



## Minnesota Twins Daily Clips Friday, November 9, 2018

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### **Rooker named Twins' best power prospect**

**Jonathan Mayo, Jim Callis, Mike Rosenbaum | MLB.com | November 9, 2018**

Baseball has witnessed a proliferation of home run-hitting rookies in recent years.

Brent Rooker, 1B, Twins No. 7

Rooker showed how advanced his bat is by reaching the Florida State League and hitting 18 homers in 62 games during his summer pro debut in 2017. He went straight to Double-A in 2018 and led the Twins with 22 home runs, 13 of which came during a torrid June and July.

### **AL Central interest in Kimbrel?**

**MLB.com | MLB.com | November 9, 2018**

Craig Kimbrel has compiled an impressive resume during his nine seasons in the big leagues, recording a microscopic 1.91 ERA with a 0.92 WHIP, 333 saves and a 14.7 K/9 rate, and he should be a coveted asset on the free-agent market this offseason.

Below, you will find a list of the latest news and rumors surrounding the right-hander.

### **Here come the ... Twins?**

Nov. 8: The Phillies and Mets have both been tied to Kimbrel in the last several days, and the Braves have long been rumored to have interest in a reunion with their former closer. And now, after the General Managers Meetings, MLB.com's Jon Paul Morosi reports that the Twins could also get involved in the bidding for the top reliever on the market under the right conditions.

According to Morosi, the Twins could jump into the mix if the talks revolve around a three-year deal for the 30-year-old closer. Kimbrel is likely eyeing a deal similar to those signed by elite closers in years past, and while Kenley Jansen and Aroldis Chapman are on five-year deals, another elite closer in Wade Davis signed for three years with the Rockies in the most recent comparable deal -- though Kimbrel has had a much more accomplished career than Davis.

The Twins revamped their bullpen last offseason and hoped to contend in 2018, but Matt Belisle is likely to retire and Minnesota traded away Fernando Rodney, Zach Duke and Ryan Pressly at the Trade Deadline. Minnesota has plenty of salary flexibility this offseason and has a pressing need in the bullpen. The Twins could choose to make a huge splash for Kimbrel if they feel like they could seriously contend within the span of Kimbrel's contract.

### **AL Notes: Kirilloff**

**Jeff Todd | MLB Trade Rumors | November 9, 2018**

Rising Twins prospect Alex Kirilloff is now represented by Scott Boras, Dan Hayes of The Athletic reports, as part of a look at the super-agent's commentary on the Minnesota organization. That puts both of the organization's top pre-MLB players (Kirilloff and Royce Lewis) in the Boras stable. A burgeoning book of business with the Twins did not stop Boras from tweaking the club, though if anything it seemed more a playful jab to set up a free-agent or prospect promotional pitch. The Twins had a rough 2018 campaign, to be sure, but have loads of free payroll to work with and some exciting young talent reaching or nearing the majors. Their offseason remains a fascinating one to watch.

## **Will Twins prioritize power hitting in free agency?**

**Phil Miller | Star Tribune | November 9, 2018**

The numbers line up remarkably uniformly. The five highest-scoring teams in the American League in 2018 are also the five teams that made the playoffs.

The Twins had the sixth most.

The six teams that had the highest batting average with runners in scoring position? Five playoff teams, plus the Twins. Slugging percentage? Same six teams.

But there's one column in which the Twins sharply diverge from the October Five: Home runs. Each playoff team launched at least 200 homers, led by New York's record-setting 276. The Twins had 101 fewer than that, finishing 12th in the league with 166.

Which means their offense had to work much harder to keep up with one-swing offenses that rule the game today. The average AL team scored 41.0 percent of its runs on homers in 2018, led by the Yankees' Stanton-and-Judge fueled attack that racked up 50.8 percent of its runs by trotting around the bases. In the postseason, where crushing an occasional mistake is often the only way to counter elite-level pitching, that proportion rose to 41.9 percent.

Minnesota's offense, on the other hand, scored just 35.4 percent of its runs the easy way, a percentage better than only the Rays and Tigers. In a sport where home runs have becoming increasingly important, where batters see launch angle and exit velocity as their keys to success, the Twins' offense became less power-centric. That they finished sixth in scoring despite the power outage might be an under-appreciated accomplishment, even though the Twins scored 77 fewer runs in 2018 than 2017, nearly half a run per game.

All of which partly explains why Miguel Sano, Byron Buxton and perhaps Tyler Austin (pictured) loom so large in the Twins' hopes for 2019. Sano hit 13 home runs in his circus of a 2018 season, or 15 fewer than his All-Star year of 2017. Buxton didn't reach the seats once in his 28-game cameo, after whacking 16 a year earlier. The Twins' 40-homer decline last season can be largely explained right there.

The decline and departure of Brian Dozier hurt, too; After receiving 36 homers from the leadoff spot in 2017, the Twins ranked 13th in 2018 with only 12.

Austin hit nine homers in just 35 games after joining the Twins in August, a pace that could place him among the team's leading sluggers over a full season. And don't be surprised if the front office prioritizes power hitting as they survey the free-agent market and consider trades.