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Berrios tangles up White Sox with 11-K outing
Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | April 12, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- Jose Berrios' ascension to ace status could be underway this season.

The 23-year-old right-hander dominated the White Sox for seven scoreless innings, tying a career-high with 11 strikeouts, while Joe Mauer had two clutch hits to reach 2,000 for his career and lift the Twins to a 4-0 win at Target Field on Thursday. Berrios improved to 2-1 with a 2.18 ERA in his best start since his season-opening shutout.

"You don't want to downplay what Jose did," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "That was masterful, maybe one of his better outings -- even after he threw a shutout a couple starts ago -- in terms of being in command of where you saw the baseball and using all his pitches. But it was Joe's night."

Berrios scattered three hits without a walk -- and has issued one walk in 20 2/3 innings this year -- which shows his improved command after entering the year with 3.7 walks per nine innings in his first two seasons. His stuff was nearly unhittable, as he registered 18 swinging strikes, including 12 on his curveball alone. He threw first-pitch strikes to 20 of the 24 batters he faced, reaching just one 2-0 count all night.

"My grip on the curveball was great tonight," Berrios said through a translator. "It felt great. The weather was better, so it felt good."

Berrios was backed offensively by Mauer, who had an RBI single as part of a two-run third inning against right-hander Lucas Giolito, and a two-run single off reliever Aaron Bummer in the seventh to notch his 2,000th career hit.

"It was a big moment late in the game, and to put a couple runs up on the board made it even sweeter," Mauer said. "[Bummer] is tough. He's got a great sinker and slider. I was happy to be able to drive one up the middle there and bring home a couple runs. The thought was in my head that he might put some tough, borderline pitches there. But I'm glad I got one back up the middle."

Byron Buxton also sparked the two-run rally in the third with a single and stolen base, scoring on a grounder from Brian Dozier, despite the White Sox playing with the infield in. Mauer's 1,999th career hit was an RBI single to right to score Dozier.

"It wasn't an easy play to score on," Molitor said of Buxton. "But his ability to anticipate the ball in the ground and to get a good jump, those are the kind of runs that few people can create the way he did there in getting around the bases."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Mauer's milestone: Mauer made history with his 2,000th hit, joining Hall of Famers Rod Carew and Kirby Puckett as the only players to achieve the feat with Minnesota. Mauer, who has played his entire 15-year career with the Twins, is one of 12 active players who have reached the 2,000 hit plateau, with Adrian Gonzalez the most recent to reach it in Aug. 2017.

"Two of my heroes right there," Mauer said of Carew and Puckett. "To be mentioned with those guys and Harmon [Killebrew] early in the year with those [Opening Day] starts, it means a lot to me right now. And not just to me, the organization. To be mentioned with those guys is pretty special."

SOUND SMART

Since 2011, Twins starters have combined to register only 11 games with 10 or more strikeouts. Berrios has achieved that feat three times. Ervin Santana also has three 10-strikeout games over that span.

HE SAID IT

"You do the math of the percentage of players who are in that category versus the people who have had a chance to put the uniform on, and it's fairly low. You start finding yourself in categories and rising into areas that few people get a chance to experience. He said out there -- and I know he truly believes it -- 'We've got bigger fish to fry,' as far as what we're trying to accomplish here. -- Molitor, who had 3,319 career hits, on Mauer's milestone

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

The White Sox appeared to break Buxton's streak of 26 consecutive stolen bases without being thrown out when he was ruled out at second base by umpire Nick Lentz on a steal attempt in third. But after a review, it was determined Buxton was never tagged and the call was overturned, giving him 27 straight steals without getting caught. It helped spark a two-run rally. Buxton added a 28th steal in a row in the eighth inning.

UP NEXT

The Twins haven't announced a starter for Friday's game against the White Sox at Target Field at 7:10 p.m. CT, as it could be affected by the weather in Minnesota. But Mauer will look to build on his incredible start to this season, in which he's hitting .412/.545/.529.

Mauer reaches 2,000-hit milestone with single **Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | April 12, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS -- Twins first baseman Joe Mauer reached an impressive milestone against the White Sox on Thursday, recording his 2,000th career hit with a two-run single off left-handed reliever Aaron Bummer in the seventh inning of a 4-0 win at Target Field.

Mauer joined exclusive company, as Hall of Famers Rod Carew and Kirby Puckett are the only other players to reach 2,000 hits with Minnesota and he's the 287th player to ever accomplish the feat.

Mauer received a standing ovation from the crowd after the hit, as his feat was acknowledged on the video board. The hometown hero from St. Paul recognized the crowd's cheers with a tip of the helmet. White Sox first baseman Jose Abreu also gave Mauer a congratulatory pat and he was again honored by the Twins with a tribute after the inning was over.

"That was awesome," Mauer said. "It really was. Leading up to it, I didn't think it was a big deal. But I got emotional. It was fun to see the fans, the boys at the top step and my family there, too. I'm glad I got it done tonight and it didn't linger on too long."

Making it even more special was the fact Mauer's family was in attendance, including his wife, Maddie, his parents, grandparents and his in-laws. His teammates also hosted a special tribute to him in the clubhouse after the game, giving him a signed bottle of Silver Oak 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon. Mauer, though, told his teammates they have "bigger fish to fry" this season, as they try to make the playoffs for a second consecutive year.

"Everybody was here," Mauer said. "I think grandma and grandpa have seen all of [my hits] at home. Just the support here, growing up here, I got

a lot of texts before the game from a couple guys I hadn't even heard from in a while, saying they were rooting for me. It means a lot."
Minnesota Twins

✓

@Twins

Joe Mauer is the 3rd #MNTwins player in history to reach 2,000 hits, joining Rod Carew and Kirby Puckett.

Congrats, Joe!

The hit was vintage Mauer, a hard-hit single up the middle that brought home two insurance runs for the Twins, on a night that saw Jose Berrios dominate Chicago. Mauer's single into center had an exit velocity of 96.3 mph, and the White Sox had no chance with the infield playing in.

"It was Joe's night," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "I just think the buildup, the response of our players and the fans that were here were kind of pushing him along. I'm sure it was gratifying for Joe to do in a moment where it was significant to the game and drive in a couple of runs. He's going to downplay it. It's who he is."

Mauer, a six-time All-Star and the 2009 American League MVP, came into the game two hits shy of No. 2,000 and walked in his first plate appearance in the first. But he had an RBI single in the third, prompting the Twins to play Prince's "Party Like It's 1999," to celebrate his 1,999th career hit.

"He obviously has had a great career," Berrios said. "Just seeing those things happening in our team is great and I'm proud of being his teammate."

Mauer, 34, is off to an incredible start in his 15th season with the Twins, hitting .412/.545/.529 with four doubles and six RBIs in 10 games. He leads the Majors in both batting average and on-base percentage.

"He's been around and continues to grind out at-bats," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "He had some pretty good at-bats. He's always been a respected player in the game with the ability to put the bat on the ball and find a hole and/or drive the ball when he needed to. A pretty accomplished player, absolutely."

Mr. Consistency, Joe Mauer, picked up career hit No. 2,000 -- and it was almost exactly the same as his first
Adrian Garro and Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | April 12, 2018

Twins veteran Joe Mauer headed into the 2018 season just 14 base hits shy of 2,000 for his career -- so you knew it was coming.

He got it out of the way pretty early, in fact. Thursday night's 4-0 win over the White Sox at Target Field marked Minnesota's 11th game of the young season. That's all it took for Mauer to add himself to the record books when he cracked an RBI single up the middle to score two runs in the seventh inning.

Mauer is nothing if not consistent -- he's tallied at least 140 hits in 9 of his 15 seasons so far -- so would it surprise you to find out that Thursday's milestone was very reminiscent of Mauer's first career hit, which happened way back in 2004? It's uncanny, really:

Relive that fateful day 14 years ago:

As for where Mauer now sits in Twins lore, well ... 2,000 hits is a very exclusive group of Minnesota icons:

Dan Hayes

✓

@DanHayesMLB

Joe Mauer is only the third #MNTwins player ever with 2,000 hits. The others -- Kirby Puckett and Rod Carew. There are seven in franchise history between Twins and Washington Senators.

"Two of my heroes right there," Mauer reflected to MLB.com's Rhett Bollinger after the game. "To be mentioned with those guys and Harmon Killebrew early in the year with those starts, it means a lot to me right now. And not just to me, the organization. To be mentioned with those guys is pretty special."

About hit No. 2,000:

"Leading up to it, I didn't try to make a big deal of it to be honest. When I got up there the at-bat before, the fans started to get into it. It put some more adrenaline in my system there. It was a special moment, especially coming off a tough lefty and driving in a couple runs, too. That was a special moment."

What was it like taking the field after the big hit? Well ...

"That was probably the most awkward I've ever been on a baseball field. I'll tell you that. I didn't know what to do. I definitely really appreciated the ovation from the fans. That was really special."

Thursday's feat also impressed another Minnesota baseball icon up in the broadcast booth:

Bert Blyleven
@BertBlyleven28

Congratulations Joe Mauer on your 2,000th hit. Up the middle that scored 2 runs. Twins up now 4-0!!! 🍀🙏👍

Not bad, Joe. Enjoy it.

Molitor waiting to name Friday starter **Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | April 12, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS -- With rain and snow in the forecast this weekend in the Twin Cities, Twins manager Paul Molitor said Thursday he's not ready to announce who will start Friday's game against the White Sox.

It's the first time this season the Twins will need a fifth starter, and right-hander Phil Hughes remains a candidate to be activated from the 10-day disabled list to start Friday. Left-hander Adalberto Mejia was also limited to two innings and 24 pitches on Tuesday, in order to be an option.

But the game appears unlikely to be played, so Molitor said the Twins won't announce a starter until they know the weather situation. But he did rule out a bullpen game.

"We will have somebody to pitch, if we play," Molitor said. "It depends on how it plays out. Our rehab guys, we have to keep them pitching as best as they can. Our Triple-A guys haven't pitched much at all. Every year, you're faced with different things because of weather, but this one has been particularly high with the variables we've had to deal with."

Molitor noted that Friday and Saturday both have unfavorable forecasts and that even Sunday's game against the White Sox could be postponed. Minnesota has off-days on Monday and Thursday of next week, around their two-game series against the Indians in Puerto Rico on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The Twins still want to find a way for right-hander Jose Berrios to start one of those two games on his native island, and he could start either Tuesday or Wednesday, depending on what Minnesota does with the rotation.

Molitor said they've already started contingency plans in case they can't play this weekend and said it's likely they end up hosting a workout day in Puerto Rico on Monday.

"We're trying to think about what if you lose all three? What are we going to do?" Molitor said. "Are we going to need to find a place to work out here? We're definitely going to have to consider working out on Monday. Guys haven't been facing hitters, [relievers Gabriel Moya and Tyler Kinley] haven't pitched much, our hitters haven't faced a lot of pitching. And worst-case scenario, you don't play five of the next seven days, with two games in between in Puerto Rico."

Thursday's top prospect performers **Mike Rosenbaum | MLB.com | April 12, 2018**

- No. 20 overall prospect Royce Lewis' (Twins' No. 1) three-run home run put Class A Cedar Rapids on the board and ignited a late rally that saw the Kernels score nine times over the final four innings to defeat Peoria, 9-5. The 2017 No. 1 overall Draft pick finished 2-for-5 at the plate in his second multihit game this season. Lewis' home run, meanwhile, was his first.

Jose Berrios dominant, Joe Mauer gets 2,000th hit in Twins' shutout over White Sox **La Velle E. Neal | Star Tribune | April 13, 2018**

Joe Mauer took a pitch from White Sox lefthander Aaron Bummer for a ball in the seventh inning Thursday before fouling off the next two pitches.

But everyone knows Mauer's at-bats are just getting started with two strikes.

And just as he's done many, many times in his career, the at-bat ended with a hit. In this case it was No. 2,000.

He bounced a single up the middle and into a milestone moment as Mauer became the 287th player to collect 2,000 hits in a career. Even better, the hit drove in two runs and put the finishing touches on a 4-0 victory over the White Sox that included seven standout innings from righthander Jose Berrios.

"Leading up to it, I really didn't think it was that big of a deal," Mauer said. "But I got emotional. It was fun to see the fans, the boys up there on the top step, and the family, too."

Mauer went 2-for-3 with three RBI. He singled in Brian Dozier in the third inning and the Twins, on cue, played Prince's hit song "1999" over the Target Field sound system.

When he batted in the fifth, the announced crowd of 15,474 began chanting "Let's go, Joe!" as he faced White Sox righthander Lucas Giolito. But Giolito struck him out with a curveball.

That's when Mauer realized it was a big deal after all.

"It threw some adrenaline into my system," he said.

Mauer got another chance in the seventh with runners on second and third. Bummer was brought in from the bullpen and, despite first base being open, pitched Mauer tough.

"When he gets to two strikes, it's like that's where you want him," manager Paul Molitor said. "That's when he seems to do a lot of his damage."

Mauer connected on a 94-mph fastball and got it through the infield as the crowd roared. He reached first base, doffed his helmet toward fans, waved at his family and received congratulations from Chicago first baseman Jose Abreu. He was stranded there as the inning ended, so fans gave him another ovation and teammates, while on their way to their defensive positions, took turns giving him hugs.

"That was probably the most awkward I've felt on a baseball field," Mauer said. "I didn't know what to do."

After the game, he was presented a bottle of wine autographed by his teammates.

"He doesn't play for any other reason that he loves the game and he wants to win," said Molitor, himself the owner of 3,319 career hits. "... Along the way, you earn the respect of who you play with and your peers and your opponents and the umpires and fans."

While Mauer, who turns 35 next Thursday, sizzled at the plate, the 23-year-old Berrios was an unstoppable force on the mound. He tied a career high with 11 strikeouts over seven shutout innings.

Through six innings, Berrios amassed nine strikeouts with no walks. He went to a three-ball count only twice during that period. And he did it mostly with a fastball that hit 92-95 mph and a wicked curveball that flummoxed Chicago hitters all night. He fell behind 2-0 only once all night.

Berrios is 2-1 with a 2.18 ERA and has only one walk with 24 strikeouts in 20⅔ innings. Mauer, meanwhile, is batting .412 with a .545 on-base percentage and has a hit in all 10 games he's played.

"As we have seen over the course of last season and the beginning of this year, [Mauer's] got a lot of baseball left," Molitor said. "He's playing at a very high level."

Twins brace for another blast of winter

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

The Twins took batting practice on the field before Thursday's game against the White Sox, a routine that has been affected by wintry weather that has gripped many major league cities this season.

"It's amazing," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "A 40-degree game in Florida, you would be shivering. Yesterday, everyone was somewhat overjoyed to be out there with one less layer."

It won't last for long.

Winter continues to ignore the calendar. A weather system that promises to dump a lot of something on the area is approaching, leaving the Twins to wonder how many more games of this four-game home series they will play against the White Sox.

And that is factoring in some of their decisions.

Indications are that righthander Phil Hughes will not be brought up to start Friday, weather permitting. Molitor hinted at the club wanting to “keep our rehab guys pitching the best way they can.” Hughes is scheduled to start on Saturday for Class A Fort Myers as he works his way back from a left oblique strain.

Pitchers at Class AAA Rochester have been thrown off schedule because the first three games of the season were postponed. Still, lefthander Adalberto Mejia, who threw 24 pitches on Monday, could be summoned to start on Friday.

Molitor added that Friday will not be a bullpen game, in which a relay of relievers are used.

“We will have someone to pitch for that game,” he said.

But the Twins aren’t confident about playing Friday because of the approaching storm.

“[Friday] is not looking good,” Molitor said. “There could be two different kind of days, but they are both going to be nasty, from what I understand.”

Twins President Dave St. Peter said the club hopes to make a decision on Friday’s game by midday.

About next week

Molitor has been concerned about pregame routines being disrupted. In addition to weather concerns, there are scheduled off days on Monday and Thursday — before and after two games against Cleveland in Puerto Rico.

And, as of Friday, rain was in the forecast for San Juan.

“We’re trying to think about what if you [can’t play] all three [games this weekend], what are you going to do?” Molitor said. “Look for a place to work out here? We’re definitely going to have to consider working out on Monday. Guys haven’t faced hitters. [Tyler] Kinley and [Gabriel] Moya haven’t pitched much. Our hitters haven’t had a chance to face a lot of pitching.

“Now you are looking at, worst-case scenario, not playing five of the next seven days. With two games in between, in Puerto Rico, where it is supposed to rain.”

There is time set aside on Monday for the Twins to work out in Puerto Rico if they desire.

Etc.

- Righthander Trevor May, in Fort Myers rehabilitating after Tommy John surgery, will throw live batting practice on Monday. He’s progressing well but still has several weeks of work in front of him.
- Righthander Michael Pineda, also coming off Tommy John surgery, is up to 120 feet in his throwing drills. He’ll continue that for another week, then will take two weeks off before entering another phase of his rehab. As with May, the Twins are pleased with his progress.
- WCCO Radio broadcasts both Twins and Timberwolves games. But the Twins will have priority over the Wolves all the way through the NBA’s Western Conference playoffs. Wolves-Rockets playoff games will be available on one of WCCO’s FM partners.

Twins postgame: On Mauer's big night, Berrios finds a way to grab some of the spotlight
La Velle E. Neal | Star Tribune | April 12, 2018

It ended up being Joe Mauer's night, but Jose Berrios was filthy again. His curveball looks even tighter than a year ago. Someone remarked that it breaks on two levels, up and down as much as left to right. When he's throwing it for strikes, he's going to be tough to beat. He also has a fastball that can touch 95, and he gets good movement on it when he throws it down in the strike zone.

He's made three starts:

One in which he threw a complete game shutout.

One in which he through three no-hit innings - and made it look easy - before falling apart.

One in which he dominated for seven innings.

"I'm not a pitching guru or a guy who sees a lot fo things than people who are more focused on that area," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "I see a compactness to his delivery that seems to be keeping him on line. There was a couple times tonight when he flew open a little bit and his arm trailed and that breaking ball backed up and we saw it."

But Berrios corrected himself and returned to shutting down Chicago. Even Roy Smalley went to twitter to sing Berrios' praises.

"My goodness. This is one of the biggest overmatches I have ever seen," Smalley wrote. "Chisox have absolutely no chance against Berrios' stuff. I will say again: he just needs to pound the strike zone. Hitters only chance is to get to 2-0 or 3-1."

Berrios fell behind 2-0 once all night. And got to three ball counts just twice.

Berrios is 2-1 with a 2.18 ERA and is setting himself up for a strong season. He could have more nights like Thursdays, especially when he runs into inexperienced lineups.

Thursday's Twins-White Sox recap

Staff Writer | Star Tribune | April 12, 2018

GAME RECAP

Impact player

Jose Berrios didn't get 2,000 of anything, but he pitched seven shutout innings, striking out 11 and not walking a single batter. He's 2-1 this season, and his ERA is 2.18. Yes, it's early.

BY THE NUMBERS

2,000 Joe Mauer got his 2,000th hit, joining Kirby Puckett, Harmon Killebrew and Rod Carew as hitters who achieved that with the Twins.

.412 Oh by the way, that's Mauer's batting average this young season.

3 Hits by the White Sox, not a one from the top four batters in the lineup.

2 Stolen bases by Twins outfielder Byron Buxton.

How many games will the Twins and White Sox play in this series? One?

La Velle E. Neal | MLB.com | April 12, 2018

The temperature headed toward 50 degrees today. Snow is melting everywhere. The sun even peeked out a couple times this afternoon.

The conditions are something these Twins haven't been used to in awhile.

"It's amazing," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "A 40-degree game in Florida, you would be shivering. Yesterday, everyone was somewhat overjoyed to be out there with one less layer."

Enjoy it while you can.

Winter's grip on this area will tighten over the weekend with a weather system that promises to dump a lot of something on the area. Folks at Target Field are half-jokingly wondering if this will be one-game series - instead of the four that are scheduled - against their AL Central rivals, the White Sox.

And that is factoring in some of their decisions.

Indications are the righthander Phil Hughes will not be brought up to start tomorrow. Molitor hinted at the club wanting to, "keep our rehab guys pitching the best way they can." Hughes is penciled in to start on Saturday for Class A Fort Myers as he works his way back from a left oblique strain. And pitchers at Rochester have been thrown off schedule because their first three games were postponed. Still, lefthander Adalberto Mejia, who threw 24 pitches on Monday, could be summoned to start on Friday.

And Molitor added that Friday will not be a bullpen game, in which a relay of relievers are used.

"We will have someone to pitch for that game," was all Molitor would say today.

But the Twins aren't confident about playing Friday.

"Tomorrow is not looking good," he said. "There could be two different kind of days, but they are both going to be nasty, from what I understand."

Joe2K becomes a reality: Joe Mauer singles for 2,000th hit
Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | April 13, 2018

As another small crowd of 15,474 on a 45-degree Thursday night stood and chanted "Let's go, Joe!" at Target Field, the object of their exhortations found himself surprisingly moved.

"Leading up to it I really didn't think it was that big of a deal, but I got emotional," Twins star Joe Mauer said after joining the 2,000-hit club. "It was fun to see the fans, the boys on the top step and family up there too. Glad I got it done tonight, and it didn't linger on too far."

Fourteen years and one week after his first career hit, Mauer secured No. 2,000 in much the same fashion to key a 4-0 win over the Chicago White Sox.

Facing freshly summoned left-hander Aaron Bummer in the seventh inning of a tight game, Mauer worked the count to 2-and-2 before grounding a 93-mph fastball up the middle through a drawn-in infield. The two-run single doubled the Twins' lead, which "makes it even sweeter," Mauer said.

The 34-year-old first baseman rounded first, kicked his right foot forward and lightly clapped his hands together once as he has so many times before. This time, Mauer retreated to first, looked into the crowd, doffed his batting helmet and waved in appreciation.

As the cheering continued, the hometown boy from St. Paul tapped his chest with his right hand and directed a subtle fist pump at his teammates celebrating in the home dugout. After the inning ended, Mauer stopped in the first-base coach's box and acknowledged the crowd again.

Another doffing of the cap, another wave and this time he received each of his teammates with quick hugs as they headed back onto the field for the top of the eighth.

"After that inning I was probably the most awkward I've ever been on a baseball field, I'll tell you that," Mauer said. "I didn't know what to do. Definitely appreciate the ovation from the fans. That was pretty special."

Jose Berrios (2-1) thoroughly dominated his American League Central rival with seven innings of three-hit ball. Berrios allowed no runners past first base and tied a career high with 11 strikeouts for the third time.

His last 11-strikeout game also came against the White Sox last Aug. 30. In five career starts against them, Berrios is now 4-1 with a 1.72 earned run average and 42 strikeouts in 32 1/3 innings.

As great as Berrios was, however, Thursday's story was Mauer, the lightning-rod franchise player in the final year of his eight-year, \$184 million contract. He became the 10th active player with 2,000 hits, the 287th all-time and the first to reach that plateau since fellow first baseman Adrian Gonzalez, then of the Los Angeles Dodgers, did so last August.

Joining Kirby Puckett and Rod Carew as the only 2,000-hit Twins in club history, Mauer started this journey back on April 5, 2004 at the Metrodome. That was the season opener on a Monday night, and Mauer, batting eighth behind Matt LeCroy as a celebrated rookie catcher, struck out and walked twice before delivering his first career hit: a two-strike single up the middle off Cleveland Indians right-hander Rafael Betancourt.

"That was another good day," Mauer said.

The 14 years span the entire length of a Timberwolves playoff drought that finally ended Wednesday night. Mauer took note of that odd connection as well.

Puckett's 2,000th hit came on April 8, 1994 against Oakland's Bob Welch. Carew's 2,000th came on July 15, 1978 at Boston against Bill Lee.

"That's two of my heroes right there," Mauer said. "It means a lot to me right now because those guys mean a lot, not only to me but to this organization. To be mentioned with those guys is pretty special."

So was reaching the milestone at home with dozens of friends and family in attendance.

"I think everybody was here," he said. "My grandma and grandpa, mom and dad. Grandma and grandpa have probably seen all of them, especially at home. I got a lot of texts today before the game, (including a) couple of guys I haven't even heard from for a while saying that they're following and rooting. That means a lot."

Mauer put himself in position to make history ahead of an approaching weekend snowstorm with a run-scoring single to center in a two-run third. With his 1,999th career hit, the in-stadium entertainment crew blasted Prince's "1999."

In the postgame clubhouse, Mauer's teammates presented him with a signed three-liter bottle of 2012 Silver Oak Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon.

"The boys chipped in and got me a nice bottle of wine, which is nice, and they all signed it," Mauer said. "They were being a little sneaky around here."

Miguel Sano, Twins teammates marvel at Joe Mauer's 2,000 hits
Mike Berardino | Star Tribune | April 12, 2018

When Joe Mauer banged out career hit No. 1,998 on Wednesday afternoon, a line single to left off Houston's Lance McCullers Jr., Miguel Sano jumped off the bench and went running down to Twins manager Paul Molitor.

"How many more? How many more?" Sano demanded as the quest for 2,000 began to sweep Mauer's teammates along for the ride.

"That's a lot of hits," Sano said before Mauer reached the plateau with a two-run single in Thursday's seventh inning against the Chicago White Sox. "He's one of the best hitters I've seen in my life. He's a special hitter."

Mauer, 34, established that much with three American League batting titles by the end of his fifth full season in the majors. His lifetime batting average before Thursday remained .309, sixth among active players, but it will climb again if he can keep up a hot start that had him at .387, third in the AL, heading into his four-game weekend series.

"Not a lot of people can reach those goals," Sano said. "Like they say, if he didn't have so many injuries and the (2013) concussion, I think he'd have more hits. He'd be fighting for 3,000 or 2,000-something."

Sano, who entered Thursday with 299 career hits, said it's Mauer's patience and bat-to-ball skills that amaze him the most.

"That's the only guy I've seen that gives two strikes easy to the pitchers," Sano said. "Not everybody can do that. I heard something one time: In four years (in high school) he had one strikeout. He's not a home run hitter. He's a contact hitter. He's going to put the ball in play all the time and go the other way."

Indeed, Mauer is a career .252 hitter with two strikes, including .319 when the count is full. In all counts he has a swinging-strike rate of just 8.6 percent; major league average during his career is 15.5 percent.

Mauer's .392 on-base percentage ranks fifth among active players. His career walk rate (12.0 percent) is just behind his strikeout rate (12.8 percent), and his 960 career runs were outpacing his 954 career strikeouts.

"It's all about patience," said Ehire Adrianza, the Twins' super utility man. "I'm just trying to learn how he goes up there and fights every pitch. It doesn't matter if there's nobody on base or he's got bases loaded, the patience he's got at the plate is amazing. It's unbelievable."

Molitor and his coaches often urge younger Twins to slow the game down. Mauer does it with a preternatural calm.

“He makes it look like it’s easy to hit, but that’s the way he is,” Adrianza said. “He’s got the gift from God and he takes advantage of it. As a young player, you’re trying to play hard with whatever you feel in your heart and with your emotion. But he looks so calm sometimes, it’s incredible.”

The other eight hitters in the Twins’ Thursday lineup entered with a combined 3,754 hits: Brian Dozier (847), Logan Morrison (726), Jason Castro (559), Eduardo Escobar (503), Eddie Rosario (375), Sano (299), Max Kepler (227) and Byron Buxton (218). Off the bench the Twins had Robbie Grossman (349), Adrianza (110), Mitch Garver (11) and Ryan LaMarre (six).

“It’s good learning from people like that,” Sano said of Mauer. “He has a lot of experience, 14 years in the big leagues. You don’t see too many people who can have a beautiful career like that.”

MYSTERY STARTER

Molitor continued to play it coy when asked the identity of Friday’s scheduled starter, even though most signs pointed to veteran Phil Hughes coming off the 10-day disabled list after dealing with a mild oblique strain.

A weekend snowstorm that could hit as early as Friday night was one reason the Twins were holding back on naming a starter. There also was an element of gamesmanship as they faced the White Sox in their first series of the year against an American League Central rival.

One scenario Molitor did rule out was a bullpen game in which the Twins would try to squeeze multiple innings out of Rule 5 rookie right-hander Tyler Kinley, who has worked mostly as a one-inning reliever in his career to this point. Last year’s long reliever, Tyler Duffey, has opened the year at Triple-A Rochester.

BRIEFLY

According to STATS Inc., Max Kepler’s big Wednesday against the Houston Astros made him the youngest player in major league history with a multi-homer game, including a walk-off homer, against the defending World Series champions. Kepler, at 25 years and 60 days, supplanted Hall of Famer Jimmie Foxx, who was 25 years, 294 days old when he did the same against the New York Yankees on Aug. 12, 1933.

Friday night’s game will be carried on Fox Sports North PLUS due to Game 2 of the Wild’s opening-round playoff series against the Winnipeg Jets.

Twins’ path to the postseason runs through watered-down A.L. Central

Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | April 13, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS – Nasty weather from a Minnesota winter that just won’t quit is threatening Friday’s and Saturday’s games between the Twins and White Sox. Twins fans still got a glimpse Thursday at one of the main reasons I’m expecting this year’s team to win at least 85 games – to equal or surpass their mark from last season.

The game was encouraging for Minnesota for two reasons: 1) J.O. Berrios was totally in control; and 2) they got their first win against the Chicago White Sox.

The White Sox have a halfway decent chance to be interesting this season. They’ve started out of the gate 4-7 before coming to Target Field. They’re starting a bunch of kids and have an enviable farm system, with some talent right around the corner. They’ve still got Avisail Garcia and Jose Abreu hitting second and third in their batting order, respectively.

But while this season has some apparent upside on Chicago’s south side, it’s also not too difficult to see this being a year of growing pains.

Look around the rest of the American League Central. The Indians, to me, are one of the best teams in baseball. Everybody else? The Royals took their shot last year and appear to have entered another rebuilding phase. The Tigers look like a pretty bad baseball team from afar. The White Sox are young and volatile and look like they, too, could be a bad baseball team this year.

Everybody else might soon be saying, ‘There’s always next year.’

Maybe it’s premature to call that but just consider where the White Sox, Royals and Tigers are in their “winning cycle.” It’s safe to say that the future looks brighter than the present for all three of those clubs. And it could turn out to be the worst trio of teams in any division in baseball this year.

Just to have some fun with math, let’s say that the three of those teams will be doormats this year. The Twins get to play each of them 19 times,

starting with Thursday's date with the White Sox. That's a total of 57 games this year against teams that you think might just be awful in 2018.

How many games could the Twins win against those clubs?

It's a tough thing to guess, of course, but let's just put a number on it. Let's say that the Twins against the trio of bad teams in their division can play ball like last year's Indians. Cleveland won 102 games, which is a .630 winning percentage. If the Twins took care of business in that fashion against the bad teams closest to them, that's almost 36 wins. (57 games X .630 win pct = 35.91 ... let's round up.)

They'll need to do well against good teams, too. No team gets to the postseason simply by beating up on inferior competition. To that end, the Twins took 2 of 3 games from the Astros at Target Field this week.

Take away the 57 against bad A.L. Central teams and you're left with 105 games on the calendar. Could you go .500 against the rest of the league? It might sound like an easy ask, but you're taking away a heck of a lot of cushion by pulling away 57 games (that's 35% of the schedule). With relatively little padding left in a pretty good American League, I think that .500 mark in the remaining games would actually be impressive. If the Twins can pull it off, that's another 52.5 wins. Let's round up again, to 53.

36 wins vs. the bottom three in the division + 53 wins = 89 wins.

These are just made-up guesses, of course. I have no proof that the Twins will be able to beat up on the division that badly. And if we're giving them a bonus for playing those three bad teams, shouldn't we also give them a penalty for playing a great team like Cleveland so many times?

Whatever. Let's not make this complicated.

Bank those 36 wins, add in the 53 against the rest of the league, and then send a bunch of prospects to Tampa Bay for Chris Archer at the trade deadline. Net yourself two more wins out of thin air down the stretch. Now you're talking 91 wins and (probably) some compelling October baseball.

Wetmore: Joe Mauer had already earned his spot on list of greatest Twins
Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | April 13, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS – Come to Target Field any game day between late March and late October and you're likely to notice bars on every level, with beer and other drinks at the ready out beyond the left-field fence in foul territory at Target Field. Sandwiched between those bars you'll notice an important piece of Twins history, maybe 50 feet above the native Minnesota limestone that rises out of the left-field seats of the lower level.

Those are the retired numbers of the greatest Twins in franchise history, and each has his jersey number displayed in raised red text inside a circle against a white backdrop.

The row of honored players from the past is pretty well full, and soon they'll have to make more room. It won't be long before Joe Mauer's No. 7 is hanging alongside those other all-time greats. He didn't need 2,000 hits to prove it; along the way he's made sure one day his name will be written in the group that includes Killebrew, Carew, Oliva, Blyleven, Hrbek and Puckett.

Joe Mauer picked up two more base hits Thursday night against the White Sox to nudge his career total up to a nice round number of 2,000 hits. Famously understated, Mauer said after the game the moment was "pretty special."

Only Rod Carew (2,085) and Kirby Puckett (2,304) have more hits in a Twins uniform than Mauer. When you count the walks, only Harmon Killebrew has reached base more times than Mauer since he franchise relocated to Minnesota in 1961. Those are some big names.

"He's going to downplay it, it's who he is," manager Paul Molitor said. "But it's one of those things that over time he'll have a chance to look back on it and remember that this was a special night."

Mauer walked in the 1st inning Thursday and rapped an RBI single in the 3rd, base hit No. 1,999. The announced crowd of 15,474 seemed to know what that signified. Mauer was on the doorstep.

He struck out in the 5th inning, which delayed the celebration. Later, a teammate told Mauer in the dugout, "You're going to get 2,000. How do you feel?"

"Excited," Mauer told him.

He walked to the plate in the 7th inning with a bat in his hand and teammates standing on second and third base, the Twins had a 2-0 lead. Facing

lefty Aaron Bummer, Mauer took a close pitch at the knees for ball 1. Several foul balls and a pitch in the dirt later, Mauer got a sinker in basically the same spot as the first one. He hit a 3-hopper back up the middle and by the second baseman for a 2-RBI single.

The game paused for a few moments. The ball was collected (and later given to Mauer in a plastic baggie). Mauer tipped his helmet to the cheering crowd, as his teammates all stood at the top step of the dugout and showed the first baseman some love with rounds of applause.

Play eventually resumed, a nice moment passed. The inning ended with Mauer stranded on first base. The stadium public address announcer made everyone aware of the accomplishment. Mauer thanked the crowd with a few waves, and looked like he was holding it together. Byron Buxton hopped out of the dugout with Mauer's glove and cap, handed them to him and then wrapped Mauer in a hug. That started a line of teammates onto the field, on their way to their respective positions, to give Mauer a congratulatory hug.

"That was awesome," Mauer said of the fan ovation he received. "Leading up to it, I really didn't think it was that big of a deal. But I got emotional. It was fun to see the fans, the boys at the top step, and family up there [in the stands], too."

The souvenir baseballs will probably go to his parents, for now. "Over the years I've said I didn't want to put them up [on display] to get content. There'll be some day where I'll put them up," he said.

Texts and messages started streaming in well before the hit, congratulating him, touching base and wishing him well. After the game, his teammates got together and gifted him an extra-large bottle of wine, which they all signed in gold-colored sharpie

Some will contend that it's no big deal, that it's an arbitrary milestone; no different than 1,999 or 2,001 hits, for that matter. But it is a big deal. Mauer can try to downplay it (typical Joe Mauer) and his critics can try to tear down the significance of the moment (also typical), but both of those attempts came up well short Thursday night.

The great thing about round-number accomplishments and other career milestones is not that they're cool for their own sake. They're special because they allow us a moment – they give us an excuse – to pause and reflect on the level of excellence that led to that point.

Thursday's career milestone is just the latest in a long line of accomplishments for a guy who won three batting titles as a catcher and also an American League MVP award.

Joe Mauer has hit .309 in his 15 seasons in the big leagues; he's got a .392 career on-base percentage. For years, he was one of the best hitters in baseball and he did it at a position that didn't used to ask for a whole lot of offense. When you think about sweet left-handed swings from the past few decades, Griffey comes to mind but the kid from St. Paul has got to be on the short list.

And speaking of short lists, not many former Twins players can claim the kind of career Mauer has put together. It was a moment to remember, yes. But Mauer didn't need 2,000 hits. He already belonged in the company of the greatest Twins players ever to pull on the uniform.

Joe Mauer notches career hit No. 2,000 **Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | April 12, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS — Joe Mauer pulled hit No. 2,000 through the right side of the infield in the 7th inning of Thursday's game against the Chicago White Sox.

Fans at Target Field cheered, his teammates celebrated, and a big bear wearing a Twins cap held up a sign that said "2,000."

After the inning, Mauer was stranded on first base, and the stadium public address announcer made everyone aware of the accomplishment. Mauer thanked the crowd with a few waves, and looked like he was holding it together. Byron Buxton hopped out of the dugout with Mauer's glove and cap, handed them to the first baseman and then wrapped him in a hug.

That started a line of teammates onto the field, on their way to their respective positions, to give Mauer a congratulatory hug.

Only Rod Carew and Kirby Puckett have more hits in a Twins uniform than Mauer.

Preview: Twins vs. White Sox **STATS | Fox Sports North | April 13, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS — A 4-0 victory over the White Sox on Thursday night started the Minnesota Twins' weekend on a high note but whether they can keep things going Friday depends on Mother Nature.

The Twins and White Sox are scheduled to continue their four-game series at Target Field but the forecast, which has already wreaked havoc on the Twins' season-opening homestand, calls for temperatures in the 30s, strong winds and a mix of rain and snow with between 8-12 inches expected to fall by Saturday afternoon.

As a result, manager Paul Molitor won't decide on a starting pitcher until he knows whether his team will play Friday.

Phil Hughes was the leading candidate before the weather got involved. He's eligible to come off the 10-day disabled list after starting the season with a strained oblique. Molitor also considered Adalberto Mejia for the start after the left-hander threw 24 pitches over two innings Tuesday.

"It depends on how it plays out," Molitor said. "Our rehab guys, we have to keep them pitching as best as they can. Our Triple-A guys haven't pitched much at all. Every year, you're faced with different things because of weather, but this one has been particularly high with the variables we've had to deal with."

The winter conditions are predicted to linger through the weekend, leaving the rest of the series in question. With the Twins slated to play a two-game set in Puerto Rico next week, Molitor is trying to come up with contingency plans.

"We're trying to think about what if you lose all three? What are we going to do?" Molitor said. "Are we going to need to find a place to work out here? We're definitely going to have to consider working out on Monday. Guys haven't been facing hitters, (relievers Gabriel Moya and Tyler Kinley) haven't pitched much, our hitters haven't faced a lot of pitching. And worst-case scenario, you don't play five of the next seven days, with two games in between in Puerto Rico."

Should the teams catch a break and get a game in Friday, right-hander Reynaldo Lopez (0-1) would start for Chicago.

He's been phenomenal this season, allowing two runs (one earned) on four hits over his first two starts but he has struggled with command at times, walking seven batters.

Lopez has never faced the Twins.

"I've been working hard since spring training trying to get better, and I think that right now I've been able to deliver," Lopez said after his last outing. "These first two outings have been good, and those are just the first two of the good outings that are coming. I'm expecting more in the future. I think it's just a matter for me to keep my focus and execute my plan. I was able to do it, and I just hope to keep doing it."

White Sox manager Rick Renteria is also trying to make alternate plans for his squad.

"Even if the weather is still inconsistent, we still have to get in some work," Renteria said. "We might try to work in the cages, get some 'pens done in the cages. We'll do what we can, whatever the weather permits us to do, and then just adjust, just keep going."

Mauer reaches 2,000 hits in Twins' 4-0 win **Associated Press | Fox Sports north | April 13, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) Understated as usual, Joe Mauer had downplayed his approaching milestone. But when the Target Field crowd rose to its feet to acknowledge the achievement, even the modest Mauer got a bit emotional.

The native Minnesotan got his 2,000th career hit at home on Thursday night, and just as importantly for Mauer, it came in a Twins victory.

Mauer had two hits and three RBIs, and Jose Berrios struck out 11 in seven innings for Minnesota in a 4-0 win against the Chicago White Sox.

"Leading up to it, I didn't try to make a big deal of it, to be honest," Mauer said. "When I got up there the at-bat before, the fans started to get into it. It put some more adrenaline in my system there. It was a special moment, especially coming off a tough lefty and driving in a couple runs, too."

Mauer became the third Twins player (joining Rod Carew and Kirby Puckett), and the 12th active player, to reach 2,000 hits. He's one of 287 players in history to reach the mark.

"You do the math of the percentage of players who are in that category versus the people who have had a chance to put the uniform on and it's fairly low," said Minnesota manager Paul Molitor, a member of the 3,000-hit club. "You start finding yourself in categories and rising into areas that few people get a chance to experience."

Berrios (2-1) tied his career high for strikeouts and allowed just three hits for the second time in three starts this season. The right-hander is 4-1

with a 1.67 ERA in five starts against Chicago.

Lucas Giolito (0-2) pitched 6 1/3 innings for the White Sox, giving up four runs, three earned, and five hits with five walks. He struck out three.

Chicago has lost eight of its past 10 games.

"Weren't able to get a whole lot going," manager Rick Renteria said. "They're not going to let us come in there and try to take a game. This is a big-boy game, and everybody's got to do their job and compete and give themselves a chance to win a ballgame."

Giolito was nearly matching Berrios for much of the game, but the control issues hurt and Twins outfielder Byron Buxton used his speed to create runs in the third inning.

Buxton singled and stole second base after a review showed Chicago shortstop Tim Anderson missed a tag. Buxton added another in the game and now has 28 straight successful stolen bases.

Buxton then took third on a short flyout to center field and scored on an infield grounder when Anderson's throw was just wide of catcher Omar Narvaez.

"It wasn't an easy play to score on, but his ability to anticipate the ball on the ground and to get a good jump, those are the kind of runs that few people can create the way he did there in getting around the bases," Molitor said.

Mauer followed with an RBI single. He added a two-run single in the seventh for his milestone hit.

"It was a big moment late in the game and to put a couple runs up on the board made it even sweeter," Mauer said.

NOT LOST

Berrios dominated with his three-pitch mix, particularly keeping the White Sox off balance with his curveball. He struck out the side in the third and didn't allow a Chicago batter to reach scoring position. He gave up three singles and hit one batter.

"You don't want to downplay what Jose did," Molitor said. "That was masterful, maybe one of his better outings even – he threw a shutout a couple starts ago – in terms of being in command of where you saw the baseball and using all his pitches."

Berrios threw 20 first-pitch strikes to the 24 batters he faced and had 0-2 counts on 11 batters. His 11 strikeouts were his most since he had 11 against the White Sox on Aug. 30 last season, another outing with seven scoreless innings.

"Obviously when they keep missing it, I'm going to keep throwing it," Berrios said of his curveball.

PROVIDING RELIEF

Chicago right-hander Chris Volstad gave up one hit and a walk in one inning after being promoted from Triple-A Charlotte.

Gregory Infante was optioned to Triple-A after Wednesday's game. The team transferred left-hander Carlos Rodon (left biceps bursitis and left shoulder inflammation) to the 60-day disabled list to clear a spot on the 40-man roster for Volstad.

TRAINER'S ROOM

White Sox: C Welington Castillo was out of the lineup for a second straight day with right knee soreness. He was injured Tuesday and is day to day.

UP NEXT

Rain and snowy conditions are forecast for the Twin Cities, likely causing issues this weekend. White Sox RHP Reynaldo Lopez (0-1, 0.69 ERA) is scheduled to start Friday night. The Twins haven't announced their starter, in part because of the weather. It will be the first turn in the rotation for a fifth starter, which could be Phil Hughes. But Minnesota is waiting on an announcement in case the game is postponed.

Top of Twins lineup best in MLB in early going
Staff Writer | Fox Sports North | April 12, 2018

Off to a 6-4 start, the Minnesota Twins are getting a nice mix of pitching and hitting.

The Twins rank ninth in the majors in runs allowed per game (3.70) and are fourth in the American League in runs per game (4.70).

A big reason for the latter stat has been the production from the top of the lineup, which has mainly consisted of Brian Dozier, Joe Mauer and Miguel Sano. Dozier has batted leadoff in every game thus far while Mauer has hit second nine times and Sano has been third in the order also in every game but one.

Dozier is batting .293 with a .396 on-base percentage and .610 slugging percentage (a 1.006 OPS) with four home runs, 10 runs and five RBI.

Mauer leads the team with a .378 average and .525 OBP and is also slugging .516 (1.041 OPS) and has scored six runs. Sano has a .250/.341/.583 (.925 OPS) slash line with three homers, seven runs and eight RBI.

Combined, Minnesota's top-three hitters in the order (Eddie Rosario took both Mauer's and Sano's places in the lineup when they sat out) have a .971 OPS — which easily tops any other 1-3 lineup in Major League Baseball. Washington is the only other club above .900 (.929). The next-highest AL team is Seattle (.872).

Mauer's hot start — his 12 hits are tied for the team lead with Dozier, who has had eight more plate appearances — has inched him closer to 2,000 career hits. He's now two short of the mark as well as three walks shy of 900.

When Mauer reaches those milestones, it will be the fifth-fewest games in the expansion era (1961) in which a player got 2,000 hits and 900 walks with one team. Wade Boggs has the record over that span with 1,515 games. Albert Pujols is next with 1,650 games, followed by Todd Helton (1,696) and Bernie Williams (1,709). Mauer has played in 1,740 games with the Twins.

Other notes:

— Minnesota hopes to keep up its pattern from 2017 against the Chicago White Sox. Last season, the Twins were 12-7 vs. the Pale Hose, with a +23 run differential and 3.31 ERA.

— Jose Berrios reached 200 career strikeouts in his 42nd major-league game. He was the third-fastest to reach that mark in Twins history, behind only Bert Blyleven (38 games) and Francisco Liriano (42). Berrios made it to 200 just before Boof Bonser (43).

— The White Sox have won just four games this season, but three have been comeback victories.

— Minnesota has allowed seven home runs this season, the second fewest in MLB.

MLB Thursday scores, highlights, live team updates, news: Red-hot Angels lead MLB in wins
Matt Snyder and Dayn Perry | CBS Sports | April 12, 2018

Mauer reaches milestone

Twins first baseman Joe Mauer has probably become underappreciated the last several years. OK, not probably. He definitely is. Thursday, he collected his 2,000th career hit as part of a night where he went 2 for 3 with three RBI in a 4-0 Twins win. He's off to a huge start this season, hitting .412/.545/.529 with six RBI, helping lead the Twins to a 7-4 record.

Mauer became the 288th player in MLB history to reach 2,000 hits and only the third player to accomplish the feat while with the Twins (Rod Carew, Paul Molitor).

After being one of the best catchers in the majors for a while, Mauer had to move to first base due to concussion issues and had down offensive years in 2014-16. Last year, though, he hit .305 with a .384 OBP and 36 doubles as part of a wild-card team and is off to a hot start. He's still a career .309/.392/.444 (127 OPS+) hitter, too. Let's try to appreciate him a little more.

Joe Mauer joins the 2,000 hit club
Bill Baer | NBC Sports | April 12, 2018

With his second hit on Thursday evening against the White Sox, Twins first baseman Joe Mauer became the 287th member of baseball's 2,000 hit club. He singled in the third inning to knock in the Twins' second run and hit a two-run single in the seventh off of White Sox reliever Aaron

Bummer to extend his team's lead to 4-0.

Mauer can very quickly ascend up baseball's all-time hits list. Clyde Milan is in 228th place at 2,100 hits. Barring a serious injury, Mauer is likely to accrue at least another 100 — if not 150 — hits this season, which will allow him to jump at least 60 or so places.

The only players to have played at least half of his games as a catcher while racking up at least 2,000 hits are Ivan Rodriguez (2,844), Ted Simmons (2,472), Carlton Fisk (2,356), Jason Kendall (2,195), Yogi Berra (2,150), Mike Piazza (2,127), Gary Carter (2,092), Johnny Bench, (2,048), A.J. Pierzynski (2,043), and Mauer. Mauer is also the third player to accrue at least 2,000 hits as a Twin, joining Kirby Puckett (2,304) and Rod Carew (2,085).

Mauer, who turns 35 years old next Thursday, entered the night batting .387/.525/.516 on the season with four doubles and three RBI in 40 plate appearances.

Joe Mauer's 2,000th hit a workmanlike, clutch single because of course it was **Dan Hayes | The Athletic | April 13, 2018**

Perhaps no other hit could be more befitting for a milestone moment than the 2,000th of Joe Mauer's career on Thursday night.

The Target Field crowd of 15,474, sensing the moment, chanted the veteran's name in unison. A hard-throwing left-hander had specifically been brought in late in the game to face Mauer with two runners in scoring position and one out in a two-run contest. Even though he realized all that was going on around him, the "Let's go, Joe!" shouts growing louder, Mauer did as he always does — he stayed simple, worked the count even, put a nice, easy swing on a sinker at the bottom of the zone and grounded it through a drawn-in infield to break the game open.

Behind Mauer's historic night and a dominant, efficient effort from José Berríos, the Twins topped the Chicago White Sox 4-0 to notch their third straight win. Mauer went 2-for-3 with a walk and three RBIs to become the 287th player in baseball history with 2,000 hits and just the third in Minnesota Twins history. His seventh-inning single also ensured that another sterling outing from Berríos didn't go to waste. Berríos struck out 11 and limited Chicago to three hits over seven scoreless innings.

"It was vintage," Twins reliever Addison Reed said of the moment.

Manager Paul Molitor almost sensed the moment coming from the dugout. With the Twins ahead 2-0 against a potentially dangerous White Sox lineup, Mauer stepped in to face left-hander Aaron Bummer after Brian Dozier knocked starter Lucas Giolito out of the game with a double into the left-field corner. Dozier's hit followed a one-out walk of Jason Castro and put two in scoring position.

Mauer took a first-pitch ball before he fouled back three straight sinkers. A fifth pitch, an 85-mph slider, missed low and made it a 2-2 count. Mauer caught hold of Bummer's next offering, a 94-mph pitch at the bottom of the zone, and grounded it back up the middle and into center field to easily score both runners. The ball exited Mauer's bat at 96.3 mph and only had a 15 percent chance of becoming a hit, according to BaseballSavant.com.

"It's like when he gets to two strikes, that's right where you want him, because that's when it seems like he does a lot of his damage," Molitor said. "I don't think (having two strikes) ever alters the confidence that he has. He's gonna find a way to put the ball in play."

The hit was the 857th of Mauer's career with two strikes, according to Baseball-Reference.com. What came next was a moment Mauer didn't quite expect. In the weeks leading up to it, Mauer tried to downplay the accomplishment as he typically does.

But there was no avoiding getting caught up in Thursday night. Whether it was the standing ovation thrust upon him by a crowd that included most of his family, a congratulatory handshake from White Sox first baseman Jose Abreu and first-base coach Jeff Smith, or the sight of his teammates at the top of the dugout, Mauer was overwhelmed. He quickly waved his hand in the air before removing his helmet and tipping it in appreciation.

"Leading up to it, I didn't think it was a big deal," Mauer said. "But I got emotional. It was fun to see the fans, the boys at the top step and my family there, too. I'm glad I got it done tonight and it didn't linger on too far."

"That was probably the most awkward I've ever been on a baseball field. I'll tell you that. I didn't know what to do. I definitely really appreciated the ovation from the fans. That was really special."

Teammates carried their celebration over into the postgame clubhouse when they presented Mauer with a bottle of wine autographed by everyone. The clubhouse knew a moment only previously reached by Minnesota Twins Kirby Puckett and Rod Carew was quickly approaching. Molitor said after Wednesday's victory that Miguel Sano had asked him if Mauer's first-inning single was his 2,000th.

Mauer set the stage for 2,000 when he singled with one out off Giolito in the third inning to give the Twins a 2-0 lead. As soon as the line drive to right touched down, the Target Field speakers began to blare Prince's '1999.' The crowd was eagerly anticipating the moment when Mauer faced Giolito in the fifth inning only to have Mauer swing and miss at a 1-2 curve in the dirt.

Though they were on the verge of doing so, the Twins couldn't break through against Giolito, stranding two runners in the fourth and another in the sixth. That he broke open the game only provided more enjoyment for Mauer.

"It was a big moment late in the game and to put a couple runs up on the board made it even sweeter," Mauer said.

Berríos dominant again

When Berríos has his curve going the way he did on Thursday, opposing hitters may as well take the night off. The young right-hander was efficient, sharp and nasty all at once in a 99-pitch effort that resulted in 73 strikes and Berríos tying a career-high with 11 strikeouts.

One reason that Berríos was so hard to hit was his ability to locate pitches in the zone while also featuring swing-and-miss stuff. Berríos not only earned 17 called strikes from plate umpire Tony Randazzo, he also induced 17 whiffs among his 99 offerings, including 11 with his curveball.

"My grip on the curveball was great tonight," Berríos said through an interpreter. "It felt great. The weather was better, so it felt good."

"Obviously when they keep missing it, I'm going to keep throwing it. That's what worked for me tonight."

Berríos also worked ahead in the count all evening. Only once did he fall behind 2-0 — to Tim Anderson in the fifth inning.

Berríos needed 19 pitches to get through a first inning in which he struck out Yoan Moncada and Abreu, but clamped down from there. He struck out Matt Davidson in the second inning, the side in the third and didn't slow down until Molitor removed him. Berríos looked as if he might achieve a new career-high in strikeouts after whiffing Abreu and Davidson in the seventh inning but Nicky Delmonico singled on a 2-2 curveball to right.

"You don't want to downplay what Jose did," Molitor said. "That was masterful, maybe one of his better outings, even — he threw a shutout a couple starts ago — in terms of being in command of where you saw the baseball and using all his pitches."

Mauer was equally impressed with Berríos, who threw a complete-game shutout on April 1. Having faced Berríos once in a Triple-A vs. the big-leaguers exhibition — Berríos said he walked Mauer — Mauer knows what the ace-in-the-making is capable of.

"He's really been giving us some great starts," Mauer said. "His stuff is amazing. We all know that. But he's putting it where he wants it, which makes him dangerous. He gave us another start tonight and hopefully he can keep that rolling."