



**Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
Thursday, September 20, 2018**

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Twins arms combine to quiet Tigers, earn sweep

Tyler Fenwick | MLB.com | September 19, 2018

DETROIT -- Stephen Gonsalves has struggled to find his footing in the Major Leagues since being called up to the Twins on Aug. 20. The 24-year-old rookie had a 9.90 ERA in August, and his first September start lasted just 2 1/3 innings after giving up five runs. But after notching his first Major League win Wednesday afternoon at Comerica Park, Gonsalves appears to be on the right track.

Gonsalves threw six shutout innings of one-hit ball as the Twins rolled over the Tigers, 8-2, for the three-game series sweep and their fourth win in a row.

"It's learning to trust your stuff," Gonsalves said. "That's what we did today. The last 3-4 outings we were talking mechanics and we just said, 'You know what, don't even worry about that. Just throw the ball as hard as you can over the plate.' And that's what we did today."

Six innings pitched is a full inning longer than his previous high. Gonsalves didn't allow a hit until JaCoby Jones singled with one out in the sixth inning. The only Tigers hit before then was a single by Nicholas Castellanos in the first inning. Combined with his last outing against the Royals, Gonsalves has gone his last nine innings allowing just one hit and an unearned run. Before these last two outings, Gonsalves hadn't allowed fewer than three runs in a game.

"I just thought he was getting his fastball in a better spot and his changeup in a better spot," manager Paul Molitor said. "When he's been getting hurt, it's either been hitters counts or mistakes up in the zone, and we didn't see too many of those today."

Of the 19 batters Gonsalves faced, only two went to three-ball counts.

For the second straight outing, Gonsalves entered after an "opener," a strategy the Twins have been experimenting with in September. Gabriel Moya threw a scoreless first inning Wednesday, which allowed Gonsalves to have to face the top of the Tigers' order only twice.

Gonsalves got an early boost from his offense. The Twins were hitting early against Tigers rookie Spencer Turnbull, who was making his first Major League start. After being retired in order in the first inning, the Twins got their first four hitters on base in the second. Two RBI singles followed by two RBI groundouts gave the Twins an early 4-0 lead. One of those RBI hits came from Tyler Austin, who batted in three runs in Tuesday night's win. Austin finished the series 4-for-7 with five RBIs.

"For anybody who comes up here and tries to get their feet on the ground and it doesn't go particularly well at the beginning, there's always that

doubt factor," Molitor said of Gonsalves. "... I think from that aspect, having a little bit of a lead was probably a good thing for him."

The Twins tagged Turnbull with two more runs in the fourth inning. Ehire Adrianza's one out-double led to a throwing error by right fielder Mikie Mahtook that allowed Austin to score, and Williams Astudillo scored Adrianza with a double to make it 6-0.

Now, Gonsalves just has to figure out who he's going to give the game ball to.

"We'll have to figure out where it goes," Gonsalves said. "I gave my dad the first strikeout and then my grandma the first out. We'll see where this first one goes."

SOUND SMART

Astudillo is best known as the 5-foot-9, 225-pound baseball player who said he just wants to show that "chubby people also run." But the 26-year-old rookie stuffed the stat sheet Wednesday with two hits and three RBIs. It's the first time in his career that Astudillo has recorded three RBIs in a game.

HE SAID IT

"His left shoulder has been bothering him some on the right-handed swing. If you guys recollect that his last couple at-bats that he did bat right-handed, he bunted, and we were just trying to stay away from that. He's been trying to get it better to where he's comfortable enough swinging. We'll see where it is in Oakland. He hung in there, got a lefty-on-lefty double, and maybe found something." -- Molitor, on Adrianza batting left-handed against lefty pitchers

UP NEXT

After an off-day Thursday, the Twins continue their road trip with a three-game series against the A's, starting with a 9:05 p.m. CT first pitch Friday. Jose Berrios (11-11, 3.81 ERA) will be on the mound for Minnesota, with Oakland yet to announce a starter. Berrios has gone a combined 12 innings and given up three runs in his last two starts.

Youth is served: Each club's best rookie in 2018 **Staff Report | MLB.com | September 20, 2018**

Each year, a new group of rookies sets out to make a mark in the Major Leagues, and in 2018, many of these young players have made history with their performances. They're fueling clubs during postseason races, as well as giving fans a glimpse of what's to come in the years ahead.

With the aid of all 30 MLB.com beat writers, here's a look at each team's best rookie this season:

Twins: Jake Cave

The Twins took a chance on Cave in March, acquiring him from the Yankees for Minor League right-hander Luis Gil, and Cave has responded with a strong rookie season. The 25-year-old wasn't expected to play much this season, but with center fielder Byron Buxton out most of the year because of injuries and offensive inconsistency, the left-handed hitting Cave has filled in nicely. He's capable of playing all three outfield positions and has shown some power offensively, hitting .257/.300/.458 with 11 homers and 13 doubles through his first 82 career games.

Rosario, Garver may not play again in '18 **Tyler Fenwick | MLB.com | September 19, 2018**

DETROIT -- Eddie Rosario and Mitch Garver have been sent back to Minneapolis to deal with their respective injuries, manager Paul Molitor said Wednesday before the Twins' series finale against the Tigers at Comerica Park, which resulted in an 8-2 win and series sweep for Minnesota.

Rosario will have an MRI on his right quad Thursday. He aggravated it while fielding a single in left field during the Twins' 6-1 win over the Tigers on Monday. It was just his second game playing the field since coming back from the same injury on Sept. 7.

Garver hasn't played since taking a foul ball off his catcher's mask last Wednesday. Molitor said the decision to send him home had more to do with travel.

"[I]t's very unlikely that anything was going to happen over the next three or four days," Molitor said. "[This will] save him the travel on airplanes, which sometimes can contribute to symptoms surrounding concussions, so we're going to get him back there."

Though neither player experienced a specific setback to prompt the move, it does indicate that their chances of playing again this season are getting slimmer. Molitor wouldn't go as far to rule them out, but there will only be six games left when they're reunited again next Tuesday in Minnesota.

"You've got to be realistic about the chances," Molitor said. "I don't think it's very great for either of them to play."

Molitor suggested that if Garver returns this season, he wouldn't go behind the plate.

"I don't think he would like to put himself in that position here with a handful of games to go, to risk something coming off it so recently, which makes sense to me," Molitor said.

Noteworthy

- Molitor had high praise for the Dodgers' Brian Dozier, whom the Twins traded away on July 31. Dozier said that he played through injuries for the Twins earlier this season.

"He's done that for a long time," Molitor said. "... He was a guy that knew how to get the most out of himself when he wasn't 100 percent."

- Molitor suggested that he will shuffle around some of the bullpen roles down the stretch of the season, including giving other pitchers chances at save opportunities.

"There's different things we might do, especially if it's someone that I would have hopes for that could eventually get roles, whether it's setup or closer or whatever," he said.

The Twins rookies are running a full Triple Crown in horse and jockey costumes
Jessica Kleinschmidt and Tyler Fenwick | MLB.com | September 19, 2018

The Twins were sensational at the plate during Sunday's 9-6 win over the Royals. The team hit four homers and, despite a subpar outing for Kyle Gibson, the right-hander managed to get the win without allowing a walk. So how does a team celebrate after such a victory? Well, they put on a Triple Crown race of course.

We aren't referring to the Triple Crown the Red Sox's own J.D. Martinez is chasing. This is the event with horses and jockeys and, in this case, the Twins rookies were both of these things:

@Cut4

The @Twins held the first leg of their "rookie triple crown" today.

Yes, that's Williams Astudillo leading the pack as players raced their costumes, and what a sight it was.

The "Twinsness," September 19

The team continued the race with the second leg following the Twins' 8-2 win over the Tigers on Wednesday. They called it the "Twinsness" after the Preakness Stakes:

Kohl Stewart was initially the winner, but he, along with several others were disqualified because they ran and you are supposed to gallop during the event. Those are the rules and if you break them, you have to suffer the consequences. After a video review, John Curtiss was named the winner.

The final race (Twinsmont Stakes) will be held on Sunday after the Twins take on the A's in Oakland.

Don't try this at home. But if you do, take photos and show us please.

Stephen Gonsalves gets first victory as Twins blitz Tigers 8-2
La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 20, 2018

DETROIT – Love it or hate it, it is a strategy that is likely here to stay. And the Twins are having some success using it.

For the sixth time this month, the Twins opened a game with a reliever and had the starter — the so-called “primary pitcher — following after one or two innings. The past two attempts have been extremely effective, including Wednesday’s 8-2 victory over the Tigers.

Lefthander Stephen Gonsalves entered in the second inning and picked up his first major league victory, throwing six innings of one-hit baseball, as the Twins swept an opponent on the road for the first time since July 23-25 at Toronto.

Gabriel Moya started the game and was a little shaky, putting two on with one out in the first before getting Mikie Mahtook to ground into an inning-ending double play. As a welcome gift for Gonsalves, the Twins offense scored four runs in the second, so he took over with a comfortable lead.

“That definitely felt good,” Gonsalves said. “First inning I would say is the worst. It’s just coming in, straight jog from the bullpen, kind of feeling it out. But after that first inning, it felt good.”

Called up Aug. 19, the rookie lefthander needed six “starts” for his first win — and an obligatory beer shower.

“Got it out of the way,” he said. “It was amazing. It’s a dream come true.”

With Addison Reed adding a scoreless eighth, the Twins took an 8-0 lead into the ninth before the Tigers tagged Alan Busenitz with two runs to break up the shutout.

Ehire Adrianza, playing with a sore left shoulder, was 3-for-4 with two doubles; Robbie Grossman was 3-for-5 with two runs scored; and Willians Austudillo drove in three runs.

Before Wednesday, Gonsalves (1-2) pitched in five games as either the starter or the primary pitcher. His longest outing had been five innings in a loss to Oakland. He lowered his ERA from 9.39 to 6.75 Wednesday.

The Twins are now 3-3 when using the OPP — opener/primary pitcher — strategy. Using an “opener” is designed to combat the first inning ERA of 4.58 — highest of any inning — but so far, Twins openers have a 6.30 ERA in the first. However, the past three times they’ve done it, the opener has pitched a scoreless first, all by Moya.

Twins manager Paul Molitor joked Monday that Moya likes the role because he can hang out in the clubhouse for eight innings afterward.

“In terms of a guy who really loves to pitch, you can see it in how he takes the mound and his antics,” Molitor said. “I don’t think he’s overwhelmed by having to go out there and try to get you the first inning or two. Stuff wise he can get lefties and righties out, so that’s why he’s an appealing choice when we go that route.”

The “primary” pitchers used by the Twins in those six games have an ERA of 1.98, and indications are they likely will use the strategy next season. Molitor hasn’t fully bought in, yet.

“It hasn’t been enough [proof] for me,” he said. “I’ve done more thinking about the logistics of it: when it’s right to just have a guy maybe only pitch one inning regardless if he goes 1-2-3 trying to get one inning instead of two innings ... But it’s kind of fluid in terms of making those decisions early in the game. You have to be ready for different scenarios the best you can.”

Ehire Adrianza's first lefty-lefty hit is a double
La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 20, 2018

DETROIT – Ehire Adrianza’s 19th double of the season Wednesday might have been his most impressive.

Adrianza injured his left shoulder Sept. 2 against Texas while swinging against lefthander Yohander Mendez, which makes it hard for him to follow through when batting righthanded. The Twins have tried to protect him, but Detroit brought in lefthander Matt Hall in the eighth. Adrianza was supposed to bat righthanded but batted lefthanded instead.

That’s not easy, because pitches that usually break toward a switch-hitter were now breaking away from him, which he’s not used to. But Adrianza got a fastball and doubled to left.

“It’s really hard, man,” Adrianza said. “I don’t know how those lefties do it, like [Joe] Mauer and [Max] Kepler. Those guys have been doing it for years. Today was my first time getting my first hit lefty-lefty. That breaking ball looks really, really hard to hit.”

The Tigers were surprised to see him bat lefthanded in the situation.

“When I went back to play defense, the third base coach [Dave Clark] said, ‘Hey man, what are you doing?’ I say I can’t swing lefty.”

Adrianza said he’s been receiving treatment for his left shoulder and has been taking some righthanded swings off the tee but is not ready to try it in a game yet. He will try it out during batting practice Friday in Oakland.

Rosario, Garver sent back

The Twins sent both outfielder Eddie Rosario and catcher Mitch Garver back to the Twin Cities on Wednesday. Rosario is scheduled to have an MRI on his reagravated right quadriceps.

Garver, slowed by a concussion, wasn't progressing enough to have an impact on the upcoming series in Oakland, so he was sent home to continue his recovery.

Once the Twins return from the West Coast, there will be just six games left in the season. The likelihood of either of them seeing action before the season ends is diminishing by the day.

"You've got to be realistic about the chances," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "I don't think it's very great for either of them to play. I talked to Mitch a little bit about the catching aspect of it, and I don't think he would like to put himself in that position here with a handful of games to go to risk something coming off it so recently, which makes sense to me."

Sano doesn't start

After striking out four times in his return to the lineup, Miguel Sano was not in the starting lineup Wednesday but was available off the bench. It was his first game since injuring his lower left leg on Sept. 4. Molitor said the Twins planned it that way.

"This way we'll hopefully have him available today, and get him through today and tomorrow, and try to get him back on the field Friday when we play Oakland," Molitor said.

Etc.

Kohl Stewart won the second leg of the Twins triple crown, which was run after the game. John Curtiss was originally declared the winner because Stewart was accused of not galloping all the way, but Stewart won an appeal.

The race is part of the annual rookie dress-up day. This year, the rookies are wearing costumes of jockeys riding horses, and the veterans are making them race (in a gallop, not a sprint) at each stop during the three-city road trip.

Eddie Rosario's season might be over for Twins
La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 20, 2018

DETROIT – Eddie Rosario walked through the clubhouse with a noticeable limp on Tuesday after aggravating his right quadriceps injury Monday as he fielded a ball hit to left field.

When asked how bad it felt, compared to the first time he was injured, the Twins left fielder replied: "It feels the same as last time."

If that's the case, Rosario likely will be unable to play in the outfield over the final two weeks of the season, and his ability to be a designated hitter could be in question.

Rosario initially was injured Aug. 30 in Cleveland while running the bases. Monday marked the first time he played in the field since then — 18 days later. This time, there are only 11 days left in the season. He was able to DH seven days after the injury, starting with a Sept. 7 game against Kansas City. If he follows the same recovery path, he could get some swings in next week during the season's final homestand.

But there's a chance that Rosario might have appeared in his final game for 2018.

"I don't know about the chance of him playing again," manager Paul Molitor said. "I don't think it's anything that we want to push too far. If he gets well and he has a chance, we would consider it, but I'm certainly not going to push for it.

"When he did this one originally, there was enough time to try to get him back out there, let him play, maybe even at less than 100 percent. There was enough games. But now, if he doesn't do anything here at least through the weekend, then we're looking down at the last week, I'm not sure what the odds are there."

Rosario is batting .288 with 24 homers and 77 RBI. He has a chance to surpass his 2017 numbers of .290, 27 and 78, which were all career-highs.

Offseason tweaks

The approach to the annual offseason instructional league, in which teams spend a month having prospects work on skills while playing games against other teams, is changing. And the Twins are among the teams shifting how they treat baseball's version of summer school.

Players used to begin the day working on skills, then finish up with games in the afternoon. The thinking used to be that's the best way to help them develop, by immediately trying to apply what they were working on in games. Twins Chief Baseball Officer Derek Falvey noted that more

teams are moving away from playing a month's worth of games to focus on how prospects are being developed.

"Eventually, instructional league became an extension of the regular season for our youngest players," Falvey said. "Despite our best efforts, it can be hard to focus on a real change with a player in the morning while asking him to compete in a game in the afternoon."

The Twins' new plan is to arrange a series of offseason minicamps at the team facilities in Fort Myers, Fla. There will be fewer games in order to focus on skill development that will be tailored to fit individual players.

Over the course of the offseason, the Twins feel they can impact more of their minor-leaguers.

"For some guys that may mean a heavy focus on strength and conditioning," Falvey said. "For others, it may be defensive work and skill development; and for pitchers it could be the development of an individual pitch."

Garver improving

Catcher Mitch Garver felt better Tuesday after having a slight setback Monday, but he is still several days away from playing after suffering a concussion last week. He spent Tuesday doing cardio work.

"He's doing a little better today but I don't see anything baseball-wise happening here at least through the weekend," Molitor said. "We're getting down to the end with him, too, as far as what he's going to be able to do before we're done."

Wednesday's Twins-Tigers game recap

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 19, 2018

GAME RECAP

IMPACT PLAYER

Stephen Gonsalves, Twins

The rookie lefthander shut out the Tigers on one hit, with a walk and four strikeouts in six innings.

BY THE NUMBERS

4: Hits Twins pitchers allowed in two of the three games in the series.

.455: Batting average for Robbie Grossman during the series.

10-6: Twins' record against Detroit this season

ON DECK

The Twins are off Thursday before starting a three-game series in Oakland on Friday.

Opener Gabriel Moya on the mound as Twins take on Tigers

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 19, 2018

DETROIT -- Twins and Tigers play at 12:10 today (FSN) in the finale of a three-game series.

Opener Gabriel Moya will start for the Twins with Stephen Gonsalves to follow.

The Twins have sent both outfielder Eddie Rosario and catcher Mitch Garver back to the Twin Cities. Rosario will have an MRI on his re-aggravated right quad. Garver, slowed by a concussion, wasn't progressing fast enough to have an impact on the upcoming series in Oakland, so he was sent home to continue his recovery.

They will wait for the Twins to return from the West Coast, then there will be just six games left in the season. Whether the play or not is up in the air. But I'm betting that they don't.

"I haven't got there yet with my own ideas about that," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "We're not going to see them until Tuesday, and then we're looking at six days. You got to be realistic about the chances. I don't think it's very great for either of them to play. I talked to Mitch a little

bit about the catching aspect of it, and I don't think he would like to put himself in that position here with a handful of games to go to risk something coming off it so recently, which makes sense to me."

Miguel Sano got the day off after returning to the lineup last night, which was planned. Sano should be back in the lineup on Friday when the Twins face the A's. Molitor said he will field his best lineups possible against the playoff-hungry A's.

Stephen Gonsalves earns first win in Twins' 8-2 victory over Tigers

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | September 19, 2018

DETROIT — Stephen Gonsalves seems to be getting the hang of this primary thing.

Staked to a four-run lead after watching the first inning from the bullpen, the Twins' rookie left-hander picked up his first big-league victory with six scoreless innings in Wednesday afternoon's 8-2 romp over the Detroit Tigers. He became the sixth Twins pitcher to reach that milestone this season, joining Fernando Romero, Gabriel Moya, Matt Magill, Kohl Stewart and Aaron Slegers.

With that, Gonsalves received the obligatory beer shower from his teammates in the visiting clubhouse at Comerica Park.

"It was amazing," Gonsalves said. "It's a dream come true."

Winning their fourth straight as they clinched the season series with the Tigers, the Twins also recorded their sixth sweep of the year. They are 10-6 against manager Ron Gardenhire's fifth straight 90-loss team, dating to 2011 with the Twins.

Running his string of innings to nine without an earned run — all as the primary — Gonsalves permitted just two baserunners: a two-out walk to JaCoby Jones on a full count in the third and Jones' line single to left in the sixth.

Gonsalves, who got nine swing-and-miss strikes, let the count reach three balls just twice. He fanned four, threw strike one to 11 of 19 batters and was in total control in his 78-pitch outing in relief of Moya.

His fastball velocity up a couple of ticks at 90-91 mph, Gonsalves credited a talk with pitching coach Garvin Alston.

"It's learning to trust your stuff," Gonsalves said. "That's what we did today. The last 3-4 outings we were talking mechanics and we just said, 'You know what, don't even worry about that. Just throw the ball as hard as you can over the plate,' and that's what we did."

Gonsalves would look up at the scoreboard radar reading from time to time. Whenever he saw 87 mph on his fastball, he'd hump back up and make sure he fired down the mound toward his target.

"I was just really focused on throwing the ball as hard as I could," he said.

Working his third straight scoreless outing as the opener, Moya worked around a hit batter and a bad-hop single in an 18-pitch first.

Gonsalves, 24, was making his sixth big-league outing after being called up from Triple-A Rochester on Aug. 20. He entered with 17 walks and just 10 strikeouts in 15 1/3 big-league innings.

His earned-run average dropped from 9.39 to 6.75 with Wednesday's handiwork.

"For anybody who comes up here and tries to get their feet on the ground and it doesn't go particularly well at the beginning, there's always that doubt factor," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "You're battling the mental part of the game. From that aspect, having a lead was probably a good thing for him."

As for the primary role, Gonsalves said he tweaked his routine to give him an extra 10 minutes of long toss in the outfield.

"Right after the anthem and right before first pitch," Gonsalves said. "I'm only sitting for five or 10 minutes. It's kind of like spring training. You're waiting for a bullpen and there are so many guys, you just have to stay loose."

Tyler Austin drove in two, giving him five runs batted in over the past two games. Austin, playing first base, also saved back-to-back throwing errors with a pair of leaping grabs in the fourth and made a solid read on a backdoor play to score on Mikie Mahtook's errant throw in the top half of that inning.

The all-Venezuelan bottom third of the Twins' batting order (Ehire Adrianza, Willians Astudillo and Gregorio Petit) piled up five hits, five RBIs and three runs. Moya also hails from Venezuela.

Now Gonsalves, a fourth-round pick in 2013 out of a San Diego high school, just has to determine who will get the game ball from his first big-league win. He had promised it to his paternal grandfather and biggest fan, a kindly man everyone called “Father John,” but he died at 86 on Dec. 1, 2015.

“I promised my ‘Vuvu’ back in the day, so we’ll see,” Gonsalves said. “I gave my dad the first strikeout and then my grandma the first out. We’ll have to figure out where this first one goes.”

As Brian Dozier slumps in L.A., Paul Molitor lauds his no-excuses approach

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | September 19, 2018

DETROIT — As Brian Dozier slides toward an uncertain free-agent future with the Los Angeles Dodgers, Twins manager Paul Molitor has watched from afar while resisting the urge to reach out with some late-season encouragement.

“I haven’t communicated with him for a while,” Molitor said Wednesday. “Caught a little bit of the game (Tuesday) night. Texted some early (after the July 31 trade). But he’s on a team in a good spot. It’s always what’s ahead of you and not maybe what’s behind you.”

Since homering three times in his first seven starts for the Dodgers, Dozier had hit .154 with an abysmal .495 combined on-base/slugging percentage over his past 33 games (and 121 plate appearances). With one homer since undergoing heart tests in mid-August, he has been reduced to a platoon role at second base as he enters free agency for the first time.

The 31-year-old also revealed to the Orange County Register over the weekend that his right knee bothered him for an extended period this season, dating to a bone bruise that required a magnetic resonance imaging exam in mid-April. That test showed no structural damage, but Dozier admitted he “irritated something” in his knee with a few plays in May and may have developed some bat habits at the plate as a result.

Dozier, who has never been on the disabled list in his career, missed just one of the Twins’ first 105 games this year before being traded for fellow pending free agent Logan Forsythe and a pair of Double-A prospects.

“He’s done that for a long time,” Molitor said. “The amount of games he played annually, we saw him bounce back from a couple things that might have knocked him off for a game or two and get right back in there. He was a guy that knew how to get the most out of himself when he wasn’t 100 percent. Didn’t make excuses about it, either.”

SENT HOME

Left fielder Eddie Rosario (right quad) and catcher Mitch Garver (concussion) appear done for the year after being sent back to the Twin Cities for additional testing.

Rosario, plagued by quadriceps issues since the end of August, will have an MRI exam to determine the full range of the problem. “We’re going to take a little deeper look,” Molitor said.

Garver, out for the past week after taking a foul tip off his catcher’s mask, expressed his reservations about catching any more this season. Molitor, after talking with Garver, said that “makes sense.”

As for a potential move off catcher in 2019, Molitor said that would be hard to envision even with Garver’s concussion history because of his limited positional value at other spots. Garver played 14 games in left field at Triple-A Rochester in 2017 and played 40 games at first base in his five minor-league seasons, but those remain “works in progress,” the manager said.

“The bat’s improved, especially in the second half,” Molitor said. “If he wasn’t a backup catcher, it would be a hard fit with a three-man bench to have him as a guy who could just be there without being a catcher, for me, at this stage.”

Among American League rookies with at least 300 plate appearances, Garver’s park-adjusted production ranked seventh while his 1.1 Wins Above Replacement (per Fangraphs) ranked eighth.

‘FREAKNESS’ RESULTS

In a controversial finish that required a lengthy meeting of race stewards Kyle Gibson, Chris Gimenez and Logan Forsythe, rookie reliever John Curtiss was declared the winner of the first-ever Twins-ness (or Freakness) Stakes.

A field of 18 competed three days after Jake Cave won the first leg of the Twins’ Triple Crown on Sunday in Kansas City. This time right-hander Kohl Stewart crossed the finish line first, but he was disqualified for running instead of galloping through Comerica Park’s 60-yard turf course.

Also taken down by no-nonsense stewards were outfielder Johnny Field and reliever Gabriel Moya. Cave was moved up to place, with long-shot reliever Alan Busenitz rewarding bettors with a nice show price.

More than an hour after the race, following extensive video review, Stewart was restored to the top spot as the stewards decided to accept his gallop after all.

The final leg of the first-ever competition — the Twins-mont Stakes — is set for Sunday afternoon in Oakland as the Twins wrap up a three-city road trip. Baseball-operations employee Frankie Padulo broke poorly and finished last after an early spill.

BRIEFLY

Switch-hitter Ehire Adrianza, troubled for 2 1/2 weeks by a sore left shoulder, hit left-handed his final two times up against lefty pitchers and doubled against Blaine Hardy. Adrianza, who hurt his shoulder on a swing during the road series at Texas, is expected to get an MRI on his shoulder after the road trip.

Gonsalves shines in 8-2 win as Twins sweep Tigers **Associated Press | Fox Sports North | September 19, 2018**

DETROIT — Stephen Gonsalves is getting more comfortable running in from the bullpen to start a game.

The Minnesota Twins, who have been experimenting with an “opening pitcher,” then bringing in a primary pitcher after an inning or two, got excellent results in Wednesday’s 8-2 win over the Detroit Tigers.

Gabriel Moya started for the Twins, but was replaced by Gonsalves in the second inning, marking the sixth time this season they’ve used an opening pitcher. Gonsalves (1-2), who pitched six scoreless innings of one-hit ball and struck out four, picked up his first major league win.

“It was amazing,” he said. “It’s a dream come true.”

In his previous outing against Kansas City on Sept. 13, Gonsalves entered as the primary pitcher in the third inning, but did not factor into the decision. Against the Tigers, he entered in the second with his team holding a 4-0 lead.

“We’re doing it so much here now that you’ve learned to adjust your routine,” Gonsalves said. “The first inning is the worst, coming in from the bullpen and feeling it out.”

The Twins, who swept the three-game series from the Tigers, made Gonsalves’ entrance easier by putting up four runs in the top of the second off Detroit pitcher Spencer Turnbull (0-1), making his first major league start.

Tyler Austin and Ehire Adrianza each had RBI singles to spark the rally.

“Moya did a nice job in that first because that’s critical to get off to a good start,” Twins manager Paul Molitor said. “It was nice to see Stephen finally get into a rhythm. I’m sure it felt good to come in with a lead, too.”

Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire isn’t sure if it will become a league-wide trend to use opening and primary pitchers.

“Your guess is as good as mine,” he said. “I don’t know where it’s going. Some of the smaller-market teams have to do that — they can’t afford the big salaries to pay pitchers like that.”

The Twins added a pair of runs in the fourth inning, which included Willians Astudillo’s RBI double, to open a 6-0 lead. They added two more in the eighth on Austin’s sacrifice fly and Astudillo’s RBI single.

Adrianza finished with three hits, three runs scored and an RBI; Astudillo had two hits and three RBIs; and Austin added two hits, two RBIs and two runs scored.

“It was top to bottom, everybody putting together good at-bats,” Austin said. “When we do that as a team, good things will happen.”

The Tigers got a pair of ninth-inning runs on Nicholas Castellanos’ RBI double and Mikie Mahtook’s sac fly.

NEWEST TIGER

Detroit said it has acquired RHP Logan Shore from Oakland as the second player to be named later in the Mike Fiers trade. Shore was ranked as

the A's 14th-best minor-league prospect, according to MLB Pipeline.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Twins: OF Eddie Rosario (right quad) and C Mitch Garver (concussion) were sent back to Minnesota and will not travel with the team to Oakland for its next series, Molitor said Wednesday.

Tigers: 3B Jeimer Candelario left Tuesday's game with a lumbar spine spasm. Gardenhire said Wednesday that Candelario is day to day.

UP NEXT

Twins: Play at Oakland on Friday. RHP Jose Berrios (11-11, 3.81 ERA) is scheduled to pitch for Minnesota.

Tigers: Host Kansas City on Thursday night. Detroit LHP Matthew Boyd (9-12, 4.08) is scheduled to face Royals RHP Jorge Lopez (2-3, 4.64).

Who needs October? The best moment for each out-of-it MLB team

Sam Miller | ESPN.com | September 20, 2018

The end of the baseball season began March 31, when the Miami Marlins' record dropped to 1-2 and their playoff odds dropped to 0 percent. Not zero rounded down from 0.4, but 0.0.

One by one, other teams have followed: The White Sox on April 10, the Reds and Tigers on April 15 . . . until the most recent "eliminations," the Giants and Pirates on Sept. 3, the 14th and 15th teams to hit zeroes. None of these teams was technically eliminated on that date, but about as many teams come back from 0.0 as you'd expect. Indeed, of the first 15 teams to hit 0.0 this year, none has clawed back to even 1 percent at any point in the subsequent months or weeks.

The first 15 have collectively played about 1,200 games, more than a quarter of a major league season, under the threat of nothing. But they play those games out of something more than obligation; they play them because there remains some potential to add to the pool of happiness in the sport.

So for each dead team, we picked a day -- or a play, or a moment -- this season when the neurons fired and the brain was faintly alive.

In reverse order of elimination:

Aug. 12: Minnesota Twins

Record since: 17-18

Post-zero high point: Willians Astudillo's Sept. 9 walk-off homer

The following tweet is not from that game but is a fair approximation of the feeling you get anytime you remember Astudillo exists:

@AaronGleeman

This clip of Willians Astudillo rounding third base is two seconds of pure bliss.

In a sport with Shohei Ohtani and Pat Venditte, Astudillo flies under the radar, but he's almost equally joyously, joyfully unique. He's a catcher (and a good-framing catcher) who, because he has limited power and a Bartolo-at-40-esque body, has had to fight his way up the minor league ladder. But unlike every other modern hitter, he almost never strikes out, which has led to some gaudy batting averages (.361 in the Venezuelan Summer League one year; .333 in Single-A; .348 in High-A; .342 in Triple-A). Ben Lindbergh has been on the Astudillo beat for a while and puts it thusly:

Astudillo has produced some of the most strikeout-averse single seasons on record. The Baseball Prospectus database includes minor league records from MLB Advanced Media dating back to 2005 and incorporating almost 42,000 individual player-seasons of at least 100 plate appearances (counting 100-PA stints at multiple levels in the same season as discrete entities). Ranked by the lowest strikeout rates relative to the league, five of the top 11 entries and eight of the top 30 belong to Astudillo alone.

There's plenty more to love about him -- the top Google News headline for him right now is "Willians Astudillo is taking grounders at shortstop" - but there has always been a tension about whether he's legit or a meme, whether his skills would translate as he moved up levels. The Twins have given him a pretty good look, and he's hitting .317. It's only 65 plate appearances, but he's hitting .317, he's slugging .508, and he's struck out only twice.

Anyway, here's him hitting the walk-off homer: