



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
Tuesday, July 3, 2018

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Brewers host Twins today only on Facebook

Chad Thornburg | MLB.com | July 3, 2018

MLB's digital-only national broadcasts continue this week with today's Twins-Brewers contest at Miller Park, which airs live in the United States exclusively on Facebook.

This Interleague bout between Central clubs is one of 25 streaming broadcasts scheduled for 2018 as part of MLB's partnership with the social media network.

Fans can catch the 4:10 p.m. ET contest at www.facebook.com/MLBLiveGames or by logging onto Facebook's MLB live page from their phones, tablets, smart TVs or other streaming devices. MLB Network will produce the game with play-by-play man Scott Braun, analysts Bill Schroeder and LaTroy Hawkins and in-game reporter Stephen Nelson.

Both sides will be represented in the booth. Schroeder, a former catcher, played six of his eight Major League seasons with the Brewers from 1983-89, while Hawkins -- who retired in 2015 after a 21-year career -- begin his career with nine seasons in Minnesota (1995-2003) and also played two seasons in Milwaukee (2010-11). Schroeder is a longtime color commentator for Brewers television broadcasts, while Hawkins, currently serving as a special assistant for the Twins, made his broadcasting debut on FOX Sports North last season.

How to watch on mobile and desktop

1. Search for "MLB Live" on Facebook

2. Follow the "MLB Live" show page

1. Download the Facebook video app on your TV or streaming device and search for "MLB Live"

2. Or stream the game from your phone to a TV on the same WiFi network by tapping the TV icon.

Upcoming Facebook games (all times ET)

- Tuesday, July 3: MIN-MIL, 4:10 p.m.
- Wednesday, July 11: WSH-PIT, 12:35 p.m.
- Wednesday, July 25: SF-SEA, 4:10 p.m.

What to know about the Twins-Brewers game

This is the first series between Minnesota and Milwaukee in 2018. The Twins swept last year's four-game season series, outscoring the Brewers, 27-10.

Jake Odorizzi will start for Minnesota. Acquired by the Twins via trade with the Rays this winter to help solidify their rotation, Odorizzi has seen mixed results through 17 starts this season. The right-hander is coming off a bounce-back outing, however, after pitching six scoreless frames against the White Sox on Thursday. Odorizzi struck out eight batters and held Chicago to three hits and three walks in the no-decision.

Milwaukee will counter with Junior Guerra, who's been the Brewers' most consistent and effective starter in 2018. He's struck out at least six batters in three straight starts, and topped 100 pitches in back-to-back outings, a rarity on a team that leans on its bullpen like the Brewers do.

The Twins welcomed back shortstop Jorge Polanco this week as he was reinstated from his 80-game suspension for use of performance-enhancing drugs. Polanco broke out in the second half of 2017, batting .293/.359/.511 with 10 home runs, 15 doubles and 43 RBIs in 63 games.

"I think we all miss that aspect of his game," manager Paul Molitor said. "He's another one of those guys who helps everyone in the lineup by how he takes good at-bats over the course of a season."

Bullpen struggles as Twins' woes continue

Stephen Cohn | MLB.com | July 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE -- The Twins recalled Zack Littell for Monday's game at Miller Park because they were looking for a fresh arm out of the bullpen. After Kyle Gibson's five-inning start, four pitchers worked three scoreless innings before Fernando Rodney's blown save in the ninth. Manager Paul Molitor called on Littell to work the 10th, with Matt Belisle the only remaining available option in the 'pen. Molitor said he hoped to use Belisle in an extra-inning save situation.

Littell, who went 19-1 as a 21-year-old in High-A and Double-A last season, loaded the bases in the 10th and took his second loss in as many career appearances when he walked Brad Miller to force in the winning run in a 6-5 Brewers victory.

[View Full Game Coverage](#)

Littell was optioned back to Triple-A following the game.

"It's a learning experience," Littell said. "It's tough right now, but it's a marathon, it's not a sprint. Keep learning from this and get better."

While Littell was superb in the Minors last season, he has struggled in the higher levels in 2018, going 1-6 with a 3.89 ERA. In his Major League debut on June 5 against the White Sox, Littell started, going three innings and surrendering six earned runs.

"I felt a lot more in control tonight," Littell said, "And I was able to slow the game down a little bit. But progress is progress, just keep building on that. It's a process, I'm still young. Just trying to be better every time out."

The most difficult aspect for Littell may have been coming out of the bullpen -- he has started 108 of 115 games he has pitched during his professional career, dating back to 2013 when the Mariners chose him in the 11th round of the MLB Draft.

"You put a young kid in a tough spot, bringing him in there in his second appearance, out of his routine of starting," Molitor said. "There's not a lot of margin of error there. It is what it is."

The Twins, however, seemingly did enough during the loss -- their sixth in the first seven games of a nine-game road trip -- to avoid a 10th inning, and even having to use Littell.

Minnesota's offense, which scored 25 runs in a three-game sweep at the hands of the Cubs over the weekend, added five more Monday -- four by way of Robbie Grossman's first career grand slam in the fifth inning. And while the staff's ERA was 8.15 over the last six games, Gibson gave his team a chance to win and exited after five innings with the lead, only giving up four runs (three earned).

But Fernando Rodney blew his second save in as many appearances and sent the game to extras after he allowed three hits, before Travis Shaw's sacrifice fly plated the tying-run in the ninth.

"[Rodney] made some good pitches," Molitor said. "I think all three of the hits were changeups. We just got in a tough spot. Sometimes results are not always parallel to how a guy is throwing the ball. Sometimes, it's tough to throw a zero when you need it."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Littell walks Broxton: Littell was ahead in the count on Brewers right-handed batter Keon Broxton 0-2 in the 10th inning, painting the outside corner and looking like he might be able to escape the frame unharmed. He then missed the zone on the ensuing four pitches, walking Broxton and the loading bases with no outs.

"It backed up," Littell said. "Just threw a couple good ones right before, and I tried to make it better or whatever the case may be. It just backed up on me and got away."

Pinch-hitter Hernan Perez followed by grounding into a forceout at home, before Miller drew the walk to end the game.

SOUND SMART

Joe Mauer moved into second place on the Twins' all-time games played list Monday with his 1,784 career game. The 35-year-old first baseman, who has only played for Minnesota during his 15-year career, entered the day tied with Kirby Puckett, but now only has Harmon Killebrew (1,939) ahead of him.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

The Twins turned a miscue into a double play in the first inning Monday.

Running from first base, Jesus Aguilar put on the brakes as second baseman Brian Dozier fielded a grounder with one out in the first inning. Dozier threw to Mauer at first for the out, but he committed an error on his throw to get Aguilar at second, as the ball went into left field. Eddie Rosario misplayed the ball in left, and Aguilar was sent home, but Rosario recovered and threw him out at the plate for a 4-3-7-2 double play.

"You go from a soft line drive that could have been a hit," Gibson said, "And [Rosario] made a good play and threw it home. We were able to get him out."

UP NEXT

The Twins send right-hander Jake Odorizzi (3-5, 4.62 ERA) to the mound in the second game of a three-game set with the Brewers on Tuesday at 3:10 p.m. CT. In a game televised exclusively on Facebook Live, Odorizzi will look to replicate his stellar May outing against Milwaukee when he hurled 5 2/3 innings of one-run ball and fanned 10. Right-hander Junior Guerra (4-5, 3.05 ERA) starts for the Brewers.

Grossman mashes first career grand slam **Stephen Cohn | MLB.com | July 3, 2018**

MILWAUKEE -- Robbie Grossman capitalized on three Twins singles in the fifth inning with his first career grand slam on Monday night at Miller Park.

Right-hander Kyle Gibson started the rally with a one-out single -- his second of the night -- before Joe Mauer flied to deep center. Eddie Rosario and Brian Dozier followed with singles, but Gibson was forced to stop at third on Dozier's hit as the Twins didn't want to test Ryan Braun's arm in left field.

The baserunning decision paid off for Minnesota as Grossman hit a first-pitch grand slam off Brent Suter.

- Grand slams mean 40% off pizza

The Twins led 5-1 after the half inning, but the bullpen would be unable to hold the lead. Milwaukee forced extra innings before winning, 6-5, on a walk-off walk in the 10th.

The Brewers' pitching staff has now allowed a grand slam in three straight games, starting with Reds pitcher Michael Lorenzen on Saturday and shortstop Jose Peraza on Sunday.

The Twins turned a wacky 4-3-7-2 double play that ended with a play at the plate **Eric Chesterton | MLB.com | July 2, 2018**

Just because a play starts out looking routine, it doesn't necessarily mean it will end that way. The Twins and Brewers learned that lesson well in the first inning of Monday night's game when Brewers third baseman Travis Shaw hit a ground ball to second base with Jesus Aguilar on first. The Twins got the easy out at first, but wanted a double play ... and that's where the fun began.

After Joe Mauer's throw sailed into left-center field and past Eddie Rosario, it looked like the Twins' hopes for a double play were over. Little did we know they were simply executing the rare 4-3-7-2 variety:

Before other teams out there try their hand at incorporating this play into their repertoire, a word of caution: It really helps to have a left fielder with an arm like Rosario's to make it happen.

Polanco returns; Buxton demoted to Triple-A **Stephen Cohn | MLB.com | July 2, 2018**

MILWAUKEE -- Jorge Polanco started at shortstop and batted fifth for the Twins in his season debut on Monday night at Miller Park. After a breakout 2017 campaign, which included 13 homers and 74 RBIs, Polanco was hit with an 80-game suspension for violating Major League Baseball's Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program in March.

With the Twins sitting at 35-45 through their first 80 games, Minnesota reinstated Polanco on Monday.

"It was very difficult," Polanco said, "But I'm glad that I'm back, and I'm glad that I'm going to be able to play baseball, which is what I love to do."

Polanco went 8-for-19 with a triple and a home run over six rehab games at Class A Advanced Fort Myers and Triple-A Rochester leading up to Monday's debut. He was also dealing with an infected right middle finger that he said he got caught in an apartment door in Fort Myers, Fla. Through the rehab stint and the injury, the 24-year-old said he just wanted to make it back to the Majors when the suspension was lifted.

"All I wanted to do was come back," Polanco said. "Obviously, sitting at home and not being with my teammates was a difficult process, but that's while I was away and I'm here now."

The switch-hitting Polanco batted fifth in only seven of his 133 games in 2017, but manager Paul Molitor said he plans on moving him around as he moves back into the lineup.

"With the 20-game stretch here, I'm trying to find a break for a couple of guys," Molitor said. "I could hit him in a lot of options. I don't think I'm going to be in too much of a hurry to get him too high, too fast. We'll see ... He hasn't played Major League competition for a long time."

Buxton optioned to Triple-A

The Twins returned outfielder Byron Buxton from his rehab assignment, reinstated him from the 10-day disabled list and optioned him to Triple-A Rochester on Monday.

Buxton played in 11 games for the Red Wings while rehabbing a hairline fracture in his left big toe, an injury he originally sustained while on a rehab assignment (migraines) with Fort Myers on April 22. Buxton has missed a total of 51 games this season due to injuries.

"We didn't put a timeline on Buxton from Day One when we decided to put him on a rehab, which was the right thing," Molitor said. "The move that was made to option him out was kind of just furthering that point that it's not, 'OK, well this calendar date comes, your time is up.' And he knows that."

In his first game since being sent down, Buxton homered, walked and struck out twice.

The former second-overall pick in the 2012 MLB Draft appeared in 140 games and hit .253 last season.

Other moves

The Twins recalled right-handed pitcher Zack Littell from Rochester, and he is set to join the bullpen Monday. Littell, who will be making his second stint with the Twins this season, has gone 1-3 with a 3.00 ERA (51 IP, 17 ER) over nine games (eight starts) for the Red Wings.

To make room for Polanco and Littell on the 25-man roster, the Twins optioned left-handed pitcher Adalberto Mejía to Rochester and placed infielder Ehire Adrianza on the 10-day disabled list with a left hamstring strain. Mejía made just one start for the Twins, tossing four innings Saturday against the Cubs.

Concerning Adrianza, Molitor said: "There were at least a handful of times over the last couple weeks where I had to check if he was going to be OK to go, and he kept saying he could go. The hard part -- I think for him -- is that he knows he's swinging the bat well and contributing. The whole idea of where we're at and Polanco coming back, I'm sure he wanted to continue to have the opportunity to play through it."

To make room for Polanco on the 40-man roster, the Twins designated Ryan LaMarre for assignment. LaMarre appeared in 43 games for the Twins this season hitting .263 (26-for-99) with five doubles and eight RBIs.

"I really enjoy having Ryan LaMarre around the team," Molitor said. "He's just energy, he's unselfish. He's always willing to try to learn more to become better. He's a great teammate. Sometimes that's the way it goes."

Rosario hoping to rep Twins on AL All-Star team

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | July 2, 2018

Twins left fielder Eddie Rosario has continued to move up in the Midsummer Classic balloting among American League outfielders, according to the fourth 2018 Camping World All-Star Ballot update released Monday.

Rosario was 14th among AL outfielders in the first update released on June 12, but he was ninth in the latest update. He's garnered 666,108 votes, but the top three have a commanding lead, with the Red Sox's Mookie Betts (3,119,106), the Angels' Mike Trout (2,666,972) and the Yankees' Aaron Judge (2,021,348) leading the way.

Rosario, though, is a deserving All-Star, hitting .313/.354/.570 with 18 homers, 23 doubles and 52 RBIs in 79 games, entering Monday. Rosario ranks seventh among position players with 3.6 Wins Above Replacement, according to Fangraphs. But he's in a tough position, as Trout (6.3 WAR), Betts (5.0) and Judge (4.2) are all ahead of him.

"Rosie has begun to figure out through last year and the first half of this year that he's got a lot of things he can do to help teams win," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "On the defensive side, with his bat, with his power. I don't know if a lot of people projected the power to this point, but if you've got that kind of bat speed and those kind of hands, it was kind of a matter of time before he figured some things out offensively. So yeah, we just hope that that nod comes his way."

Molitor, a seven-time All-Star during his Hall of Fame career, added that Rosario deserves recognition for how he's developed his game, and an All-Star bid would be a fitting reward.

"Young players that have high aspirations for themselves, to be an All-Star is not a motivation that, I think, is a bad one," Molitor said. "It's a great way to increase your brand and your exposure and let everyone know that, 'Hey, I can be an elite player in this game.' That's what All-Stars do."

Shortstop Eduardo Escobar is also an All-Star candidate, but he is not among the top five vote-getters at his position. Escobar is hitting .277/.332/.527 with 12 homers, 49 RBIs and a Major League-leading 34 doubles in 77 games while seeing time at both shortstop and third base.

Fans may cast votes for starters at MLB.com and all 30 club sites -- on computers, tablets and smartphones -- exclusively online using the 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Ballot until Thursday at 10:59 p.m. CT. On smartphones and tablets, fans can also access the ballot via the MLB At Bat and MLB Ballpark mobile apps. Each fan can vote up to five times in any 24-hour period, for a maximum of 35 ballots cast.

Following the announcement of this year's All-Star starters, reserves and pitchers, fans should return to MLB.com and cast their 2018 Camping

World MLB All-Star Final Vote for the final player on each league's roster. Then on Tuesday, July 17, while watching the 2018 All-Star Game presented by Mastercard live on FOX, fans may visit MLB.com to submit their choices for the Ted Williams Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet with the 2018 MLB All-Star Game MVP Vote.

The 89th Midsummer Classic, at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C., will be televised nationally by FOX Sports; in Canada by Rogers Sportsnet and RDS; and worldwide by partners in more than 180 countries. FOX Deportes will provide Spanish-language coverage in the United States, while ESPN Radio and ESPN Radio Deportes will provide exclusive national radio coverage of the All-Star Game. MLB Network, MLB.com and SiriusXM also will provide comprehensive All-Star Week coverage. For more information about MLB All-Star Week and to purchase tickets, please visit AllStarGame.com and follow @MLB and @AllStarGame on social media.

Other Twins on the ballot include first baseman Joe Mauer, second baseman Brian Dozier, third baseman Miguel Sano, center fielder Byron Buxton, right fielder Max Kepler, catcher Mitch Garver and designated hitter Logan Morrison.

Twins squander Robbie Grossman's grand slam, fall to Brewers in 10 innings **La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | July 3, 2018**

MILWAUKEE – The Twins hoped that getting away from Chicago and getting a fresh start against the Brewers would change their fortunes.

Sorry, bad baseball travels. And some of the issues that led to five losses in six games vs. the White Sox and Cubs last week reappeared Monday in a 6-5, 10-inning loss to the Brewers.

With the Twins up 5-1 after Robbie Grossman's fifth-inning grand slam, Kyle Gibson gave up three runs in the bottom of the inning; Fernando Rodney blew his second save in a row in the ninth; and rookie Zack Littell, thrust in a tough situation because of bullpen overuse, loaded the bases in the 10th before walking Brad Miller to force in the winning run.

"You imagine the frustration of fighting, playing a good game for the most part and having a chance there," manager Paul Molitor said. "You put a young kid in a tough spot bringing him in there in his second appearance, out of his routine of starting. There's not a lot of margin of error there. It is what it is.

"We got the big hit from Robbie, and then we got shut down the rest of the game. They inched closer, especially in the fifth. We just couldn't hold on to the end. It's kind of a familiar story line, but it's reality."

The reality:

- The Twins are 4-15 in one-run games.
- They have suffered nine walkoff losses.
- They are 3-6 in extra-inning games.
- They have lost four in a row despite scoring 30 runs over those games. They have also lost six of seven and nine of 11.

"It gets cumulatively frustrating to keep losing games," Gibson said, "but I don't think it is doing anything to roll into the next day. I expect us to come out and play a solid game and have a chance to win."

Gibson singled and scored the Twins' first run in the third inning. He then singled to left to start the fifth. Eddie Rosario beat out an infield hit. Then Brian Dozier singled to left to load the bases — Gibson was held up at third when most other players probably would have been waved home.

Brewers pitching coach Derek Johnson went to the mound to talk with righthander Brent Suter. Surely, he didn't advise him to throw an 84-mile-per-hour fastball over the heart of the plate. But Suter did, and Grossman homered to left-center for his first career grand slam and 5-1 Twins lead.

But Milwaukee responded with three runs in the bottom of the inning, getting a leadoff homer by Manny Pina and an unearned run on third baseman Willians Astudillo's fielding error.

The Twins bullpen held the score there until the ninth. But Rodney, pitching in only his second game since June 23, loaded the bases and gave up a game-tying sacrifice fly to Travis Shaw. It was Rodney's fifth blown save of the season.

Littell, who was sent down to Class AAA Rochester following the game, looked nervous as he loaded the bases with no outs in the 10th. Molitor went to a five-man infield and got a forceout at home. But Littell kept misfiring until Miller walked on four pitches to force in the winning run.

Gibson had two singles and scored twice, but it was hard for him to talk about his night at the plate.

"I'd like to have a little bit more fun with that," he said, "but I'd rather go 0-for-5 and throw eight innings."

To catch Tuesday's Twins-Brewers game, fans must tune in to Facebook

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | July 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE – If you want to watch the Twins play the Brewers on Tuesday, don't head to Fox Sports North.

Head for your computer, smartphone or tablet.

The game will be available exclusively on Facebook, the result of an agreement between Major League Baseball and the social network to stream games on its platform. The Twins-Brewers matchup is one of 25 games that will be shown exclusively on Facebook this season through its video site, called Facebook Watch.

The game will be produced by the MLB Network, with Scott Braun handling the play-by-play. LaTroy Hawkins from the Twins side and Bill Schroeder from the Brewers side will provide analysis.

According to the agreement, Facebook will stream selected midweek afternoon games, most of them on Wednesdays.

"It will look different," Twins President Dave St. Peter said. "It will not look like any other broadcast and that is by design. It's all aimed at trying some different things and certainly trying to appeal to a different demographic as well as a global audience.

"That has been one of the interesting things, that after these games you get a fair amount of data on who's actually watching, how long they are watching and where they are watching from."

While the broadcast will be produced by the MLB Network, Facebook will be add its own special touches. There are no commercials, as the announcers will continue to discuss the game — and whatever else comes up — between innings. Viewers will be able to ask questions in the comments section, and Braun, Hawkins and Schroeder will take turns answering them during the middle innings.

So Dick Bremer, the Twins play-by-play announcer for Fox Sports North, gets the day off.

"It's not much different from what Richard and I do in the booth," said Hawkins, who has repeatedly refused to address Bremer by his abbreviated name. "Just a three-man booth. I have never been in a three-man booth before, that will be different for me."

Facebook, according to reports, is paying MLB between \$30-35 million in the deal, as it tries enter the sports viewing market.

"By no surprise, the audiences have skewed younger and I think that is a worthwhile experiment and we want to learn more about it," St. Peter said. "For a Twins perspective, we are happy to be part of the national package, this game tomorrow and hopefully future games."

Twins take Byron Buxton off DL, but he stays in Rochester; Jorge Polanco returns

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | July 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE – When the Twins said they weren't going to call Byron Buxton up until he gets his bat going, they meant it.

And Monday's move, in which he was reinstated from his rehabilitation assignment, activated from the disabled list and optioned to Class AAA Rochester proves that.

What it does do, however, is enable the Twins to call the center fielder up sooner than later if they want to.

Buxton's rehab assignment was set to end Sunday. If they optioned him then, the Twins could not call him up for 10 days unless they had an injury. This way, the Twins have started the 10-day window earlier.

"You do it earlier than later," Molitor said. "We'll see if it pays off in the long run whether he actually gets back here quicker."

Buxton, who hit a leadoff homer on Monday, is batting .217 in 12 games at Rochester. The Twins have repeatedly said they will leave him there until he gets his bat going — and that meant beyond his 20-day rehab.

"We didn't put a timeline on Buxton from Day 1 when we decided to put him on a rehab, which was the right thing," Molitor said. "The move that was made to option him out was kind of just furthering that point."

The move was one of many the Twins made Monday. To make room for Jorge Polanco, fellow infielder Ehire Adrianza was put on the 10-day disabled list because of a strained left hamstring that bothered him recently.

Adrianza hit .324 over the final 22 games in June, and there were indications that he tried to talk his way off the DL. He declined to comment Monday.

"The hard part — I think for him — is that he knows he's swinging the bat well and contributing," Molitor said.

To make room on the 40-man roster for Polanco, the Twins designated outfielder Ryan LaMarre for assignment. He made the club out of spring training and provided reliable defense, but was sent to Rochester on June 24 and could be claimed by another team.

Lefthander Adalberto Mejia, who started Saturday, was sent back to Rochester as well. The Twins called up righthander Zack Littell to provide them an innings eater as the bullpen recovers from a rough three days vs. the Cubs.

Polanco finally back

Polanco spent the first half of the season keeping up from afar as he served an 80-game suspension after testing positive for the performance-enhancing drug stanozolol.

Now he is back with a team that has supported him during a trying period in his career.

"All I wanted to do was come back," he said. "Obviously, sitting at home and not being with my teammates was a difficult process, but that's while I was away and I'm here now."

Molitor didn't waste time inserting Polanco in the starting lineup and batting him fifth. He said it wasn't necessary for Polanco to address teammates before the game. He just asked him to not try to make up for lost time.

"It's good to see him," Molitor said. "He had to pay a price for something that happened, and he took it head-on, took accountability, did his time, so to speak, and he's put the work in."

Polanco spent the time working out at Fort Myers, Fla. He played in a few extended spring training games and worked on sharpening his fielding with minor league instructor Sam Perlozzo.

His work was delayed a few weeks ago when he cut his right middle finger on the door to his apartment in Fort Myers. The finger became infected, and a scar remains.

He played two games with Class A Fort Myers before moving up to Rochester last week. He went 6-for-13 in four games with the Red Wings, encouraging the club to bring him up as soon as his suspension ended. And his teammates are happy to have him back.

"I made sure a lot of guys in here reached out to him [in Florida]," second baseman Brian Dozier said. "That's a tough thing to go through. When you have your brothers in here texting all the time and showing love and support, it makes it a lot easier."

International affairs

Monday was the first day clubs could sign international free agents who are at least 16 years old. The Twins, according to a source, have struck an \$2.75 million agreement with Venezuelan outfielder Misael Urbina, ranked as the 10th-best prospect in the pool.

The Twins also have reached agreements with righthander Jesus Medina and outfielder Alexander Pena, both also from Venezuela. The Twins won't announce the signings until the players pass physicals.

The Twins are one of six clubs with the maximum bonus pool of \$6,025,400, and intend to sign several more prospects.

Postgame: The losing ways continue as the Twins fall 11 games under .500
La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | July 3, 2018

Some final notes and thoughts following the latest debacle:

The first batter in the 10th told the story. Zack Littell plunked Nate Orf with an 0-2 curve that didn't curve.

"It backed up," he said. "Just threw a couple good ones right before, and I tried to make it better or whatever the case may be. It just backed up on me and got away."

It seemed inevitable that Milwaukee was going to win. Milwaukee loaded the bases, but the Twins got lucky with a five man infield that produced a force out of Orf at home (more on Orf later).

But Littell kept missing the plate against Brad Miller until the winning run was forced in by a walk. In two appearances, Littell has an 18.90 ERA.

"It's a learning experience," he said. "It's tough right now, but it's a marathon, it's not a sprint. Keep learning from this and get better."

Littell was optioned back to Class AAA Rochester after the game. A corresponding move will be announced tomorrow.

Odd double play

Travis Shaw batted with one out and Jesus Aguilar on first base. Shaw hit a grounder to Brian Dozier as Aguilar ran toward second. Aguilar slowed down to avoid being tagged out, and Dozier threw to first to get Shaw.

Joe Mauer threw back to second, but wildly. The ball went into the outfield as Aguilar headed for third. Eddie Rosario overran the ball, and Aguilar was waved home. Rosario recovered in time to throw Aguilar out at home.

Score that a 4-3-7-2 double play.

Mistakes

The Twins have earned these losses. Let's track the mistakes from Monday:

Fourth inning: Williams Astudillo, after reaching on a single, gets picked off first base.

Fifth inning: Astudillo, playing third, gets eaten up by a grounder by Ryan Braun for an error as a run scores.

Ninth inning: Joe Mauer appears to ground out to end the inning. But Miller commits a fielding error. Eduardo Escobar, who was on second when the ball was put in play, takes too big of a turn around third. Miller recovers the ball and starts a rundown to nab Escobar to end the ninth.

Things that costs a team games....

Finally...

Just for some levity (isn't there healing in laughter?)

Nate Orf made his major league debut for the Brewers tonight. I saw the name and had flashbacks.

When I worked at the Kansas City Star, I covered an indoor soccer team called the Kansas City Attack. Their main rivals were the Cleveland Crunch.

The Crunch's goalkeeper, one of the best in the league, was named Otto Orf.

Orf wore the number 00. His number was the same as his initials.

I'll show myself out...

As season reaches midpoint, Twins lurching toward 90 losses again

Michael Rand | Star Tribune | July 2, 2018

When things go wrong in life or sports, it's often useful to have a milestone or designated point for a "new beginning" to offer a chance at starting over.

Birthdays and New Year's offer a chance for introspection in life. In sports, short of waiting for next year, the halfway point in a season can be that moment.

What went wrong? What can get better? Those sentiments are rooted in idealism, and sometimes they work.

Reality, though, often tells a different story – particularly in baseball, which is designed as a grind. It's a battle of focus, particularly in the traditionally hot months of July and August.

The calendar turned to July on a blast furnace type of day in Chicago for the Twins. An 11-10 loss to the Cubs also ensured that when the Twins reached the midpoint of their season Monday in Milwaukee, they would do so on a pace to lose at least 90 games for the sixth time in eight seasons.

Teams that know they're out of the playoff picture already at the midpoint – and only the most optimistic Twins player would think otherwise at this point – tend to drift downward as the calendar drags along lazily with game after game.

That was the path of the 2011-2014 Twins, teams that closely resemble this year's team at least in terms of first-half trajectory. The Twins theoretically have better players this season than they had on those 2011-14 squads, and they probably should have more hope based on last year's strong finish and the prospect of getting back some pretty good players in the second half.

But those previous teams all had between 35 and 37 wins at the midpoint of the season before having even more disappointing second halves. In total, they were 21 games worse in the second halves than the first halves, and all were at least four games worse. All finished with at least 90 losses.

(The 2016 Twins, the most recent full-season failure, started 27-54 and almost couldn't help but improve a little. They went 32-49 in the second half, which is still nearly a 100-loss pace).

This year's team seems particularly vulnerable because of the preseason expectations and because of the way it is structured. They have a ton of veterans on the last year of their contracts, meaning they have the potential to be traded as rentals at the nonwaiver deadline at the end of the month. Those who stay could be interested more in individual gains than team goals as they try to earn big offseason paydays.

The inevitable infusion of young players that would follow a massive sell-off – and which will arrive regardless when rosters expand in September – can offer fans a glimmer of hope for the future, but it seldom results in more wins in the short-term.

The Twins can still rewrite their 2018 story and use it as some sort of springboard to 2019. But if history is a guide, they are likely lurching toward another lost season.

Monday's Twins-Milwaukee game recap

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | July 2, 2018

GAME RECAP

IMPACT PLAYER

Brad Miller, Milwaukee

The Brewers shortstop was 3-for-5 with two runs scored and forced in the winning run with a walk in the 10th.

BY THE NUMBERS

9 Walkoff losses by the Twins lead the majors

1,784 Career games for Joe Mauer, passing Kirby Puckett for second on the Twins' career list.

ON DECK

Jake Odorizzi threw six shutout innings vs. the White Sox on Thursday and will try to build on that Tuesday

So what's the deal with the Twins game being only on Facebook on Tuesday?

Staff Writer | Star Tribune | July 2, 2018

A NEW WAY TO WATCH

Tonight's Twins-Brewers game will not be televised, only streamed on Facebook. Things to know:

- Facebook is paying Major League Baseball to exclusively stream 25 games this season.
- Financial details were not released, but it is believed Facebook is paying \$1 million per game.
- The broadcast is free, but viewers need a Facebook account.
- There are no between-innings ads. Announcers will show league highlights and answer questions.
- There is a chat section that can be hidden.
- Once viewers are logged into Facebook, search for MLB Live to get access to the stream.
- There are no blackout restrictions.

Twins option Byron Buxton to Triple-A Rochester

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | July 2, 2018

MILWAUKEE — Technically, Byron Buxton had another seven days left on his rehab assignment, but the Twins went ahead and optioned the 24-year-old center fielder to Triple-A Rochester on Monday.

Buxton went out and homered in his first at-bat after being optioned.

“We didn’t put a timeline on Buxton from Day 1 when we decided to put him on a rehab, which was the right thing,” Twins manager Paul Molitor said. “It’s not, ‘OK, when this calendar date comes, your time is up,’ and he knows that. Don’t know what’s going to happen. We’ll see if it pays off in the long run whether he actually gets back here quicker.”

If somehow Buxton doesn’t accrue another 13 days of service time this year, he will finish 2018 with less than three full years in the majors. While he would still be eligible for salary arbitration as a Super 2 this offseason, the Twins would then be able to delay his free agency until after 2022, as unlikely as that may be.

Buxton’s left big toe is healthy but his swing still needs work. Even after getting two hits, including a double, on Sunday for the Red Wings, he was batting just .214 with 15 strikeouts through 42 at-bats in Triple-A.

“A lot of guys on the staff reached out (to Buxton),” Molitor said. “I talked to him (Sunday). He’s obviously willing to do what ever we feel is in his best interest. As a player you want to be up here contributing right now. I just told him that the timing is still to be determined.”

TWINS SIGN URBINA

As expected, the Twins opened the 2018-19 international signing period by agreeing to terms with Venezuelan center fielder Misael Urbina.

According to a person with direct knowledge, Urbina will receive a \$2.75 million bonus upon passing his physical. The 5-foot-11, 170-pounder, who turned 16 in April, is expected to draw the largest bonus out of Venezuela this year.

According to Baseball America, Urbina has strong defensive instincts, good closing speed and a below-average arm. Scouts are reportedly split on his hitting ability, but he does have pull-side power with a compact swing.

Also expected to sign with the Twins this week are Dominican shortstop Felix Rosa and Venezuelan right fielder Alexander Pena. Pending physicals, both are expected to receive bonuses of \$200,000 or more.

The Twins are among six teams with an international bonus pool of \$6,025,400. Dominican second baseman Yunior Severino, who signed with the Twins for \$2.5 million in December after being declared a free agent by Major League Baseball, counts against the 2018-19 pool.

RIPPLE EFFECT

In order to make room on the 40-man roster for shortstop Jorge Polanco, who was reinstated after serving an 80-game steroid suspension, the Twins designated for assignment outfielder Ryan LaMarre.

The 29-year-old LaMarre was optioned to Triple-A a week ago after posting a .321 on-base percentage in 109 plate appearances. The Twins will have seven days to trade, release or pass him through waivers.

“I really enjoy having Ryan LaMarre around the team,” Molitor said. “He’s (got) energy, he’s unselfish. He’s always willing to try to learn more to become better. He’s a great teammate. Sometimes that’s the way it goes.”

In addition, left-hander Adalberto Mejia was optioned to Rochester after lasting just four innings in his 2018 big-league debut on Saturday in Chicago and infielder Ehire Adrianza was placed on the 10-day disabled list with a strained left hamstring.

Over his past 77 trips, dating to June 6, Adrianza had hit .324 with a .918 OPS while battling hamstring soreness for the past couple of weeks. Adrianza lobbied to stay active, but the Twins felt the condition worsened on Saturday at Wrigley Field.

To replace Mejia right-hander Zack Littell was recalled from Rochester, where he has a 3.00 ERA in 51 innings (eight starts). Littell will work in middle relief for now, but the Twins will need another starter on Thursday at home against the Baltimore Orioles.

LARNACH UPDATE

The Twins continue to talk with the adviser for Oregon State right fielder Trevor Larnach, the 20th overall pick in this year’s draft, but no deal had been struck as of Sunday night.

According to a person with direct knowledge, it’s “still possible” the Twins will sign sixth-rounder Charles Mack, a high school third baseman from New York and a Clemson signee. If they can get him under contract for less than the \$253,700 signing slot, Larnach’s bonus offer could increase in advance of Friday’s deadline.

Slot value for the No. 20 pick is \$3.12 million, but the Twins might only have about \$2.9 million left in their draft pool after going over slot for four other picks in the first 10 rounds.

BRIEFLY

Super utility man Taylor Motter (concussion) was due to take a few swings indoors as well as undergo an ImPACT test. If all went well, he could hit on the field as soon as Tuesday with an eye toward coming off the 7-day concussion DL as soon as Friday.

Wilfran Astudillo, 16-year-old cousin of Twins utility catcher Willians Astudillo, signed with the Blue Jays. The younger Astudillo is the son of Willians’ cousin Franny. When Willians Astudillo signed with the Phillies in 2009, his bonus was \$90,000.

Jorge Polanco returns but Twins still fall 6-5 to Milwaukee Brewers **Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | July 2, 2018**

MILWAUKEE — As it turns out, it was the middle finger on Jorge Polanco’s right hand that the switch-hitting shortstop slammed in the door of his Fort Myers, Fla., apartment.

Factor in Ervin Santana’s five-month rehab (and counting) from Feb. 6 finger surgery, and that particular digit has served as a handy symbol of an obscenely disappointing Twins season that reached its midpoint (nadir?) with Monday’s 6-5 loss in 10 innings to the Milwaukee Brewers.

Fernando Rodney's second straight blown save offset Robbie Grossman's first career grand slam, and rookie Zack Littell walked in the winning run for the Twins' ninth walk-off loss. That's already the most for the Twins since suffering 10 of them in 2004.

Polanco went 0 for 4 with a leaping catch in his 2018 big-league debut as the Twins fell a season-high 10 games out of first place.

<https://youtu.be/K4VpXdu1xpc>

His finger later became infected after the apartment accident, costing him some valuable preparation time as he served out an 80-game steroid suspension. Coincidentally, Santana also missed the first 80 games due to a steroid suspension in 2015.

"I feel really good that I'm back," Polanco said through a translator. "I'm looking forward to going out there and play hard and help my team win games."

How hard was the time spent in baseball limbo?

"It was very difficult," he said, "but I'm glad that I'm back and I'm glad that I'm able to go play baseball, which is what I love to do."

When Polanco's suspension was announced in March after he dropped his appeal of a positive drug test, he issued an emotional apology to his teammates, coaches and bosses in the home clubhouse down at Hammond Stadium. Upon rejoining the big-league club on Monday, it was fair to wonder whether Polanco would address the team again.

"I don't think it's necessary," Twins manager Paul Molitor said, "and he gave me no indication he thought that was necessary."

Polanco went a combined 8 for 19 with a triple and a home run in six rehab games at Class A and Triple-A. Molitor popped him right back into the lineup as his No. 5 hitter while allowing that it might take some time before Polanco reclaims the confidence he had over the final two months last season.

Through a 20-win August and a pressure-packed September that ended with the Twins clinching their first postseason berth in seven years, Polanco hit .316 with a .931 on-base/slugging percentage while hitting third the bulk of the time.

"It's good to see him," Molitor said. "He had to pay a price for something that happened and he took it head-on, took accountability — did his time, so to speak — and he's put the work in. He's been a great example for a lot of our young guys down in Florida the past three months or so. He's anxious to play."

In a brief meeting with Polanco, Molitor offered a simple message.

"Be yourself," Molitor said. "Don't worry about trying to make an extreme impression or try to make up for lost time. Just be the player that we know that you can be, and that will be plenty good enough."

<https://youtu.be/yob9FNzxcCs>

There is no handbook for how to handle the public embarrassment of a steroid suspension. But the Twins were pleased with the way Polanco went about it, from his public statement in March to the long, hot days at extended spring training, working on his defense with Sam Perlozzo.

"I think it was outstanding," Molitor said. "It was disappointing when it happened. He's not the first and probably won't be the last that unknowingly puts himself in a bad spot, but he took care of what he had to take care of. From the day that we found out, he went about his work as professionally as you could ask a guy to do it, and I'm proud of him for doing that."

With his 1,784th appearance in a Twins uniform, Joe Mauer passed Kirby Puckett for second-most in Minnesota franchise history. Mauer also doubled off the center-field wall in the third to move within one of Puckett's Twins franchise record (414).

Twins reinstate Polanco, recall Littell
Staff Writer | Fox Sports North | July 2, 2018

Jorge Polanco is back.

The Minnesota Twins reinstated the shortstop from the restricted list Monday. Polanco had been serving an 80-game suspension for violating the league's drug policy.

Polanco returned to action last week, appearing in two games for Single-A Fort Myers and four games for Triple-A Rochester. The 24-year-old appeared in 133 games for the Twins last season, hitting .256/.313/.410 with 13 home runs and 30 doubles.

The Twins also recalled right-handed pitcher Zack Littell from Triple-A and made a series of roster moves to make room for them on the 25-man roster. Left-handed pitcher Adalberto Mejia was optioned to Rochester, while infielder Ehire Adrianza was placed on the 10-day disabled list strained hamstring.

Littell has been sharp down in Triple-A since giving up six runs in three innings during a loss to the Chicago White Sox in his major-league debut on June 5. He has a 3.00 ERA in nine games (eight starts) for Triple-A Rochester.

Mejia made his first start of the season Saturday in a 14-9 loss to the Chicago Cubs. Adrianza, who has made 56 appearances for the Twins this season at shortstop, is hitting .264/.314/.410 with 14 doubles and four home runs.

Outfielder Ryan LaMarre was designated for assignment to make room for Polanco on the 40-man roster. LaMarre hit .263/.321/.313 in 43 games for the Twins this season.

The Twins also reinstated outfielder Byron Buxton from the 10-day disabled list and optioned the speedy outfielder to Triple-A Rochester.

Twins lose to Brewers on walk-off walk in 10th
Associated Press | Fox Sports North | July 2, 2018

MILWAUKEE — Brad Miller drew a bases-loaded walk with one out in the 10th inning and the Milwaukee Brewers rallied past the Minnesota Twins 6-5 on Monday night.

Nate Orf, playing in his first major league game, was hit by a pitch from Zack Littell (0-2) leading off the 10th. Manny Pina followed with a single and Keon Broxton walked.

Pinch-hitter Hernan Perez, hitting against five infielders, hit a grounder to the left side that shortstop Jorge Polanco fielded and fired to the plate to force Orf before Miller got his chance.

Corey Knebel (2-0) pitched a scoreless 10th for the Brewers, who trailed 5-1 after Robbie Grossman blasted his first career grand slam with two outs in the fifth off Milwaukee starter Brent Suter.

The Brewers rallied against Twins closer Fernando Rodney in the ninth to tie it. After retiring pinch-hitter Eric Sogard, Rodney gave up three consecutive singles to load the bases for Travis Shaw, who tied it with a sacrifice fly. Rodney blew his fifth save opportunity this season.

The Brewers took a 1-0 lead in the first on Jesus Aguilar's run-scoring fielder's choice.

The Twins tied it in the third on a one-out RBI groundout by Brian Dozier, one pitch after Dozier appeared to have struck out swinging. Plate umpire Doug Eddings ruled that Dozier had fouled off the pitch, a call argued by Milwaukee manager Craig Counsell.

Suter gave up five runs and nine hits in five innings.

Pina led off the Brewers' fifth with a homer off Kyle Gibson to cut the Twins' lead to three. Milwaukee added another run on Miller's bloop single and pulled to 5-4 when Twins third baseman Willians Astudillo failed to cleanly field Ryan Braun's grounder near the bag.

Gibson gave up eight hits and three earned runs over five innings.

TRAINER'S ROOM:

Twins: Reinstated SS Jorge Polanco following an 80-game suspension for testing positive for a performance-enhancing drug. “He had to pay a price for something that happened. He took it head on, took accountability,” manager Paul Molitor said. To make room for Polanco, OF Ryan LaMarre was designated for release or assignment. ... Recalled RHP Zack Littell from Triple-A Rochester and sent LHP Adalberto Mejia to Rochester. Placed INF Ehire Adrianza on the disabled list with a hamstring injury. ... Returned OF Byron Buxton from his rehab assignment and sent him to Rochester.

Brewers: OF Christian Yelich sat out for the fourth consecutive time since leaving Thursday’s game with lower back tightness. “We’re getting closer,” Yelich said. ... RHP Aaron Wilkerson was optioned to Triple-A Colorado Springs when Orf was recalled. ... Transferred INF/OF Nick Franklin, who has been out since May with a quadriceps injury, to the 60-day disabled list.

UP NEXT

Twins: Jake Odorizzi (3-5, 4.62 ERA) allowed one run and five hits with 10 strikeouts in a May 20 start against the Brewers but didn’t factor into the decision.

Brewers: Junior Guerra (4-5, 3.05) surrendered one run and four hits in 4 1/3 innings and received no decision in a 3-1 loss to the Twins in Minneapolis on May 20.

We traded Manny Machado to every team. Here's who he helps most **Bradford Doolittle | ESPN | July 3, 2018**

If the competitive landscape of the NBA determined the tilt of the North American continent, you might have noticed a bit more of a westward lean Monday morning. If you haven't heard, LeBron James announced his departure for Los Angeles, where he will try to resurrect the Lakers' on-hiatus dynasty. Just like that, with a news release, the hierarchy of an entire league was upended.

EDITOR'S PICKS

Power Rankings: Who is on top at the halfway point?
Our first list of July marks the season's midway mark. Where does your team land?

Olney: Contenders consider buying low, buying late
As teams look at trades for veterans like Cole Hamels, this year's deadline could play out like last winter's market.

Midseason awards, bad All-Star positions and MLB's next big thing
Who have been baseball's best as the season hits the halfway mark? Plus, the AL's two weak spots and remembering an umpiring gaffe for the ages.

There simply is no baseball equivalent. If Mike Trout were suddenly released from his Los Angeles Angels contract and decided he wanted to play for the Baltimore Orioles, the O's would be better and the Angels would be worse. But the effect would be fractional compared to James' move. It's the nature of the sport.

Keep that in mind as we set out to overanalyze the coming MLB trade season. With the non-waiver trade deadline looming at the end of this month, there could be some big names on the move. The biggest prize is Baltimore shortstop Manny Machado, who can become a free agent after the season. With the Orioles on pace to win 47 games (no, really), it seems a cinch that Machado will be playing for another team a month from now. A trade could come down any day.

Machado is an elite player who is putting up a level of production right on target with his preseason forecast. Nevertheless, the team that ends up with him won't be ensuring itself of anything. Whereas at this time yesterday, the Lakers seemed like a fringe playoff candidate in the NBA, and today they are considered a surefire postseason entrant and possibly one more big splash from title contention.

That said, Machado makes more sense for some teams than others. In an effort to put some numbers to this, I decided to inject his trade candidacy into this month's Stock Watch. In addition to the usual metrics, each team is listed with its "Machado Bump." That is: How much would the acquisition of the Orioles' star infielder boost each team's win forecast? How would it impact their chances to win it all?

To calculate this, I "traded" Machado to every team in the majors, one at a time. For each club, I integrated him into its depth chart, moving around other pieces as needed. The assumption in terms of trade return was that Baltimore would be taking back minor league prospects who don't impact the big league depth chart. This isn't perfectly realistic. For instance, a Cubs-Orioles trade involving Machado would likely also include Chicago's starting shortstop, Addison Russell. Why else would Baltimore do it?

Rather than guessing the exact trade package each team might surrender, it made for more consistency to simply introduce Machado onto each team's roster, and off that of Baltimore. After "trading" Machado to each team, I ran 10,000 simulations of the rest-of-the-season schedule with the reconfigured rosters, giving me the revised figures for win forecast and title probability.

The Machado Bump is meaningful, if not earth-shattering. The uptick in win forecasts depends on the quality of players being uprooted, along with the remaining schedule each team faces. However, the championship forecast has a lot to do with how the possible postseason matchups stack up, which makes this exercise particularly interesting. In the American League, the Astros, Yankees and Red Sox are so tightly clustered that another elite acquisition could be a tipping point among them. The same could hold true for a whole clutch of National League teams. This plays out in the simulations.

As usual for Stock Watch for this time of the year, teams are grouped into three classes: Buyers, Holders and Sellers. Within each of these groups, the teams are ordered by the Manny Bump to its title chances, with ties broken by the bump in win forecast. And yes, every team gets a Manny Bump. There isn't a team in the majors that wouldn't be made better by his presence.

Sellers

Minnesota Twins

Current win forecast: 76.9 (Change from June: -1.6)

Current playoff probability: 8.8% (Down 11%)

Current championship probability: 0.7%

Manny Bump: 0.20% title probability | 2.8 wins (19th)

From here on out, the Machado bump is listed for entertainment purposes only. Instead, we'll focus on the assets these Sellers have that might aid someone else's cause in the postseason.

The Twins are newcomers to the Sellers class, one they had not meant to be in. But with the gap between Minnesota and Cleveland growing larger, and the one between the Twins and the top of the wild-card standings even wider, it's getting close to pull-the-plug time.

Second baseman Brian Dozier is the top trade candidate, though his less-than-stellar first half doesn't help his trade value. On the other hand, this is a classic sell-high opportunity when it comes to Eduardo Escobar, a player forecast for 0.3 WAR who is on pace for 3.9. Also of interest is reliever Ryan Pressly.

Miller's bases-loaded walk leads Brewers past Twins, 6-5

Associated Press | ESPN | July 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE -- With the bases loaded and the game tied in the 10th inning, Brad Miller plotted his approach as he came to the plate.

"You just look like you're going to swing and don't swing," Miller said.

Miller drew a bases-loaded walk with one out and the NL Central-leading Milwaukee Brewers rallied past the Minnesota Twins, 6-5 on Monday night.

Nate Orf, playing in his first major league game, was hit by a pitch from Zack Littell (0-2) leading off the 10th. Manny Pina followed with a single and Keon Broxton walked.

Pinch-hitter Hernan Perez, hitting against five infielders, hit a grounder to the left side that shortstop Jorge Polanco fielded and fired to the plate to force Orf before Miller got his chance against Littell.

"It's tough right now," Littell said, trying to explain his lack of command in the 10th.

Corey Knebel (2-0) pitched a scoreless 10th with a pair of strikeouts for the Brewers, who trailed 5-1 after Robbie Grossman blasted his first career grand slam with two outs in the fifth off Milwaukee starter Brent Suter.

Milwaukee has allowed grand slams in three consecutive games.

Four Brewers relievers combined on five shutout innings.

"Corey had a dynamite inning," Milwaukee manager Craig Counsell said. "It was an outing for the bullpen. They kept us alive in that game."

The Brewers rallied against Twins closer Fernando Rodney in the ninth to tie it. After retiring pinch-hitter Eric Sogard, Rodney gave up three consecutive singles to load the bases for Travis Shaw, who tied it with a sacrifice fly. Rodney blew his fifth save opportunity this season.

The Twins tied it at 1 in the third on a one-out RBI groundout by Brian Dozier, one pitch after Dozier appeared to have struck out swinging. Plate umpire Doug Eddings ruled that Dozier had fouled off the pitch, a call argued by Milwaukee manager Craig Counsell.

Suter gave up five runs and nine hits in five innings.

Pina led off the Brewers' fifth with a homer off Kyle Gibson to cut the Twins' lead to three. Milwaukee added another run on Miller's bloop single and pulled to 5-4 when Twins third baseman Willians Astudillo failed to cleanly field Ryan Braun's grounder near the bag.

Gibson gave up eight hits and three earned runs over five innings.

ORF'S LONG JOURNEY

The undrafted Orf, 28, started at second base. He has been one of the top-producing players in the Brewers' farm system for many years and fans have long been clamoring for him to be called up, even launching a (hash)FreeNateOrf campaign on Twitter.

"He is one of the more respected and revered players in our organization because of the way he treats people and because of the way he goes about his business," Brewers general manager David Stearns said.

Orf, whose parents traveled from St. Louis for the game, narrowly missed hitting a grand slam in the fifth but Max Kepler hauled in the deep drive at the center-field wall.

"After I hit it, I was like this is it. This is the coolest thing I've ever done," Orf said. "Then he caught it."

HITTING HURLERS

Gibson, who had singles in his first two at-bats, entered the game with just a pair of career hits in 16 at-bats. His single leading off the third was his first hit since June 2015.

"I'd rather go 0 for 5 and go eight innings," Gibson said.

Suter singled in his only at-bat and Milwaukee reliever Taylor Williams got his first career hit with a sixth-inning single.

TRAINER'S ROOM:

Twins: Reinstated SS Jorge Polanco following an 80-game suspension for testing positive for a performance-enhancing drug. To make room for Polanco, OF Ryan LaMarre was designated for release or assignment. ... Recalled RHP Zack Littell from Triple-A Rochester and sent LHP Adalberto Mejia to Rochester.

Brewers: OF Christian Yelich sat out for the fourth consecutive time since leaving Thursday's game with lower back tightness. ..RHP Aaron Wilkerson was optioned to Triple-A Colorado Springs when Orf was recalled. ...Transferred INF/OF Nick Franklin, who has been out since May with a quadriceps injury, to the 60-day disabled list.

UP NEXT

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the decision.

Brewers: Junior Guerra (4-5, 3.05) surrendered one run and four hits in 4 1/3 innings and received no decision in a 3-1 loss to the Twins in Minneapolis on May 20.

Twins make series of roster moves, including paving the way for Jorge Polanco's return

Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | July 2, 2018

The Twins got swept in Chicago and took a bus to Milwaukee, hoping for better fortunes. They'll do it with a new-look 25-man roster that includes a new starting shortstop.

Jorge Polanco is back, having served an 80-game PED suspension, and he'll likely take over for the Twins at shortstop. Polanco is one of a handful of roster moves the Twins made Monday.

Here they are:

-Ehire Adrianza put on the disabled list. He'd been hitting well and then strained his left hamstring. So he will likely be replaced in the starting lineup by Polanco and maybe Eduardo Escobar.

-Byron Buxton completed his rehab assignment but he won't join the big league club right away. The Twins have used his final minor league option for the right to keep him at Triple-A Rochester, as the centerfielder continues to work on his swing away from the Major Leagues.

-Adalberto Mejia was optioned to the minor leagues. He'll go back to Triple-A Rochester after a 4-inning start with the Twins in his 2018 debut over the weekend. He also failed to cover a base and the Twins must have felt like they needed extra protection in the bullpen after a heavy workload against the Cubs.

-Zack Littell was recalled from Triple-A Rochester, and he'll serve as that protection.

-Ryan LaMarre was designated for assignment or release. That roster move makes room on the 40-man roster for Polanco to be reinstated after his suspension.

Report: Twins sign high-ranked prospect from Venezuela

Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | July 2, 2018

The Twins reportedly have signed Misael Urbina, an outfield prospect from Venezuela, for \$2.75 million. The report is from Jesse Sanchez of MLB.com, who covers international prospects extensively.

Urbina is 16 years old and has a long ways to go before he gets to the big leagues. But there's apparently a lot to like about him as a player. He's ranked No. 3 on the international prospect list by MLB.com. And ranked No. 10 on Baseball America's list.

The Twins have more than \$6 million they can spend on international free agents this year, and the new fiscal year for that market began Monday.

Here's an excerpt on Urbina from Sanchez:

On offense, the 16-year-old Urbina is a line-drive hitter with a high baseball IQ and projects to have plus speed and a plus hit tool. He has been clocked in the 6.5-6.6-second range in the 60-yard timed run. Urbina is already an advanced defender for his age and he's expected to improve. Scouts like his experience against high-level competition.

The Twins' most prominent international free agent last season had his contract nullified when a reported failed physical (vision) caused the Twins to back out. That contract was for a reported \$3 million.

Other Twins players to come out of the international free agent market include Miguel Sano (Dominican Republic), Jorge Polanco (D.R.) and Max Kepler (Germany). Shortstop prospect Wander Javier currently holds the club record for biggest international signing bonus.

Jorge Polanco returns to Twins in thick of mess that began with his suspension
Dan Hayes | The Athletic | July 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE — After an offseason full of positive momentum, the Twins began to head the opposite direction when Jorge Polanco was suspended on March 18.

Suddenly, a team that had flushed out its projected 25-man roster with capable veterans would be without its starting shortstop and No. 3 hitter for 80 games after Polanco was suspended 80 games for testing positive for performance-enhancing drugs.

While plenty of other reasons have contributed to the Twins' 35-46 record, bad luck has also played a role. And you could argue it all began when Polanco tested positive for Stanozolol.

An eager Polanco was activated prior to Monday's 6-5, 10-inning loss to the Milwaukee Brewers and returned to the Twins for the first time since spring training. Polanco went 0-for-4 in his season debut. Though they initially were disappointed, the Twins welcomed their young middle infielder back after a productive version of extended spring training.

"It's good to see him," manager Paul Molitor said. "He had to pay a price for something that happened and he took it head on, took accountability, did his time, so to speak, and he's put the work in. He's been a great example for a lot of our young guys down in Florida the past three months or so. He's anxious to play."

Polanco did plenty of individualized work with minor-league infield instructor Sam Perlozzo during his suspension. He described much of it as routine maintenance, a chance to tidy up little details like footwork, etc.

Working out of Fort Myers, Fla., Polanco played in extended spring-training games until June 1. He suffered an injury to his middle finger when he cut it on his apartment door that kept him sidelined until last week. But Polanco returned to action and didn't show any signs of rust, combining for eight hits in 19 at-bats in six minor-league rehab games.

Now that he's back, Polanco realizes there's more work to be done as he must attempt to mend relationships in the clubhouse.

"I feel really good that I'm back, looking forward to go out there and play hard and help my team win games," Polanco said through an interpreter. "Earn the trust of my teammates and the team and work hard and go out there and support them. That's all I can do."

Polanco addressed the team in March and apologized for his actions. He had no plans to speak with them as a group again before Monday's game and Molitor didn't think it would be necessary.

Molitor batted Polanco fifth in the lineup because he doesn't want to put too much pressure on him. Polanco hit third 32 times last season and Molitor could see him winding up there again, but not until he's ready. Though Polanco went 6-for-13 with a triple and two walks at Triple-A Rochester, the Twins suspect some rust may still surface.

"My only message for him, other than to tell him we were really happy to see him and welcome him back, was just be yourself," Molitor said. "Don't worry about trying to make an extreme impression or try to make up for lost time. Just be the player that we know that you can be and that will be plenty good enough."

Polanco had a huge impact on the second half of the Twins' 2017 season. He produced an .870 OPS and helped the Twins absorb the loss of Miguel Sanó down the stretch.

Polanco also made some strides defensively from 2016, improving from minus-8 Defensive Runs Saved to minus-1.

"It was great," starting pitcher Kyle Gibson said. "We're glad to have him back. Heard he's been swinging the bat well. He's going to play some solid defense and swing the bat. Excited to have him back."

Polanco was almost a little too amped up in his return. He watched a number of the Twins' games while he was absent and longed to return. The speed of the game nearly caught up with Polanco in the 10th inning with the bases loaded. The Twins were working with a five-man infield and Polanco's throw home nearly pulled catcher Bobby Wilson off the bag. But Wilson was able to get possession and tag home for a force play.

"All I wanted to do was come back," Polanco said before the game. "Obviously, sitting at home and not being with my teammates was a difficult process, but that's while I was away and I'm here now."

"In general, I just worked hard on my entire thing on defense and offense, everything — running the bases — I'm just glad that I'm here today."

Mistakes add up again

Fernando Rodney blew his second straight save. The Twins made two more base-running errors. Rookie Willians Astudillo misplayed an in-between hop and the error led to a run scoring. All of it, along with a bases-loaded walk by rookie Zack Littell, added up to yet another disappointing defeat for the Twins, who grabbed a 5-1 lead in the fifth inning on a Robbie Grossman grand slam.

Littell, who was optioned back to Triple A after the game, walked Brad Miller after hitting one batter, yielding a hit and walking another to force in the winning run in the 10th. It was the ninth walk-off loss of the season for the Twins, who have lost six of seven on their current road trip.

“You imagine the frustration of fighting, playing a good game for the most part and having a chance there,” Molitor said. “You put a young kid in a tough spot bringing him in there in his second appearance, out of his routine of starting. There’s not a lot of margin of error there. It is what it is. We got the big hit from Robbie, and then we got shut down the rest of the game. They inched closer, especially in the fifth. We just couldn’t hold on to the end. It’s kind of a familiar storyline, but it’s reality.”

For Miguel Sanó and Byron Buxton, it’s process over results in rehab timeline

Dan Hayes | The Athletic | July 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE — Both have taken well to the Twins’ plan, Miguel Sanó improving his strength and Byron Buxton getting comfortable with a swing adjustment.

Sanó has bought into the Twins’ aggressive proposal, getting stronger in the lower half, losing weight and giving himself a better chance at the plate. Buxton’s broken toe is no longer an issue, and he continues to work on a consistent approach.

But neither has reached the point where the Twins are ready to promote them back to the majors. Even though the Twins are in desperate need of reinforcements after starting their road trip with losses in five of six games, Sanó and Buxton weren’t among those deployed to Milwaukee.

The Twins began a three-game series at the Brewers on Monday and activated shortstop Jorge Polanco and recalled Zack Littell. But Sanó continued his assignment at Single-A Fort Myers while Buxton was activated off the disabled list and re-assigned to Triple-A Rochester.

“Still a work in progress,” manager Paul Molitor said about Sanó this weekend. “Very encouraged about how he’s gotten after it and tried to get himself in a better place to use the skillset he has. There have been some good things in the games. He’s moving fairly well. I’m not sure he’s in the place he needs to be completely yet, but he’s progressing and that’s what we hoped.”

“We’re trying to get him to that place. We’re not going to rush something that’s not ready to happen.”

The Twins are pleased about what has occurred since they sent Sanó to Fort Myers after a June 14 contest in Detroit. He hit his first home run on Sunday in 34 plate appearances since his demotion. But it’s more about what has occurred off the field that the Twins view as a positive.

While his inability to hit is the reason Sanó was sent to the minors, the team is taking advantage of the demotion to do an all-out makeover. Part of what one staffer described as a “drastic” plan for Sanó includes strengthening the slugger’s lower half. Though he worked hard after he was medically cleared in January and was good enough to play, Sanó lost much of that strength when he almost missed a month starting in late April with a hamstring strain.

The Twins also wanted for Sanó to work with a nutritionist and hope in the process of it all that Sanó would lose weight.

“His conditioning has continued to get better and better and that’s helped him on the field,” chief baseball officer Derek Falvey said. “We’ve seen some things from the offensive side with adjustments. (minor-league hitting coordinator) Rick (Eckstein) was there first. He spent some time with (minor-league hitting coach) Steve Singleton. He’s progressing.

“He’s done a good job. But I’ve said it 1,000 times, it’s not so much about the weight. We want him to be strong. He’s a big man. We want the lower half to be strong to put him in a good position to hit the way we know he can.”

Whether from the naked eye or via analytics, Sanó’s struggles are as clear as day. Always a free swinger, the third baseman has had even more swing and miss in his game this season.

Through his first three seasons, Sanó struck out 35.8 percent of the time, according to Fangraphs.com. Even so, Sanó had always been able to hit for power, producing a .241 Isolated Power, which ranked 18th among 232 players with 1,000 or more plate appearances from 2015-17.

This season, Sanó has struck out in 40.5 percent of his plate appearances, a figure that increased to 41.1 percent after he returned from the

disabled list. In that span, Sanó's ISO dropped to .162.

His average exit velocities provide an even clearer picture. Whereas last season Sanó produced exit velos of 93.5 mph and 94.2 on pitches middle in and down and in, this year those figures have dropped to 86.6 mph and 86.5.

On pitches up and over the middle, he's down to 70.4 mph from 98.6. Down the middle increased from 99.6 mph to 100.9 while middle down has increased from 92.3 mph to 93.6. But Sanó also has struggled with pitches away, falling from 101.0 mph to 95.6 on up in the zone and from 95.5 mph to 94.7 on middle away.

Sanó's exit velocities in 2017.

Sanó's exit velocities in 2018.

The Twins say all of that is related to a loss of leg strength.

"For me, it was getting comfortable of really getting strong on his legs," hitting coach James Rowson said. "He wasn't able to get a really strong position on his legs consistently. It was a matter of being able to do it consistently.

"We know Miguel Sanó can hit. There's no doubt in my mind what he can do with a bat when everything is going well. It's just a matter of getting into the right position on time and being able to do it more consistently. We feel good about he's getting closer and closer to that mark every day."

While they're encouraged, the Twins remain guarded about the timeline for Sanó, an All-Star in 2017. He played in consecutive games on Tuesday and Wednesday before taking Thursday off.

On Friday, he went 3-for-4 with three RBIs. Sanó was limited to a pinch-hit appearance on Saturday before he returned to the lineup Sunday and went 2-for-4 with a homer.

Sanó entered Monday hitting .345/.441/.483 with eight singles, one double, one homer, six RBIs, five walks and seven strikeouts since starting his current rehab assignment.

"Everything I'm hearing is good so far," Rowson said.

Between Rowson and Molitor, the Twins have been in constant contact with Buxton, who is scheduled to be in the minors another 10 days as a result of Monday's move, unless he replaced an injured player. Molitor said the two spoke Sunday as the Twins made a number of moves, including designating Ryan LaMarre for assignment and placing Ehire Adrianza on the 10-day DL.

"We didn't put a timeline on Buxton from Day 1 when we decided to put him on a rehab, which was the right thing," Molitor said. "He's obviously willing to do whatever we feel is in his best interest. ...

"As a player, you want to be up here contributing right now. I just told him that the timing is still to be determined."

Buxton apparently took the news of his re-assignment well. He homered, walked and struck out twice in five plate appearances on Monday. Buxton is hitting .217/.280/.391 with two doubles, two homers, six RBIs, three walks and 17 strikeouts in 50 plate appearances on his current assignment.

Rowson said the goal is to give Buxton time to find a consistent hitting position. With his season disrupted by injuries since April 12, the Twins hope to get Buxton back on track by refocusing his efforts. Similar to Sanó, they hope Buxton's takeaway is that getting it right is more important than a timeline.

"Get back to some of the basics," Rowson said. "Just getting to a good position to hit, seeing the ball clearly, being able to take some swings with some balance. It wasn't a whole lot of new things as it was to get him healthy and getting back to feeling close to how he felt toward the last year and building off that as well.

"He's getting comfortable and I think he's on the upswing. But it's really important he feels like there's no rush in terms of timeframe. Take the time. Get it right. Don't feel like there's a rush to get it right. Just get it right so that once we get this train moving forward again we continue in that direction."