



**Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
Monday, April 9, 2018**

- Mariners-Twins postponed by inclement weather. MLB.com (Bollinger) p.1
 - Joe Mauer prepares to add another keepsake to his collection. Star Tribune (Neal) p. 1
 - On winter's third strike, Twins bow out. Star Tribune (Adler) p. 2
 - Former Vikings, Twins announcer McConnell dies at 79. Star Tribune (Staff) p. 4
 - Twins-Houston series preview. Star Tribune (Neal) p. 4
 - Twins-Mariners game postponed; will be made up May 14. Star Tribune (Neal) p. 5
 - To avoid snow, Twins postpone Sunday's game against Seattle to May 14. Pioneer Press (Murphy) p. 5
 - Twins, Mariners finale postponed due to inclement weather. Associated Press (Staff Writer) p. 6
 - Twins likely to adjust rotation after weather causes Mariners game to be postponed. ESPN 1500 (Wetmore) p. 6
 - Why Logan Morrison and the Twins aren't panicked over his slow start The Athletic (Hayes) p. 7
 - Sunday's Twins-Mariners game postponed due to weather. MPR News (Staff Writer) p. 8
 - The ups, and downs, of being a Minnesota Twins mascot. MPR News (Staff Writer) p. 8
 - Birmingham Barons sweep doubleheader from Chattanooga Lookouts. Times Free Press (Staff Writer) p. 10
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Mariners-Twins postponed by inclement weather

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | April 8, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Twins saw their scheduled game on Sunday against the Mariners postponed due to wintry conditions and it will be made up on Monday, May 14 at 6:10 p.m. CT, on a mutual off-day for the two clubs.

The announcement was made roughly three hours before the scheduled first pitch of 1:10 p.m. CT. Sunday's forecast called for a high of 32 degrees in the Minneapolis area with a chance of snow in the afternoon. Temperatures are expected to climb slightly toward 40 degrees for the Twins' series opener against the Astros on Monday at Target Field. The Mariners will move on to Kansas City to open a series with the Royals on Monday.

The Twins will shuffle their starting rotation as a result, with right-hander Lance Lynn getting pushed back from his scheduled start on Sunday to start the series opener against Houston. Right-hander Jake Odorizzi is slated to start on Tuesday and he'll be followed by right-hander Kyle Gibson on Wednesday.

Thursday's starter against the White Sox has yet to be announced, as it's the first time the club will need a fifth starter this season, but it could be right-hander Phil Hughes who threw five innings with Class A Advanced Fort Myers on Thursday.

Fans who purchased tickets for Sunday's game may either use them to get into the makeup game on May 14 or exchange them for any other Twins home regular season game in 2018. Unused tickets may be exchanged at the Target Field Ticket Office.

Joe Mauer prepares to add another keepsake to his collection

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | April 9, 2018

Joe Mauer, winner of batting titles, Gold Gloves, Silver Slugger Awards and a growing number milestone mementos, has the materials to decorate one of the all-time man caves if he wanted to.

Yet most of the hardware and baseballs he has collected through his career — when he has remembered to ask for personal memorabilia — is packed away in boxes. Mauer owns two homes and one cabin in Minnesota, but none of them has a designated area to reflect his 15-year Twins

career. The first baseman admitted that he doesn't know where some of the stuff he has won or accumulated is even kept.

"My parents have the MVP trophy [from 2009] and a couple other things," Mauer said. "But I didn't want to put stuff up until after I'm done playing.

"I have stuff, but I don't have it out. It's in storage boxes and stuff like that."

His collection is about to increase by one baseball. Mauer enters a three-game series against Houston only six hits shy of 2,000 for his career. He would join Kirby Puckett (2,304) and Rod Carew (2,085) as the only players with at least 2,000 hits with the Twins.

After Houston, the Chicago White Sox visit for four games. Mauer has hit more home runs (18) against the White Sox than any opponent.

So, barring unforeseen developments, sometime this week the Cretin-Derham Hall product will become the 287th major leaguer to reach the 2,000-hit plateau. He also will become the 10th active player to reach that mark. Seattle's Ichiro Suzuki leads that group with 3,085.

Both Mauer and Suzuki were denied chances to add to their hit totals on Sunday, when the series finale between the Twins and Mariners was postponed because of inclement weather. It will be made up May 14.

Mauer will be relieved to reach 2,000 at Target Field, where there are usually a few members of his family in attendance each game.

"There's a lot of family meetings at the ballpark," he said.

Mauer might not have a large inventory of memorabilia to show off, but he makes up for it in quality. One day, he will display his five Silver Sluggers, three Gold Gloves as a catcher and three trophies for his AL batting titles. And maybe he will retrieve the MVP trophy from his parents.

"There are a couple of things I have out," Mauer said. "I know in my office I have a picture of Rod, Tony [Oliva] and I. A couple things like that. But I don't have any of my awards put up."

Mauer was like many players who don't start thinking about collecting until later in a career. He knows he has missed out on opportunities to ask for gear and might start doing more of that now that he's almost 35. He does have most of his milestone baseballs, with help from the Twins.

One of the more unique items in his possession came when he was kidding about hitting his 200th double at Chicago late in the 2010 season, the same series during which he collected his 1,000th hit.

"Somebody asked me if I wanted anything from that game," Mauer said. "And I jokingly said, 'Yeah, get me second base.' I was just messing around.

"But the guys in Chicago actually gave me second base. It was kind of cool. I have that up at my parents' house. I wish I would have done a little bit more of that. I don't have a whole lot, to be honest."

Mauer said he is not counting down the hits he needs to reach 2,000, but he is looking forward to adding that ball to his growing collection. He has not commented on whether he will play in 2019 — his celebrated eight-year, \$184 million contract expires after the season — but clearly he is in the collectible stage of his career. Eventually, he is going to rummage through his storage area for the boxes marked "batting titles."

It was pointed out to Mauer that if he played about another seven years, he could collect the ball from his 3,000th hit.

"I don't know about that," he said with a chuckle. "That's a long way to go for that."

On winter's third strike, Twins bow out
Erin Adler | Star Tribune | April 9, 2018

The Twins had already played in worse weather this year, at home and on the road.

So they took a lashing for postponing Sunday's third game against the Mariners, citing the cold and snow.

"It's lame," Monica Surber said as she jogged past Target Field on Sunday afternoon. "They could have gotten enough innings in to count for a game."

The delay came a week after the Twins jabbed fans reluctant to go to Thursday's frigid home opener.

"Am I missing something? Aren't we supposed to be the #BoldNorth?" Twins President Dave St. Peter tweeted last Monday.

On Sunday, St. Peter said Major League Baseball and players for both the Mariners and Twins supported the decision to postpone Sunday's 1:10 p.m. game, the third in the series.

The Twins are "pretty beat up from playing in 27 degrees yesterday," he said about Saturday's second game.

"I think what we were most concerned about today was the snowfall, which is obviously not conducive to great baseball," St. Peter said Sunday.

The White Sox started their home season Thursday, playing in the snow and cold, as did the Twins during last week's series against the Pittsburgh Pirates. During that series, the Twins played in blowing snow and temps in the mid-30s that felt like 22 with the wind. But from New York to Detroit, nine other baseball games have been postponed due to wintry weather.

Tough calls

"We knew this was going to be a challenge each and every day," St. Peter said about the Mariners series. Asked about his tweet, he said: "I think in this world you make decisions one day at a time."

The cancellation, which the Twins tweeted at 9:51 a.m., means the Mariners will make a one-game stop at Target Field May 14.

The temperature hovered just below freezing at what would have been game time and less than an inch of snow fell in the Twin Cities as of 7 p.m. Sunday, the National Weather Service said.

The forecast had called for an inch or two of snow Sunday afternoon for the Twin Cities, then another inch in the evening with temperatures in the high 20s. Flurries started just after 2:30 p.m. in Minneapolis, and became heavier as the afternoon went on.

The home opener was the second coldest in Target Field history. The game-time temperature was 38 degrees, the seventh sub-40 degree start since the park opened.

A few people took to Twitter to question the decision to reschedule. One said it's another reason to have a baseball stadium with a roof, another questioned if we're really the "Bold North."

The Twins are scheduled to play host to Houston Monday night with gametime temperatures expected to be in the mid-30s.

'A cup of disappointment'

At the Caribou Coffee adjacent to Target Field, a dozen customers sipped warm drinks as the snow fell Sunday.

Shift manager Cole Herman said he'd served a handful of disheartened customers who hadn't known about the change in plans and showed up anyway.

One lady sidled up to the counter to order a big "cup of disappointment," he said, when she heard about the cancellation.

"It definitely hurts our business," Herman said. "It was plenty cold the other days."

Reed Petitpern, a recent transplant from Detroit, was walking near the field Sunday. He found the change in plans confusing. "It really wasn't that bad, weather-wise," Petitpern said. "I'm just wondering why."

Carmane Teetzel, out on errands, called the cancellation "sad." If she could be outside, she said, it seemed like the Twins could manage it, too.

"I feel like people are so used to Minnesota weather," Teetzel said. "I don't think it's that cold."

But Kyle Torfin, who came from Elk River and didn't know the game was postponed, said he was glad to hear the news. He would have left after an inning anyway.

"If it was sunny and 30 degrees, that's one thing," he said. "If it's snowy and cloudy and 30 degrees, that's another. You just can't warm up."

Former Vikings, Twins announcer McConnell dies at 79

Staff Writer | Star Tribune | April 9, 2018

Joe McConnell, whose longtime broadcasting career included two stints with the Vikings and one with the Twins, died Sunday in Indianapolis at age 79, the Chicago White Sox announced.

McConnell called White Sox games from 1980 to '84. His career also included 23 years doing play-by-play in the NFL, including with the Vikings from 1971 to '76 and again from 1985 to '87.

He spent 1978 and '79 with the Twins. His career included five NFL teams, two NBA teams, two MLB teams and various college football and basketball teams, including Purdue football from 1995 to 2009.

He also served as the lead voice for the NBA Radio Network from 1991 to '95. He broadcast three Super Bowls, the NBA and ABA championships, the NBA All-Star Game and the American League Championship Series.

Twins-Houston series preview

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | April 8, 2018

Twins vs. Houston: Series preview

Champs come in for chilly series

THREE-GAME SERIES AT TARGET FIELD

Monday, 7:10 p.m. • FSN, 96.3-FM

RHP Lance Lynn (0-1, 11.25 ERA) vs. RHP Justin Verlander (1-0, 2.31)

Tuesday, 7:10 p.m. • FSN, 96.3-FM

RHP Jake Odorizzi (0-0, 2.61) vs. LHP Dallas Keuchel (0-1, 3.27)

Wednesday, 12:10 p.m. • FSN, 96.3-FM

RHP Kyle Gibson (1-0, 0.87) vs. RHP Lance McCullers Jr. (1-1, 3.48)

TWINS UPDATE

Sunday's postponement vs. Seattle because of cold and snow means the Twins will push their rotation back a day. It also means they won't have to use a fifth starter on Wednesday; one will be needed Friday vs. the White Sox instead. That's assuming the weather cooperates, of course. ... Lynn will try to rebound from a shaky Twins debut on April 2 in Pittsburgh, where he gave up a first-inning grand slam in a 5-4 loss. ... The Twins were 4-for-9 with runners in scoring position Saturday vs. the Mariners to raise their season average to .258.

ASTROS UPDATE

The last time Houston was here, the Astros bludgeoned Twins pitching last May, batting .388 with 10 home runs and outscoring the Twins 40-16 in a three-game sweep. This time, they come in as World Series champions, and at 8-2 they have matched their best 10-game start to a season. They have outscored opponents 47-25 in those 10 games, though they only scored six runs in three games vs. San Diego over the weekend. ... Verlander, traded from Detroit to Houston on Aug. 31, made only one start vs. the Twins last season, giving up four runs over five innings and walking six during a 6-3 loss April 21. Overall, he is 17-9 with a 3.15 ERA in 34 career games against the Twins.

Twins-Mariners game postponed; will be made up May 14

La Velle E Neal III | Star Tribune | April 8, 2018

The game between the Twins and Mariners today has been postponed due to the combination of cold temperatures and an approaching snow

system.

The game has been rescheduled for Monday, May 14 at 6:10 p.m.

Righthander Lance Lynn was scheduled to start for the Twins today, but now will start tomorrow, when the Twins open a three-game series against the Houston Astros. Lynn did appear on the field briefly this morning - wearing shorts - to play catch for a few minutes.

Righthander Jake Odorizzi will start on Tuesday, with righthander Kyle Gibson pitching on Wednesday. The postponement also pushes back the return of righthander Phil Hughes, who is on a rehabilitation assignment at Class A Fort Myers. He was in line to start on Wednesday, when the Twins needed a fifth starter for the first time all season. Now they won't need one until Friday against the White Sox.

Hughes will likely throw on the side or make a brief appearance for Fort Myers before Friday's game

The Twins closed the clubhouse to the media upon the announcement, so no one - neither players nor manager Paul Molitor - were available for comment. Reporters and stadium workers basically showed up at the park in time to reverse course, given the odd timing of the announcement. The teams knew two days ago this was a possibility and had been kicking around makeup dates.

At least they didn't open the gates and have fans sit around for a couple of hours before deciding to call the game,

To avoid snow, Twins postpone Sunday's game against Seattle to May 14

Brian Murphy | Pioneer Press | April 8, 2018

The Twins finally succumbed to Mother Nature's cold hand.

Sunday afternoon's game against the Seattle Mariners at Target Field was postponed in anticipation of another round of snow in the Twin Cities. The game will be made up at 6:10 p.m. May 14 — a mutual off day for both teams.

Cold weather and snow have dominated the weather since the Twins returned home from their season-opening road trip to Baltimore and Pittsburgh. Field conditions prevented them from having batting practice at Target Field or PNC Park in Pittsburgh.

First-pitch temperature for Saturday's 11-4 loss to Seattle was 27 degrees, the coldest game the Twins have played in their 58 years in Minnesota. Thursday's home opener was 38 degrees at game time.

Snow today? Yep, maybe an inch or two. Then the weather looks to warm up nicely

The Twins won two out of three from the Orioles, split a two-game series against the Pirates and are 1-1 versus the Mariners, deferring the rubber match of Seattle's only visit to Target Field to next month.

"The conditions haven't been ideal, obviously," manager Paul Molitor told WCCO Radio on Sunday. "The players have done a good job trying to navigate cold conditions. Yesterday was challenging. The temperature (Sunday) was maybe doable, but with the forecast of snow coming it felt smart to postpone."

The postponement also means Minnesota will not need a fifth starter for its pitching rotation until Friday.

Right-hander Phil Hughes is rehabilitating in Fort Myers, Fla., from a mild oblique strain and was on track to start Wednesday against the defending World Series champion Houston Astros.

But the weather, which might be problematic all week in Minneapolis, allows the Twins to evaluate Hughes more and determine his availability for Friday's three-game series opener against the Chicago White Sox.

Fans holding tickets for Sunday's game can use their tickets for the May 14 rescheduled game against Seattle or exchange their unused tickets at the Target Field box office for any 2018 regular-season game, subject to availability.

Twins, Mariners finale postponed due to inclement weather

Staff Writer | Associated Press | April 8, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — The series finale between the Seattle Mariners and the Minnesota Twins was postponed Sunday because of wintry weather.

With snow in the forecast and game-time temperatures expected to hover around freezing, the game was called off about three hours before it was supposed to begin and rescheduled for May 14 at 6:10 p.m., what had been a mutual day off for both teams. The Mariners had not been scheduled to return to Minnesota this season.

Lance Lynn had been scheduled to make his Target Field debut for the Twins, opposite Marco Gonzales of the Mariners.

The two teams played through the coldest outdoor Twins' game in Minnesota history on Saturday when the first pitch was thrown in 27-degree weather. Seattle beat Minnesota 11-4.

"It was freezing," Mariners outfielder Dee Gordon said after the game. "I was getting picked on a lot of the time for having a hoodie on. Then we went out, and everybody on their team had a hoodie on. I was like, 'Oh, I don't feel so bad.'"

Because of the cold weather, both teams agreed to forgo the use of the bullpens in left-center field and let relievers warm up in the hitting cages behind the dugouts.

Sunday's postponement could help both pitching staffs.

Neither team has a fifth starter on the roster. The Twins host the Houston Astros on Monday night while the Mariners visit the Kansas City Royals.

The weather is supposed to remain cold but dry the rest of the week in Minnesota, which also hosts the Chicago White Sox for four games following a three-game set with Houston.

Twins manager Paul Molitor didn't announce his rotation plans, but Lynn likely will be pushed back for Monday's game against the Astros and followed by Jake Odorizzi, Kyle Gibson and Jose Berrios.

Right-hander Phil Hughes is rehabilitating a left oblique strain and likely will take the fifth-starter spot. Instead of being needed on Wednesday against the defending World Series champions, Hughes could be in line to start Friday against Chicago.

"The outing went well the other day," Molitor said Saturday after Hughes allowed three runs in five innings for Class A Fort Myers. "He got his pitches up a little bit closer to being able to start, if you will. I saw that he touched 94 the other day. We're just going to have to see how things play out here. He's still on rehab assignments so we're just going to see how that plays out and what happens with the weather and games being played the next couple of days and all of those things."

Seattle left-hander Marco Gonzales is expected to start the series opener in Kansas City, followed by Felix Hernandez and James Paxton. Mike Leake, who started Saturday's win in Minnesota, will follow Friday at home against Oakland with the Mariners having another off day on Thursday.

Twins likely to adjust rotation after weather causes Mariners game to be postponed

Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | April 8, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — With snow in the forecast, the Mariners and Twins avoided another chilly afternoon at the ballpark. Sunday's scheduled game has been postponed due to inclement weather, the teams announced.

The game will be played May 14 instead, with a 6:10pm first pitch.

If you had tickets for Sunday, you've got two choices:

Use the tickets to get into the rescheduled game.

Exchange the ticket for any future Twins regular season game this year — subject to availability. You can swap your tickets for seats with equal or lesser value.

Lance Lynn was schedule to start Sunday's game, and he'll be pushed back to Monday's tilt against the Astros. He'll be followed by Jake Odorizzi and Kyle Gibson, the Twins announced. That trio likely will be followed by Saturday's starter, J.O. Berrios. At which point the Twins will need a fifth starter Friday, April 13, for the first time of the season. Phil Hughes has been rehabbing in the minor leagues and could be lined up to make that start.

Why Logan Morrison and the Twins aren't panicked over his slow start

Dan Hayes | The Athletic | April 8, 2018

It's early enough for a veteran player and his team not to worry too much about a slow start. The schedule has been full of days off and erratic, winter weather. And he shouldn't be too upset about the process either, as internal numbers indicate Saturday's game was his strongest game of the season.

But damn if Logan Morrison wouldn't love for something positive to latch on to.

The search for an encouraging result is on hold for the newly acquired Twins designated hitter, who must now wait until Monday against the Houston Astros for his next opportunity after Sunday's game was postponed due to inclement weather. Though frustrated by his 1-for-19 start, Morrison sounds to be far from worried, even though the natural instinct is to want to perform well for a new team.

"I don't think I'm happy with the way I've started, for sure," Morrison said. "Definitely frustrating, but this would be frustrating at any point in the season. Just happens to happen at the beginning."

The early numbers — Morrison has a .287 OPS through 22 plate appearances — have already brought out the pitchforks from a small portion of unforgiving fans on social media who are dissatisfied with his play.

Morrison's performance perhaps unfairly attracts more scrutiny than others because A) he signed a deal that could pay him \$16 million over two years in February and B) his foul pop out with the bases loaded on Saturday came at a critical point in an 11-4 loss to the Seattle Mariners.

But let's consider any number of reasons why this is merely a bad start and nothing more.

First and foremost is the sample size provided. Morrison's 22 trips to the plate represent only 4.3 percent of the 503 plate appearances he's averaged the past three seasons. If this happened in June or July, it surely wouldn't receive the same amount of publicity. Instead, it occurs at a time of the season when everyone is paying attention and has high expectations.

You also have to account for all the team's time off since leaving Fort Myers, Fla., on March 25. Sunday's postponement, which will be made up May 14, is the sixth day off in 14.

And that doesn't take into account the cold weather the Twins have faced; they've played in 40-, 37-, 38- and 27-degree temperatures the past four games. Developing a rhythm in those conditions isn't easy and it's something manager Paul Molitor takes into account when assessing Morrison's start.

"I haven't sensed any type of extra anxiety about it or panic or anything like that," Molitor said. "I think he's been taking pretty good at-bats. You know, I think everyone is aware of when you get off to a slow start. But like we talked about before the game, it's just been really hard for guys to get their rhythm. You're not getting on the field much and relying on cage work. At-bats have been sporadic with the off days and we're only 20 at-bats in, so we'll see where it goes from here."

Morrison's frustration from Saturday — when he stranded seven runners in a game that was tight until the eighth inning — is probably only heightened because he put together two very good at-bats with runners in scoring position.

Batting against Seattle's Mike Leake in the first inning with two on and two out, Morrison fouled off a 2-2 cut-fastball inside and then ripped the next pitch, also a cutter, to deep right only for Mitch Haniger to track it down.

Then in the seventh, Morrison fouled off several more pitches from hard-throwing reliever Juan Nicasio. He turned around a 95-mph fastball with an exit velocity of 97.4 mph, which traveled 355 feet, according to BaseballSavant.com. Nicasio's 94-mph fastball on 3-2 exited Morrison's bat at 106.2 mph, but also went foul. Morrison then fouled out on the eighth pitch of the at-bat.

"I think I had a couple good ones and then I had a terrible one today off Marc Rzepczynski," Morrison said, referring to a three-pitch strikeout in the sixth. "It's a process, but shoot, it would be helpful if some started falling or get some good results with the at-bats."

During the contest, Morrison produced six exit velocities of 90.3 mph or more. He had four in the previous six games, including a 108.7 mph bullet for an RBI double in Wednesday's win at Pittsburgh. He's hitting the ball hard, and yet his BABIP stands at just .071, 200 points below his career average. Taking everything into context, you can understand why the Twins aren't concerned.

"Logan put together a really good at-bat there," Molitor said of the seventh-inning pop out. "It didn't end up the way we had hoped. But he put

down some good swings, he put up a good fight.”

Overall, Morrison’s average exit velocity this season stands at 88.91 mph, which is right at the league average, and up from 2017, when he averaged 88.6 mph.

Morrison believes he’s not far off the mark. But he’d still love if one of his seventh-inning drives did damage and he was in the spotlight for a different reason.

“Keep one of those fair and (it’s a) different story in the game,” Morrison said. “Obviously, a big at-bat in the game, want to come through, but it wasn’t in the cards today. Keep grinding, keep going.”

Sunday's Twins-Mariners game postponed due to weather
Staff Writer | MPR News | April 7, 2018

The Minnesota Twins have announced that Sunday's game against the Seattle Mariners has been postponed due to "inclement weather." Snow is forecast in much of Minnesota and is expected to hit the Twin Cities metro area Sunday afternoon. According to a spokesperson for the Twins, it's not unusual to postpone games due to weather, but this is usually due to rain rather than snow.

The game will be made up on Monday, May 14 at 6:10 p.m., a mutual off day for both clubs.

Fans who had tickets for Sunday's game can use their tickets for the rescheduled game or exchange their unused tickets for any regular season Twins game in 2018.

The ups, and downs, of being a Minnesota Twins mascot
Staff Writer | MPR News | April 7, 2018

Saturday's game between the Minnesota Twins and the Seattle Mariners was the coldest home game ever played at Target Field: 27 degrees.

No better day, I thought, to don one of the notoriously warm costumes and participate in the Twins mascot race on the field between the fourth and fifth innings.

Perhaps it wasn't my best idea.

Because I'm a season-ticket holder, the Twins offer certain perks. These include holding the giant American flag during the home opener or getting to put a message on the scoreboard.

This past week the team asked if I wanted to participate in the mascot race that happens each home game. Did I want to be one of five people dressed in mascot costumes and race along the warning track from left field to the visitor's dugout?

The offer was too good to pass up.

I thought it would be fun and recruited a friend and former Minnesota Public Radio colleague William Wilcoxon to participate as well.

Did I mention we are both in our mid-50s?

Rules of the race

The mascot race participants were told to meet near Gate 6 at the end of the second inning.

We were all men.

Two Twins employees made sure we signed the liability waiver and took us in an elevator into the bowels of Target Field. In a cramped, cold storage room, we got our first gander at the mascot uniforms, each hung on a tall white pole with the head perched on top.

They outlined the ground rules.

First, the race was not fixed. No one is told who should win. Each of us got to choose who we wanted as our alter-ego mascot.

I picked the Louie the Loon costume because loons are one of my favorite Minnesota icons.

Wilcoxon, my buddy, picked Wanda the Walleye.

Another older guy picked Babe the Blue Ox.

A fit-looking younger guy chose Skeeta the Mosquito.

The mascots and a Twins staff member leave the field.

Louie the Loon, Skeeta the Mosquito, a Minnesota Twins staffer, Babe the Blue Ox, Wanda the Walleye and Bullseye leave the field after the mascot race on April 7, 2018. Lydia Bickal for MPR News

And a teenager ended up as Bullseye the Target dog. The kid said he plays baseball for Burnsville High School; we had our pre-race favorite.

While we put on our costumes, we were told that Target, which sponsors the races, does not allow photographs to be posted online of anyone wearing a mascot without its head on.

To be eligible, you only have to be over 18 years old (unless a parent signs a waiver) and under 6-foot, 5-inches tall.

The Twins' primary caution beforehand:

"The Mascot costumes can be a bit cumbersome and are not air-conditioned! The race is not recommended for those that are prone to claustrophobia."

Suiting up no easy task

Getting suited up in the costume was complicated. I started with an undersuit that kind of looked like white pajamas. Then came the striped stirrup socks that went over my shoes and thin white gloves for my hands.

I stepped into the body portion of the costume, which is connected to the head with a zipper. Zipping the head and attaching the wings to the suit required a little help.

Sidenote: The costumes once featured oversized shoes as well, but too many people tripped over them during the race. So I was left to race in my own shoes.

As we struggled to get everything put together properly, unbeknownst to us (because we couldn't see the game) the Twins had a struggle of their own. They gave up five unanswered runs as we were getting ready to race.

They took us to the loading dock behind the outfield wall. I watched the teenager in the Bullseye suit stretch his legs.

I should have followed his lead.

As the fourth inning neared completion, we were told where to line up on the field and to wait for the stadium announcer to holler: "3-2-1, GO!"

It had been 45 minutes and I was ready to race.

Legs moving, sight impaired

The other mascots avoid Louie the Loon (Jim Bickal) as he falls.

Babe the Blue Ox and Wanda the Walleye (William Wilcoxon) avoid Louie the Loon (Jim Bickal) as he falls to the ground after pulling his hamstring muscle during the mascot race at Target Field on April 7, 2018. Lydia Bickal for MPR News

I heard the announcer loud and clear and started to run.

But I had to look through Louie's mouth. I could see just fine straight ahead but I had zero peripheral vision.

I kept thinking that I hoped I would not run into another mascot trying to pass me.

I kept running as I watched Bullseye and Skeeta widen their lead as we came around the turn and headed down the straightaway.

I tried to speed up to see if I could catch them.

This was my mistake.

My right hamstring tightened.

And as I put weight on, I crumpled to the ground.

"Down goes Louie!," the announcer bellowed.

Luckily I didn't take out Babe and Wanda who were right behind me. As they passed, fans urged me to get up and continue.

But I'm no fool.

I knew I was done. As I limped off the field with my loon tail between my legs, I learned the teen in the Bullseye suit was indeed the winner.

Wilcoxon finished the race in fourth place.

The cold and not my age is crash culprit

The Target Field staff were very nice, suggesting it was the cold and not my advancing years that led to the injury.

- Related: Home opener among coldest ever

They summoned a couple of EMTs who checked me out. It was their first call of the game.

I didn't need their professional opinion, I had once pulled a hamstring playing softball and Saturday was a repeat performance.

The EMTs gave me Advil, ice and words of encouragement.

I watched the rest of the game in the stands, an ice pack on my leg and a beer in my hand thinking my days as a sprinter, costumed or not, are over.

I'll keep my day job over in St. Paul as senior producer for Morning Edition at MPR News.

Birmingham Barons sweep doubleheader from Chattanooga Lookouts

Staff Writer | Times Free Press | April 9, 2018

The Chattanooga Lookouts played 14 innings Sunday and didn't score in the first 12.

That wasn't a recipe for success.

Chattanooga's bats were chilled by Birmingham pitchers as the Barons swept a pair of seven-inning games, 4-0 and 4-2, at AT&T Field. An announced crowd of 2,762 attended the doubleheader, which was the result of Friday night's game being postponed due to heavy rain.

Barons starting pitcher Ian Clarkin was dominant in the opening game, scattering four hits before being replaced by Ryan Burr with one out in the sixth inning. Burr was even better, retiring all five Lookouts he faced.

Randy LeBlanc took the opening-game loss for Chattanooga despite allowing four hits and two runs in five innings.

LeBlanc did struggle out of the gate, however, allowing singles to Tito Polo and Jameson Fisher before walking Matt Rose to load the bases. Polo and Fisher scored to put the Barons up 2-0, and it remained that way until the sixth inning, when Lookouts reliever Sam Clay walked the first three batters he faced and then hit Keon Barnum with a pitch.

In the second game, a Seby Zavala home run to left field and a Ryan Brett single to right that scored Nick Basto put Birmingham up 2-0 in the second inning. The Barons made it 4-0 in the fifth on Fisher's two-run homer to left.

The Lookouts finally got on board in the sixth when Tanner English opened with a triple to center and scored on Sean Miller's infield single. Miller scored on a LaMonte Wade sacrifice.

Chattanooga is off to a 1-3 start and is assured of losing the season-opening series heading into tonight's 7:15 finale against the Barons.