working around a leadoff walk by getting Kole Calhoun to hit into a well-turned 3-6-3 double play. After another walk to No. 9 hitter Rene Rivera — the Twins' 12th walk of the night — Rodney retired Zack Cosart on a flyout, leaving Mike Trout in the on-deck circle as the game ended.

An inning earlier, Trevor Hildenberger, working the third night in a row, worked out of a jam by retiring Jefry Marte. Hildenberger was rewarded with his first victory of the season.

The Twins looked on the verge of handing the Angels a game in which they led early. Kyle Gibson was effective for six innings. The Twins offense scored three runs in the third and seemed in control.

Then the Twins stopped scoring and the Angels inched their way back in with runs in the third, sixth and seventh innings. They tied the game in the seventh when Ryan Pressly gave up an RBI single to Justin Upton. And the game moved into extra innings.

Mike Trout reached on a fielder's choice in the 11th, stole second and moved to third on a flyout. Twins manager Paul Molitor gambled. He had Albert Pujols and Andrelton Simmons intentionally walked to load the bases for Marte. Hildenberger did his part, getting Marte to tap back to him to end in the inning.

And the Twins were rewarded in the 12th with big hits by Garver and Petit.

It's not quite time to say the Twins have totally turned their season around. It's difficult to take a team seriously when it's not even at .500.

But that might be changing.

The victory on Saturday gave the Twins a 7-2 mark on their current 10-game road trip, setting themselves up for a big Mother's Day on Sunday.

Another victory, and the Twins would head to the Twin Cities back to .500, at 18-18. They would finish the road trip 8-2 after taking three of four games from the Angels. And they would keep heat on first-place Cleveland in the AL Central.

The Twins took a 3-0 lead in the third on a Byron Buxton's RBI double, Joe Mauer's RBI single and a sacrifice fly by Brian Dozier. The runs came off Angels righthander Nick Tropeano, who was making his first start since recovering from a sore shoulder.

Cosart scored during a fielder's choice in the third to put the Angels on the board. Andrelton Simmons scored on a sacrifice fly in the sixth to bring the Angels within 3-2. Simmons legged out a triple when his sinking liner deflected off the heel of Max Kepler's glove as he attempted a diving catch.

## **Walters: Twins rookie Fernando Romero has the right 'stuff'**

**Charley Walters | Pioneer Press | May 12, 2018**

“Since he was a young kid, 19, 20 years old,” Mauer said.

Mauer, who spent 11 seasons managing in the Minnesota Twins' system before leaving last December to spend more time with family, managed Romero at Class A Cedar Rapids, then last year at AA Chattanooga, and worked with him in the instructional league.

Jake Mauer has had a close-up view of Fernando Romero.

Minnesota Twins pitcher Fernando Romero throws against the Toronto Blue Jays in a baseball game Wednesday, May 2, 2018, in Minneapolis. (AP Photo/Jim Mone) Minnesota Twins pitcher Fernando Romero throws against the Toronto Blue Jays in a baseball game Wednesday, May 2, 2018, in Minneapolis. (AP Photo/Jim Mone)

“Since he was a young kid, 19, 20 years old,” Mauer said.

Mauer, who spent 11 seasons managing in the Minnesota Twins’ system before leaving last December to spend more time with family, managed Romero at Class A Cedar Rapids, then last year at AA Chattanooga, and worked with him in the instructional league.

## ADVERTISING

“He’s always had ‘stuff,’ ” Mauer said.

Romero, 23, with a fastball that reaches 98 mph and a hard-biting slider, dazzled in his first two starts for the Twins since his promotion from AAA Rochester two weeks ago, throwing 11 2/3 scoreless innings while striking out 14 in two victories. In four spring training outings, Romero didn’t allow a run over eight innings.

On Sunday against the Los Angeles Angels in Anaheim, he’ll face Japanese two-way star Shohei Ohtani, also 23. Pitching, Ohtani is 3-1 with 32 strikeouts in 26 1/3 innings. Batting, he’s .354 with five home runs.

“When guys usually throw as hard as Fernando does, generally it’s pretty straight,” Mauer said. “Not Romero’s (fastball) — it’s lively, it sinks, it’s heavy. What’s always been the key for him is command (control).”

Mauer laughed.

“I’ll tell you, I wouldn’t dig in on him,” he said. “No way — (his fastball) is firm, and it’s moving. It’s legit stuff, no doubt about it.”

Romero, a right-hander, is six feet, 215 pounds.

“He wasn’t afraid at all, not intimidated,” Mauer said of Romero in the minors. “He’s got confidence about himself. He’s a competitor, and he’s a good teammate.”

Late last season at Chattanooga, after the team won the first half, then was closing in on the playoffs, the Twins shut down Romero.

“He was nursing some shoulder stuff, and there was some fatigue,” Mauer said. “So we gave him the option to either go home (Dominican Republic) and rest for a few weeks, then come to (spring training) Fort Myers.

“Most guys, probably 90 percent, would jump at that, right? But he wanted to stay and be with his teammates to go through the playoffs, knowing that he couldn’t pitch. He wanted to stay and cheer them on. He was always a guy in the dugout that was vocal, positive and pulling for guys. I’m pretty happy to see what he has done thus far.

“He has potential to be one of those guys as far as ‘electric’ stuff, which as a starter we probably haven’t seen since (Francisco) Lirano and (Johan) Santana. But also, it’s only two outings. Obviously, there’s a long way to go. But he’s got good make-up, and if he can stay healthy, he can be pretty special.”

Mauer’s younger brother, Joe, 35, is in the final season of a \$184 million, eight-year contract.

“He hasn’t really said much (about his future),” Mauer said. “It’s kind of cliché, but he’s day to day, see how it goes, see where they (Twins) are at, and if he stays healthy — I think that will be a big key. I think it’ll all shake out.

“He’s having fun. It’s a good feeling when you show up at the ballpark and have a chance to win every day.”

Due to his recent retirement from the field, future hall of famer Ichiro Suzuki won’t be with the Seattle Mariners when they play the Twins in Minneapolis on Monday. As longtime New York baseball writer Murray Chass points out, Suzuki, counting his time playing in Japan and the American major leagues, has a total of 4,367 hits. That’s more than Pete Rose, who holds the American major league career record of 4,256, and Ty Cobb (4,191), the only other American major leaguer to achieve 4,000 hits.

By the way, Twins manager Paul Molitor ranks ninth on the all-time hit list with 3,319, and he missed nearly 500 games due to injuries.

Albert Pujols achieved career hit No. 3,000 the other day in Seattle. Dr. Seth C. Hawkins was there, the same as he has been at other ballparks for every other major league player who attained that milestone since Hank Aaron and Willie Mays in 1970.

That’s 24 consecutive 3,000-hit landmarks that Hawkins has witnessed in person.

Hawkins, 75, has a Ph.D. in Rhetoric, which is an intercollegiate public speaking competition he successfully coached at Southern Connecticut State before moving to St. Paul in 1993. He attended seven games in Anaheim and Seattle waiting for Pujols to reach 3,000.

“He hit an opposite-field single — his swing was actually like Ichiro classically did,” Hawkins said. “He was going after an outside, low curveball. I think he figured ‘I’ll beat the shift and bloop it into right field if I can so that even a diving catch is impossible.’ And that’s exactly what happened.”

Hawkins, a delightful character who is retired, attends these historic games, he said, as a representative for baseball fans who cannot attend.

“A lot of fans can’t afford to be there, they can’t get time off work, so I’m representing them,” he said. “This way, the fans have another fan to identify with.”

Hawkins plans to continue his in-person pastime of 3,000-hit performances.

“I’m going to go at it as long as I can put my creaky bones together,” he said. “But I think I get a little rest on the 3,000 because I don’t see (Detroit’s) Miguel Cabrera (2,666 hits) getting there until the summer of 2020. And then (Seattle’s) Robinson Cano (2,414) probably the following summer.”

It was announced last week that the Yankees and Red Sox next year in June will play two games, the first major league baseball games in England, at London’s Olympic Stadium.

“So I’m off to London next summer,” Hawkins said.

Besides his 3,000-hit ventures, Hawkins has seen regular-season major league games at 88 ballparks, including in Tokyo, Sydney (Australia), Monterrey (Mexico) and Honolulu.

His favorite ballparks? Houston, San Diego, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

The Twins’ Target Field is in his next four-city group.

“Target Field turned out a lot better than a lot of people anticipated — it’s a very pleasant place to see a game,” Hawkins said. “It’s also got a weird distinction — it’s the closest ballpark to public transit, the shortest walk from the light rail. It beat out Wrigley Field by a hair and a staircase.”

The Twins’ former home, the Metrodome, where Hawkins witnessed 3,000-hit milestones by Dave Winfield, Eddie Murray and Cal Ripken?

“The Metrodome — I will have to be kind by saying, ‘Oh, dear.’ It was a mistake. But there were so many architectural mistakes made in the 70s and 80s in sports stadiums.

“The Metrodome was not the worst, but it was a contender. It was not the concrete tomb that the (Seattle’s) Kingdome was. I bought raffle tickets to be the guy who pushed the red button to blow up the Kingdome, and I lost along with thousands of others. But I gave it a try.

“The 70s stadiums were supposedly dual-purpose, but none of them worked — baseball was always shortchanged.

“We are in a remarkable golden era — the (Baltimore’s) Camden Yards and forward. A lot of people don’t know how lucky they are — this is the finest time in ballpark history, and I’m happy to live in it. The ballparks are so much better than many of the ones of the past.”

Hawkins has seen games in both Yankee Stadiums.

“The new one looks like a movie set — it’s a disappointment,” he said.

The Twins have had 161 sellouts since Target Field opened in 2010.

Nick Punto will wear a Twins uniform and play in the Hall of Fame Classic game at Doubleday Field in Cooperstown, N.Y., on May 26.

Guy to watch: Frankie Capan, who lived on the 18th fairway at North Oaks Country Club and was home-schooled before moving to suburban Phoenix, shot a record 11-under-par 59 to win the Arizona state high school Division III golf championship as a senior at Northwest Christian last week.

Capan, a 6-foot, 185-pounder who won by 10 strokes, has committed to the University of Alabama. His 59 at the Sonoran course in Tucson included three eagles, seven birdies — and two bogeys.

Cretin-Derham Hall football coach Brooks Bollinger, the former Vikings QB, goes into the North Dakota Sports Hall of Fame on June 16 in Jamestown.

On Monday, Stillwater Country Club will host the U.S. Women’s Open qualifier, with 47 players from across the nation competing for two spots in the 73rd tournament that will be held May 31-June 3 at Shoal Creek in Alabama.

Among Minnesota's greatest unheralded athletes, Noel Jenke, 71, who signed with the Boston Red Sox as an outfielder, then played linebacker for the Vikings, and turned down a chance to sign with the Chicago Blackhawks after playing all three sports for the Gophers, was to attend this weekend's reunion of his alma mater's 1969 Big Ten championship baseball team.

Anoka grad Bobby Fenwick, 71, the former Gophers shortstop who was a first-round draft pick of the San Francisco Giants and went on to play in the major leagues, has retired as GM at Superior National Golf Course in Lutsen. He resides in Grand Marais.

DON'T PRINT THAT

Look for former Gopher Rickey Foggie to join new head football coach at St. Thomas Academy, Dan O'Brien, as quarterbacks coach.

And for Robert Mestas, who was head boys basketball coach at Minneapolis Roosevelt for six years, to become head boys coach at Burnsville.

If Twins infielder Eduardo Escobar (15 doubles, seven home runs, .295 average) continues on pace, his next contract could be worth \$18 million for two years. Under contract for \$4.85 million this year, Escobar, 29, who might be the Twins' most valuable player at this juncture, can become a free agent after the season. A utility player, only seven shortstops in the majors last season hit more than his 21 homers. Escobar is on pace to hit 35 this year.

Is Miguel Sano still with the Twins?

At his present pace (.276, on base percentage .391), Twins first baseman Joe Mauer, 35, whose \$23 million per season contract ends after this season, probably could get a \$22 million, two-year extension.

Potential free agent after the season, Twins second baseman Brian Dozier, 30, could be worth \$40 million over three years. He's playing for \$9 million this year.

It shouldn't be long before crafty starter Stephen Gonsalves gets promoted to the Twins from Class AAA Rochester.

Melvin Newbern Jr., 6-4 son of the former Gophers standout point guard, has committed to Montana State after a brilliant junior college career at North Dakota State College of Science. And it looks like his younger brother, 6-4 Beijan Newbern from Marantha Christian Academy in Brooklyn Center, could be headed to Montana State, too.

Another Newbern son, Peyton, is an eighth-grade standout playing in the Howard Pulley program.

Ex-Gophers basketball star Willie Burton has become athletics director for Detroit public schools.

Rochester Century sophomore shortstop Mac Horvath, who has committed to North Carolina and is among the state's top prep talent, is out for the season with a broken fibula.

North Carolina, by the way, has stepped up its recruiting of Minnesota high school baseball players.

Stillwater junior right-hander Will Frisch, who has committed to Texas Christian, has his fastball clocking in the low 90s mph.

His Stillwater teammate, left-handed junior Drew Gilbert, who has committed to Oregon State, is also throwing in the low 90s and in his first 15 innings struck out 28.

Spotted lunching at Shamrock's pub in St. Paul last Thursday: Power group Jim Carter, Stu Voigt, Bob Paradise, Ray Hitchcock, Terry McMahon, Chuck Mitch, Snap Leitner, Tom Campion, Mike Campion and Dick Haigh.

A second Pro Bowl Vikings player has purchased an expensive house in quiet Sunfish Lake near the team's new practice facility in Eagan, and another is expected to buy soon.

Gary Trent Jr., the 6-6, 210-pound former Apple Valley and Duke shooting guard who has declared for June's NBA draft after his freshman season, will be among 69 prospects at the league's combine this week in Chicago.

Trent, who has signed with veteran agent David Falk, hasn't heard whether the Timberwolves, in need of shooters and currently owning the No. 20 overall pick in the draft, will invite him for individual workouts. Gary Sr., who played three seasons for the Wolves as a 6-8, 250-pound forward, was the 11th overall pick in the 1995 draft.

Gary Jr. is projected as a middle first-round draft pick.

The Gophers football team has the 13th easiest non-conference schedule — New Mexico State, Fresno State and Miami (Ohio) — among the Big Ten's 14 teams, ahead of only Rutgers, according to athlonsports.com.

The Minnesota PGA will take over operation of the Tapemark-sponsored charity pro-am after next month's tournament. It has been held at Southview Country Club for 47 years.

## OVERHEARD

Gophers baseball coach John Anderson, the Big Ten's all-time victories leader, on why he decided 25 years ago not to have captains for his team: "I think leadership has to come from the team itself. Sometimes your best leaders aren't your best players. Sometimes they're not your seniors, sometimes they're your freshmen. So if you want to lead, lead. If you don't want to lead, follow. But at least be on board with what we're doing here."

### **Twins' Bobby Wilson, Ervin Santana will always be linked in Angels history**

**Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | May 12, 2018**

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Even before driving in the game-winning run with a ninth-inning sacrifice fly in Friday night's 5-4 comeback win, Twins catcher Bobby Wilson had a productive visit to Orange County.

The former Los Angeles Angels backup visited South Coast Plaza on Wednesday's off day to have his watch cleaned and adjusted. This isn't just any watch, mind you, but a gift from former Angels teammate Ervin Santana to commemorate the no-hitter on which they collaborated on July 27, 2011, a Wednesday afternoon in Cleveland.

"It was such a nice gesture on Ervin's part," Wilson said of his current Twins teammate, who is eyeing an early June return after undergoing finger surgery on Feb. 4. "He took my wife and me out to dinner, too, and he gave me a watch that I wear every day. It's a nice-looking watch, too."

A silver Chanel model with a row of diamonds embedded on a black face, the watch includes a personalized engraving on the back that reads: "Bobby Wilson Caught No-Hitter 7-27-11."

Wilson, now 35, had already caught Sean O'Sullivan's nine-inning no-hitter in Triple-A in 2009 when he hooked up with Santana for one of their 35 starts from 2010-12. Only Jeff Mathis and Mike Napoli have caught more of Santana's starts.

"Just a special day," Wilson recalled. "I remember the first hitter (Ezequiel Carrera) in the first inning got on by error, stole second. Then they got him over and he scored on a wild pitch. That was the one run scored, and from that point on Ervin was as dominant as I've seen a pitcher."

Santana's fastball was humming in the mid- to upper-90s, and his signature slider "was as good as it's ever been," Wilson said. Santana finished with 10 strikeouts and just one walk (Lonnie Chisenhall with one out in the eighth) in a 105-pitch gem, but the no-hitter kind of snuck up on everybody.

"Honestly I really didn't know until the ninth inning," Wilson said. "You're just thinking, 'Let's get the win first.' Then you get to the ninth, and it kind of started settling in then. I didn't feel any pressure that day. I don't know why."

Wilson, who came within three outs of a third professional no-hitter with former Texas Rangers right-hander Colby Lewis in June 2016 at Oakland, remembers the final out on a Michael Brantley fly ball to Peter Bourjos in center.

"I just remember running towards Ervin and seeing (Angels teammates) Mark Trumbo and Erik Aybar there," Wilson said. "They almost somehow beat me to the mound, which I guess with my speed is not that shocking. I got there."

The postgame celebration was a bit rushed as the Angels had to fly to Detroit right after the game.

"It was kind of a weird day," Wilson said. "We didn't really get a chance to celebrate that much, but it was a nice flight."

After the game, Wilson got a congratulatory text from then-Twins catcher Drew Butera.

"I was like, 'Thanks, Drew. Now go get yourself one,' " Wilson said. "I wasn't even thinking. I was just so caught up in the moment, I didn't realize he had already caught one (Francisco Liriano's in Chicago that May 3)."

Butera gave him a gentle reminder: "I already got one."

Wilson gladly apologized. He was just happy to join the club.

## CASTRO'S KNEE

Catcher Jason Castro, eligible to come off the 10-day disabled list on Tuesday, instead will visit knee specialist Dr. Robert LaPrade on Monday in Vail, Colo.

Out with a torn meniscus in his right knee, Castro had hoped a cortisone injection would calm the issue down enough for him to return quickly without surgery, but Twins manager Paul Molitor said Saturday the knee “is probably not progressing as much as we had hoped.”

Castro, hitting just .143 with 26 strikeouts in 74 plate appearances, missed all of 2011 with a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee and also had arthroscopic surgery on the same knee in September 2013.

“Given his history, we want to make sure we do this thing right,” Molitor said.

## BRIEFLY

Santana (finger) threw a 50-pitch bullpen session on Thursday that included 8-10 sliders and plans to throw to hitters on Monday and Thursday in Fort Myers, Fla. If that goes well, he will make a start in extended spring training on May 21 with a rehab outing of four innings or 60 pitches on May 26. He can't come off the 60-day disabled list until May 28.

Miguel Sano (hamstring) scaled back his on-field workouts a bit Saturday and appears to need more time before heading out on a rehab assignment.

Trevor May (elbow surgery) worked three scoreless innings on Saturday for Class A Fort Myers in his first rehab start. May allowed a hit and three walks while striking out five in his 58-pitch outing.

### Mitch Garver does it again as Twins take 5-3 win in 12 innings

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | May 12, 2018

ANAHEIM, Calif. —After coming through in the late innings for a second straight night with his mother in the stands, Mitch Garver smiled late Saturday at a suggestion a Mother's Day gift would be unnecessary.

“See all that pink stuff: Cleats, bat, catcher's gear?” he said after this 5-3 win in 12 innings, pointing into his locker at Angel Stadium. “She's going to hang it up somewhere.”

Adding to the thrill for Gail Garver, who made the trip over from Albuquerque, was having Neil Garver, Mitch's older brother, in the stands as well for both uplifting Twins' victories. A pharmacist in Grand Junction, Colo., Neil Garver made the trip with his girlfriend and got here just in time to see his brother play the offensive hero with a pair of clutch hits.

“Pretty good,” Garver said in his typical understated way.

Friday night, Garver tied the game with an “emergency swing” single past first, as Twins manager Paul Molitor called it, to tie the game during a three-run ninth inning rally in a 5-4 victory. In Saturday's 12th, Garver ripped a two-strike changeup for a double past third to score Eddie Rosario from first with the go-ahead run.

“This was not an emergency swing,” Garver said with a smile. “I tweaked a little something in my swing today, and it made me feel more aggressive, more confident.”

It helped, he said, that he had faced Ramirez three or four times last season while he was with the Triple-A Pawtucket Red Sox in the International League. Saturday's hit was Garver's second or third double off the tricky right-hander; he wasn't sure.

Gregorio Petit added a run-scoring single for some breathing room as Fernando Rodney notched his seventh save in 10 chances with a seventh straight scoreless outing.

One night after perhaps their most unlikely win of the season, the Twins won for the seventh time in eight tries (all on the road) and improved to 2-3 in extra innings. They also avoided a fifth walk-off loss in their past 22 games, thanks to more sterling work from their bullpen.

Twins relievers have pitched to a 2.08 ERA across 13 innings through the first three games of this series, which wraps Sunday with a pitching matchup between rookies Fernando Romero and Shohei Ohtani. That includes one earned run and nine strikeouts in the past 10 1/3 innings for the bullpen.

Trevor Hildenberger, working for a third straight day and the sixth time already in May, escaped a bases-loaded jam in the 11th after consecutive intentional walks to Albert Pujols and Andrelton Simmons. Both walks were the four-finger variety sent in from the bench.

“We went to chat (on the mound) and we had a plan set, and then I look up and (Pujols) is at first base,” said Garver, the University of New Mexico product who is seeing more action with starting catcher Jason Castro (knee) on the disabled list. “And then Simmons comes up, and it's the same thing. We're kind of going through the same plan and then he's on first base as well.”

Journeyman Jefry Marte was due up next. Molitor was “fairly confident” Ohtani wasn’t a pinch-hitting option for Angels manager Mike Scioscia with Sunday’s afternoon start looming.

“I look at Hildy, and I’m like, ‘Hey, here we go. This is the time. This is gut check,’ “ Garver said. “He came through with some really, really good pitches. What a clutch outing out of him. We’ve got total confidence in him to throw all three pitches over the plate, which he did.”

Marte was out on a swinging bunt that Hildenberger calmly fielded and threw to first.

“The plan was not to hit the leadoff guy,” Hildenberger deadpanned. “But things rarely go to play in life or in baseball.”

Having climbed out of 4-0 and 4-1 holes the first two nights of this series, the Twins had to work overtime after blowing a 3-0 lead. For the second time in three nights, Twins reliever Ryan Pressly was unable to keep the Angels off the board, a pair of walks and a passed ball setting up Justin Upton’s game-tying single in the seventh.

Pressly, who entered with a 1.33 earned run average, was making his team-high 19th appearance already this season.

Four straight Twins reached safely against Angels right-hander Nick Tropeano in a three-run third. Byron Buxton’s run-scoring double came on a 2-2 slider, one pitch after he tried to bunt the runners over.

It gave Buxton just his third extra-base hit this season and his first of any kind (at any level) since April 12. Buxton is 1 for 10 with a double and a walk since missing 21 games with migraines and a fractured big toe on his left foot.

Joe Mauer followed with a line single to right for the second Twins run, and Brian Dozier delivered a sacrifice fly to center to make it 3-0. That marked the Twins’ third outburst of three runs or more in a span of 16 innings in this series after going 25 innings without one.

Buxton added a running catch in which he slammed into the wall to rob Ian Kinsler of extra bases in the fourth. Mike Trout, the Angels’ two-time MVP center fielder, looked up at former Angels teammate Torii Hunter in the broadcast booth after that play.

The Angels began to claw back against Twins starter Kyle Gibson with single runs in the third and the sixth. Zach Cozart’s one-out double got things moving in the third, and Andrelton Simmons’ one-out triple off the glove of a diving Max Kepler set up Luis Valbuena’s sacrifice fly in the sixth.

Lifted at 92 pitches, Gibson turned in his third quality start in five tries and worked at least six innings for the fifth time in eight starts. He threw first-pitch strikes to just 12 of 25 batters, walking four, but he also fanned four of five batters during one stretch in the middle innings.

Twins reliever Addison Reed, working for just the second time in nine days, stranded three runners in two scoreless innings. Reed grew up in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., attended Los Osos High School 41 miles to the west and had a large group of friends and family in the stands.

Lefty Zach Duke tossed a scoreless 10th for his 13th straight appearance without allowing an earned run, dating to April 10.

“This is a long road trip for us; three cities is a lot,” Garver said. “You get towards the end here, and guys are tired and they’re missing home and we want to get back. Pulling off those wins and hopefully taking the series (Sunday) is a huge boost for us, especially against a tough team. Gosh, that lineup is stacked over there.”

### **Garver’s RBI double in 1th helps Twins beat Angels 5-3**

**Associated Press | Fox Sports | May 12, 2018**

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) Minnesota Twins reliever Trevor Hildenberger and catcher Mitch Garver were trying to figure out how to handle Albert Pujols’ at-bat with Mike Trout in scoring position in the bottom of the 11th inning, only to realize that manager Paul Molitor had already intentionally walked the Los Angeles Angels’ slugger.

Hildenberger got out of the bases-loaded jam and Garver got the key hit in the next inning to help continue the Twins’ hot streak away from home.

Eddie Rosario scored from first on Garver’s double in the 12th and Minnesota beat Los Angeles 5-3 Saturday night.

“We found a way to win,” Molitor said.

Rosario came all the way around on Garver’s ground ball down the third-base line to put the Twins back in front. Rosario, who went 2 for 4, had singled on a ground ball past reliever Noe Ramirez. Garver then scored from second on Gregorio Petit’s single to center.

Fernando Rodney earned his seventh save after getting Zack Cozart to fly out to left to end the game after walking Rene Rivera with two outs.

But it was Hildenberger who kept the Angels from getting a walk-off win in his third relief appearance in three days.

Hildenberger (1-0) got Jefry Marte to ground out on a weak ball back to him after walking Pujols and Andrelton Simmons to load the bases. Trout had reached third with two outs on Justin Upton's sacrifice fly.

"You walk the Hall of Famer and the guy hitting .500, and you get a guy that you can attack and try to force the ball in play," Hildenberger said. "Molly put me in a position where I had to throw strikes, and I appreciate that vote of confidence."

Ramirez (1-2) gave up two runs on three hits in the 12th after not allowing a run, hit or walk in his first two innings of relief.

The Twins improved to 7-2 on their 10-game road trip, which concludes against the Angels on Sunday.

"Three cities is a lot. You get towards the end here, and guys are tired and they're missing home and we want to get back, but pulling out those wins and hopefully taking the series tomorrow is something that is a huge boost for us heading home into a long homestand," said Garver, who went 1 for 4.

Minnesota got to starter Nick Tropeano with three runs in the third, as Byron Buxton, Joe Mauer and Brian Dozier each had an RBI.

The Angels got one back in the bottom of the third when Cozart scored on a chopper to third by Justin Upton to make it 3-1.

Simmons cut the margin to 3-2 in the sixth and Upton got his second RBI in the seventh, driving in Calhoun to tie the score at 3. Pujols struck out with runners on second and third to end the inning.

"We had a lot of opportunities," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "We played a hard game. Unfortunately, we didn't get that hit here or there when we needed it. They made pitches when they had to and they held on."

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Twins: C Jason Castro will travel to Colorado on Monday and get a second opinion on the torn meniscus in his right knee. Castro was placed on the 10-day disabled list last Saturday. ... 3B Miguel Sano (left hamstring) is still not pain-free and would have his on-field rehabilitation dialed back as a precaution, Molitor said.

Angels: RHP Blake Wood (elbow) will begin a rehab assignment at Class-A Inland Empire on Monday. ... RHP Parker Bridwell (elbow inflammation) is set to resume throwing, Scioscia said. Bridwell made one start this season, giving up six runs in 1 2/3 innings against Oakland on April 6.

#### STRANDED

The Angels were 1 for 10 with runners in scoring position and left 16 runners on base, the most in a game since playing 19 innings against Boston on Aug. 9, 2014. The Twins helped the Angels out by issuing 12 walks.

"They can really swing it and put up runs in a hurry, so walks definitely not part of the formula, but thankfully we were able to strand them and allow them to only put three on the board," said Twins starter Kyle Gibson, who gave up two runs, three hits and four walks in six innings.

#### STREAK OVER

Upton went 2 for 5, but did not hit a home run for the fifth consecutive game, which would have tied the team record set by Bobby Bonds from Aug. 2-7, 1977.

Upton has nine RBIs in his last five games and a major league-leading 17 RBIs in 11 games during May.

#### UP NEXT

Twins: RHP Fernando Romero (2-0, 0.00) will try to extend his unblemished start. The 23-year-old rookie has not allowed a run in 11 2/3 innings, the second-longest scoreless streak by a Twins pitcher to start his career since 1974.

Angels: RHP Shohei Ohtani (3-1, 4.10) will make his first start at home since April 17, when he left early because of a blister after giving up three runs in two innings against Boston. That was the only one of Ohtani's five major league starts where he has not made it into the sixth inning.

**Max Kepler is even raking against lefties now — and it's a boon for the Twins**  
**Dan Hayes | The Athletic | May 12, 2018**

ANAHEIM, Calif. — He was out of the starting lineup on Friday with a bruised hand, which stressed the Twins for a day as they dealt with a short bench. But it's largely the way Max Kepler has performed against left-handed pitching this season that has made it possible for the Twins to work with a small bench in the first place.

Once considered a weakness that bothered him mentally, early returns would suggest Kepler, 25, has made big strides against southpaws this season. Through 31 trips to the plate, Kepler has a 1.134 OPS against left-handed pitchers this season, including six extra-base hits. He entered the season with a .520 OPS in his first 271 plate appearances against lefties and often required a platoon partner. But aside from sitting Friday to rest a hand that was hit by a pitch a night earlier, Kepler has been an everyday player this season for the Twins. Such is the Twins' confidence in him that he even ended up pinch hitting Friday night during the decisive ninth-inning rally. He was intentionally walked and later scored the winning run on Bobby Wilson's sacrifice fly.

"He'll be the first to tell you it got in his head a little bit last year," manager Paul Molitor said. "People talked about it every time we faced a lefty, and sometimes he'd play and sometimes he wouldn't. He had a nice camp facing lefties and he's just been able to carry it over."

Kepler's confidence has been evident in several facets of his game. Not only did he handle center field well in Byron Buxton's month-long absence, Kepler has shown more discipline at the plate this season while concurrently being more aggressive. He's taking more pitches outside the strike zone and has a better walk rate while swinging more frequently at good pitches.

Overall, Kepler has produced a 131 wRC+ early on, up from a career mark of 96. Much of it stems from his at-bats facing lefties, against whom he had a .176/.242/.279 slash line before this season. Kepler admits he was partly to blame for his struggles.

"I think it was just mental," Kepler said. "From the people who were talking about it, and then it got to me mentally. Not that I want to bring up my career in the past, but I've hit lefties fine. It's all mental at this level. Once you let a little mental thing get to you, it makes it harder for yourself."

Kepler has made it look much easier in his third full season in the majors. Not only has he drawn more walks, it seems as if every ball Kepler puts in play is hit hard. His average exit velocity this season is 90.95 mph, which is better than the league average of 89.05 mph. Last season, Kepler's average exit velocity was 88.3 mph.

"He's filled out and got stronger and is playing with more confidence on both sides," a National League scout said. "He showed he can play center field if needed. And he will continue to get better because he is hungry to show the homeland that he is a major-league, two-way regular that could be a perennial All-Star in the future."

The emergence has helped the Twins on many fronts this season as Kepler gave them another consistent bat to weather the absences of Buxton and Miguel Sanó. It also means that Molitor doesn't need to carry an extra outfielder on the 25-man roster as he doesn't have to platoon for Kepler as he did in the past. Before Thursday's game, the Twins activated Buxton from the disabled list and optioned outfielder Ryan LaMarre to Triple-A Rochester instead of sending a pitcher. In years past, the Twins might have needed Robbie Grossman to pinch hit for Kepler against lefties and then replaced Grossman with LaMarre, who has a superior glove. But Molitor agreed that Kepler and several other lefties have hit their same-handed counterparts well enough this season to keep a 13-man pitching staff.

"I'm comfortable with the way it is now," Molitor said.

Kepler suggests his overall improvement is merely feeling comfortable at the plate and eliminating swings at certain pitches. He thinks it's a matter of confidence and experience.

Molitor noted Kepler isn't chasing the slider away nearly as much, and the numbers back the assertion. According to Brooksbaseball.net, Kepler has only struck out twice on sliders this season, which puts him on pace for about 10. He's hitting .300 against the slider this season. Last season, Kepler hit .161 and struck out 21 times.

"Last year, I was swinging at waste pitches," Kepler said. "I was being too aggressive in certain count situations. I think patience has helped me a lot this year. Doesn't matter. Righty or lefty."

"I feel like with each year and each game, you learn how to manage your frustration and put it behind you quicker."

"I'm up there looking for my pitch instead of hitting their pitch. I know when I miss it. And if I hit, I know. It's like being more aware than in the years before."