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Astudillo, Grossman show strength in win

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | August 29, 2018

CLEVELAND -- With catchers Jason Castro and Bobby Wilson on the disabled list, Willians Astudillo will get plenty of looks at catcher down the stretch, while Robbie Grossman is expected to remain in the mix in the outfield and at designated hitter with Logan Morrison out for the season after hip surgery.

Both took advantage of their playing opportunities on Wednesday, as Astudillo connected on his first career homer in the third and Grossman delivered a go-ahead two-run single in the seventh to lift the Twins to a 4-3 win over the Indians at Progressive Field. Minnesota and Cleveland are 9-9 against each other this year with the season series on the line on Thursday.

"Not a ton of offense, but we got some big hits," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "Astudillo getting his first homer, and Robbie coming through with the big hit to put us ahead. Nice two-out rally for us. It's not going to save your season to beat the Indians in 10 out of 19, but I wouldn't mind accomplishing that tomorrow."

Astudillo got the Twins on the board with a leadoff home run off Adam Plutko in the third, while Joe Mauer and Eddie Rosario both doubled in the fifth to bring home a run.

"Hitting my first Major League home run felt really good, because it contributed to a win," Astudillo said through a translator. "I was looking for a fastball. It was a first-pitch ball, so I thought fastball again."

But it was Grossman who came through with the game's biggest hit on a two-out single with the bases loaded off Indians reliever Cody Allen. Miguel Sano was thrown out at third on the play, but the damage was done.

"[Allen] was struggling out of the stretch, and when he moved to the windup, he threw a couple good pitches," Grossman said. "The pitch I fouled off before was probably a better pitch than the one I hit. I was just glad it found a hole. Got enough to put barrel on it."

The offense backed rookie right-hander Kohl Stewart, who has allowed exactly three runs in each of his four career starts. He nearly got through five innings for the first time this season, but gave up a two-out RBI double to Edwin Encarnacion that knocked him from the game after 4 2/3 innings.

Stewart labored through a 36-pitch first inning, allowing two runs as Yonder Alonso and Melky Cabrera connected on back-to-back RBI singles. He escaped a bases-loaded jam, getting Yan Gomes to ground out on a hard-hit ball to third. He settled down from there, retiring 12 of 13 before running into trouble in the fifth.

"As the game went on, I felt a lot better," Stewart said. "I felt like I was attacking hitters and getting ahead and better things were happening. Just started trusting myself in that second inning."

The bullpen was strong after Stewart's departure. Trevor May, Taylor Rogers and Trevor Hildenberger combined to throw 4 1/3 scoreless innings on two hits. Rogers threw two scoreless frames, helped by a double-play lineout to end the eighth, and Hildenberger picked up his fifth save.

"Our bullpen did a wonderful job," Molitor said. "Trevor and Rogers had a couple of really good innings, and Hildy took away the drama."

MAUER JOINS ELITE COMPANY

Mauer became the third player to reach 1,000 career runs with the Twins after scoring in the fifth, joining Hall of Famers Kirby Puckett (1,071) and Harmon Killebrew (1,047).

His 422nd career double also moved him past Joe Judge for second on the franchise's all-time doubles list. He trails only Hall of Famer Sam Rice (478).

"It's a little bit of a strange stat," Molitor said. "You've got to get on base a lot, you've got to have people drive you in. Kind of a combination of just being out there enough to accomplish a goal like that, and he's probably not quite the baserunner he was when he was younger. He's always been pretty astute and knowledgeable about decision-making. I always say there's an art to scoring runs. You don't just rely on people behind you. You do your part, and 1,000 runs says a lot about that. He's climbing up a lot of ladders in Twins history, and that's one of them."

SOUND SMART

With two scoreless frames, Rogers extended his streak to 16 straight scoreless appearances over 14 innings, dating back to July 30.

HE SAID IT

"Oh, yeah. I heard him. We're in Cleveland. It is what it is. They pay good money to come to the games. They can do whatever they want. [The double] just made me smile, but that's about it. I was just glad I got on base there." -- Grossman, on getting heckled loudly by a fan in the sixth, only to double an inning before his game-winning single

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

The Twins lost a run in the ninth on a successful challenge by the Indians. Tyler Austin was originally ruled safe on what would've been an infield single to third to bring home a run. But after review, the call was overturned, and Austin was ruled out to end the inning.

UP NEXT

Right-hander Jake Odorizzi (5-8, 4.38 ERA) will start for the Twins in the series finale against the Indians on Thursday at 12:10 p.m. CT, exclusively on Facebook. Shortstop Jorge Polanco could return to the lineup after dealing with tightness in his left hamstring. Right-hander Mike Clevinger (9-7, 3.30) will start for Cleveland.

Twins vs. Indians only on Facebook today

Manny Randhawa | MLB.com | August 30, 2018

MLB's digital-only national broadcasts continue this week with Thursday's Twins-Indians contest at Progressive Field, which will stream live in the United States exclusively on Facebook. The American League Central clash is one of 25 streaming broadcasts scheduled for 2018 as part of MLB's partnership with the social media network.

Fans can catch the 1:10 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 announcer Scott Braun; analysts John McDonald and Glen Perkins; and in-game reporter Jackie Redmond. McDonald had a 16-year MLB career as an infielder from 1999-2014, spending seven seasons with the Indians. Perkins was a three-time All-Star closer for the Twins during a 12-year career, spent entirely with Minnesota.

How to watch on mobile and desktop

Desktop

1. Search for "MLB Live" on Facebook
2. Follow the "MLB Live" show page

Mobile

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.

What to know about the Twins-Indians game:

The Tribe is slated to send Mike Clevinger to the mound. The 27-year-old right-hander has made a career-high 26 starts during his third Major League season, and has been very good, posting a 3.30 ERA and 1.23 WHIP. He has pitched at least six innings in 20 of those 26 outings. Thursday's start will be his third against Minnesota this season. On June 3 at Target Field, he gave up four runs on seven hits over six innings during a 7-5 Indians loss. He fared much better on Aug. 8, when he gave up just one run on five hits over seven innings in a 5-2 Tribe victory.

The Twins will counter with Jake Odorizzi, whom Minnesota acquired from the Rays in a trade last offseason. In 27 starts this season, the 28-year-old right-hander has a 4.38 ERA. He's coming off a strong outing against the A's last Friday, in which he yielded two runs (one earned) on five hits over seven innings. Thursday's start will be his fifth of the season against Cleveland. He's struggled against the Tribe in 2018, posting a 7.85 ERA over 18 1/3 innings.

Twins 'going to listen' to Aug. 31 trade offers **Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | August 29, 2018**

CLEVELAND -- Despite having already traded veterans Eduardo Escobar, Ryan Pressly, Zach Duke, Lance Lynn, Brian Dozier and Fernando Rodney since late July, Twins chief baseball officer Derek Falvey said he'll continue to listen to trade offers up until the Aug. 31 deadline from teams wishing to acquire a player who can be active for the postseason.

The Twins don't have much in the way of trade candidates left, however, as right-hander Ervin Santana is out indefinitely with another setback to his surgically repaired finger and first baseman Joe Mauer has a full no-trade clause. The only impending free agent who could be moved is infielder Logan Forsythe, who was acquired from the Dodgers in the Dozier trade. Forsythe has played well since joining the Twins and cleared waivers earlier this month, meaning he can be traded to any team.

"I do think the reality is, just like July 31 is an active day in terms of deadlines for decisions, I wouldn't be shocked if there's a lot of conversations around baseball over those final 24 hours," Falvey said of Friday's deadline. "I would think there would be a possibility of that. We're going to listen if teams call. I just think right now it's more likely than not you'll have a conversation about somebody, and that's been my history on every Aug. 31, honestly."

Complicating things for the Twins is they don't have much in the way of position-player depth available as potential September callups, so keeping Forsythe down the stretch could make sense. The only healthy position players on the 40-man roster not currently on the 25-man roster are outfielders Byron Buxton, Johnny Field and Zack Granite. Top middle-infield prospect Nick Gordon, the No. 72 overall prospect per MLB Pipeline, has struggled offensively at Triple-A Rochester and isn't expected to be added to the 40-man roster and recalled.

Buxton is hitting .386/.413/.659 over 10 games at Rochester in August, but Falvey and Twins manager Paul Molitor said nothing has been officially decided on Buxton's status. They could decide to let him get fully healthy over the final month, but he's playing so well it could help his confidence for next year if he can carry over his recent success into the Majors in September.

"We're taking the long-term view about our players," Falvey said. "Any player we bring up, we're thinking about what's the benefit to the September experience -- whether it's hitting, pitching, defense or an opportunity that's here in terms of at-bats and playing time. ... Our focus should exclusively be what we think is the best for Byron long term, and that's where it's going to be."

As a result of the roster construction, Molitor said he expects most of the September callups to be pitchers, coming in waves on Saturday, when rosters expand, and then again on Tuesday, a day after the Triple-A season ends.

"We're getting closer to being convinced that the six-man rotation, in some shape or form, will be the way to go," Molitor said. "The fact is that our bullpen, even though we've had a large number out there all year, I would like to have the protection for a couple more arms out there, too."

One September callup that was leaked by Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire is his son, Toby, who will join Minnesota's coaching staff for a short spell down the stretch. Toby Gardenhire guided Class A Cedar Rapids to the postseason in his first year as manager and is one of several Minor League coaches who will be cycled in next month.

"Gardy got a little ahead of that one," Falvey said with a laugh. "I've found that that experience is so beneficial for young coaches that haven't been up here before. It's maybe more beneficial to them than it is for the Major League staff to have an extra body around. So I want to make sure we give that opportunity to a few different guys."

Spring Training schedules set for 2019
Staff Report | MLB.com | August 29, 2018

Major League Baseball unveiled the full schedule for 2019 Spring Training presented by Camping World, with action slated to begin on Feb. 21, when the Mariners and A's will meet at Hohokam Stadium in Mesa, Ariz., for the Cactus League opener.

The Rays and Phillies will christen the Grapefruit League with a matchup at Charlotte Sports Park in Port Charlotte, Fla., on Feb. 22 before all 30 teams officially begin their spring campaigns the following day, Feb. 23.

Along with the traditional sites in Arizona and Florida, Spring Training action will also take place in more unfamiliar settings come March. Split squads from the Rockies and D-backs will travel south of the border to Monterrey, Mexico, for a pair of games on March 9-10 in a precursor to MLB's two additional regular-season series scheduled at the Estadio de Beisbol Monterrey.

At the end of the spring, the Braves will give fans a sneak peek of their new Spring Training facility in North Port, Fla., slated to open in 2020, with a game there on March 24. And while some exhibition games will be played at Major League and Minor League ballparks around the country in the following days, the Red Sox will travel to Arizona to play the Cubs from March 25-26.

The Mariners and A's will officially begin regular-season play with games in Tokyo on March 20-21, while Opening Day 2019 for the rest of MLB is slated for March 28.

Twins
Grapefruit League opener: Feb. 23 vs. TB

Robbie Grossman comes through for the Twins in snug victory over Cleveland
Phil Miller | Star Tribune | August 30, 2018

CLEVELAND - Robbie Grossman heard him. How could he not?

During a quiet moment just before Grossman stepped in for his sixth-inning at-bat, a loud Indians fan bellowed, "Robbie Grossman, you're not a good baseball player!" Thusly motivated, Grossman promptly doubled.

"It made me smile, but that's about it," Grossman said. "I was just glad I got on base there."

But the Twins outfielder was able to have a hearty laugh at his heckler's expense — and the Indians' — an inning later. Batting with the bases loaded and two outs, Grossman belted a two-strike fastball from Cody Allen into right field, driving home the tying and go-ahead runs, and the Twins' bullpen made it stand up for a 4-3 victory in Progressive Field.

The win broke Minnesota's four-game losing streak and tied the season series with Cleveland at nine victories apiece, with the rubber match coming in Thursday afternoon's finale.

"He who laughs last ..." Twins manager Paul Molitor said with a smile.

That the Twins were in such good moods was mildly remarkable, given how the night started for Kohl Stewart. The rookie needed 36 pitches to escape a rough, two-run first inning, finally getting Yan Gomes, the Indians' eighth hitter, to smash a one-hopper at Miguel Sano with the bases loaded. Stewart's night would have ended right there, Molitor said, had Gomes collected Cleveland's fourth hit or third walk of the inning.

Instead, the rookie righthander returned and recorded 11 more outs, eight of them consecutively, before finally being removed after allowing Jose Ramirez's two-out single and Edwin Encarnacion's RBI double in the fifth.

"I just didn't come out and attack," said Stewart, who has allowed exactly three runs in all four of his major league starts. "As the game went on, though, I felt a lot better. I felt like I was attacking hitters and getting ahead and better things were happening. But yeah, that first inning wasn't good."

Didn't matter once the offense got cranked up. Willians Astudillo smacked his first career home run in the third inning, crushing a belt-high fastball more than 400 feet over the high wall in left-center field. Two innings later, Joe Mauer briefly tied the score, coming in from second base on Eddie Rosario's double to deep center field.

The run was the 1,000th of Mauer's career, making him the third Twin ever to reach that milestone; only Kirby Puckett (1,071) and Harmon Killebrew (1,047) ever had more for Minnesota.

“I always say there’s an art to scoring runs. You don’t just rely on people behind you, you do your part,” said Molitor, who scored 1,782 times in his Hall of Fame career. “One thousand runs says a lot about that. He’s climbing up a lot of ladders in Twins history.”

But it was Grossman, playing in order to give Max Kepler a day off, who had the biggest hit. Indians manager Terry Francona chose to use Allen, his struggling closer, in the seventh inning in hopes of breaking a streak of poor pitching; Allen had allowed runs in three of his previous four appearances. But the move backfired when, after retiring Astudillo and Mauer to open the inning, Allen lost control of the strike zone. He walked Logan Forsythe on five pitches, gave up a single to Rosario and walked Sano on four pitches, bring up Grossman with the bases loaded.

The outfielder got behind 1-2, then turned on a high, inside fastball and drove it between first and second base, scoring two runs despite Sano being thrown out trying to advance to third base.

It also humbled a heckler. “I heard him. We’re in Cleveland,” Grossman said with a shrug. “They pay good money to come to the games, they can do whatever they want.”

Twins consider whether to play or rest Byron Buxton

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | August 30, 2018

CLEVELAND – After fighting off migraines, breaking a toe and injuring his wrist, would Byron Buxton be better off starting his offseason next week and putting 2018 behind him? That’s a calculation the Twins are considering, with roster expansion looming this weekend.

Buxton, who batted .156 in 28 injury-plagued games with the Twins but is 18-for-48 (.375) with nine extra-base hits since being activated by Class AAA Rochester in mid-August, is one of three position players in Rochester who is on the Twins’ 40-man roster — fellow outfielders Zack Granite and Johnny Field are the others — a fact that normally might make him an obvious choice for promotion in September. But Derek Falvey, the Twins’ chief baseball officer, said Wednesday that no decision has yet been made about the Gold Glove center fielder.

“There’s been a combination of things that have been challenging,” Falvey said. “Our focus should exclusively be on what we think is the best for Byron long-term, and that’s where it’s going to be.”

Spending September in the majors would also give Buxton more than three years of major-league service time, which would keep him on track, under current rules, to be a free agent after the 2021 season, rather than 2022. But Falvey insisted payroll considerations are playing no part in the Twins’ deliberations.

“That’s not something we’re factoring in. We want to talk through all the reasons, again, just rooted back in what we think is the best for Byron long-term,” Falvey said. “We’re going to take that approach with this decision. No different.”

Keeping rookies Jake Cave and Tyler Austin in the lineup as much as possible, in order to fully evaluate them, is a consideration as well.

Manager Paul Molitor said the Twins plan to call up a pitcher or two on Saturday, and complete their roster expansion Tuesday, after the International League season ends Monday. The Twins are leaning toward using a six-man rotation in September, and he would like to add a couple more arms to the bullpen.

Molitor has kept in touch with Buxton, both by phone and text message, and said he’s enjoying Buxton’s late-season surge. “He’s been on a good run. Multi-hit games, and the extra-base hits,” the manager said. “He’s still pulling the ball probably at a very high rate. Seems we saw that a lot when he was up here, too. But he’s doing OK. It’s fun to watch him get hits.”

Trades possible

Even after making six trades in a 10-day span last month, Falvey remains attentive to the possibility of more as Friday’s postseason-roster deadline approaches.

“We’re going to listen if teams call,” Falvey said. “Right now, it’s more likely than not that you’ll have a conversation about somebody. That’s been my history on every Aug. 31, honestly.”

Gardenhire — the other one — to join team

In addition to players, major league teams are allowed to add an additional coach during September, and Falvey said the Twins intend to rotate that responsibility among several coaches in their system. The order hasn’t been finalized, but Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire revealed one to Detroit reporters: Class A Cedar Rapids manager Toby Gardenhire will be on Molitor’s staff when the Twins visit Detroit on Sept. 17-19, assuming the Kernels’ Midwest League playoff run is over by then.

“That’s the best and worst part, because now there’s going to be a lot of crap flying,” the elder Gardenhire said, according to the Detroit News. His wife, Carol, “might be rooting for them, and that’s really going to bother me. This is really cool. He’s worked a long time for this.”

One more day off

A pregame thunderstorm kept Jorge Polanco from testing his sore left hamstring on the field, so Molitor chose to play it safe and give the shortstop another day off. “[Tuesday] he still had a little more specific tightness in that left hamstring,” Molitor said of the minor injury, which forced Polanco out of Sunday’s game with the A’s. “It seems to me after a couple of days he still has a little soreness in that area, so there was probably a little something that happened in there.”

Twins spring training schedule set; camp opens Feb. 13

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | August 29, 2018

CLEVELAND – Twins pitchers and catchers will report to 2019 spring training in Fort Myers, Fla., on Wednesday, Feb. 13.

The first full-squad workout at the CenturyLink Sports Complex is Monday, Feb. 18, and spring games begin Saturday, Feb. 23.

The Twins will play 18 home games at Hammond Stadium, starting with a night game against Tampa Bay on Feb. 23. They will have 15 road games.

Spring training concludes March 26 with a game against the Rockies in Fort Myers.

The regular season opens March 28 at Target Field against Cleveland.

TWINS SPRING SCHEDULE

(away game times TBA):

Feb. 23 vs. Tampa Bay, 6:05 p.m.

Feb. 23 (split squad) Baltimore, at Sarasota

Feb. 24 Boston, Fort Myers (JetBlue Park)

Feb. 25 vs. Baltimore, 1:05 p.m.

Feb. 26 vs. Pittsburgh, 1:05 p.m.

Feb. 27 Philadelphia, at Clearwater

Feb. 28 Tampa Bay, at Port Charlotte

March 1 vs. Boston, 1:05 p.m.

March 2 Washington, at West Palm Beach

March 3 vs. Philadelphia, 1:05 p.m.

March 3 (split squad) Boston, Fort Myers (JetBlue Park)

March 4 vs. Baltimore, 1:05 p.m.

March 5 vs. Tampa Bay, 1:05 p.m.

March 6 off

March 7 Boston, Fort Myers (JetBlue Park)

March 8 vs. Tampa Bay, 1:05 p.m.

March 9 Pittsburgh, at Bradenton
March 10 vs. Toronto, 1:05 p.m.
March 11 vs. Detroit, 1:05 p.m.
March 12 Pittsburgh, at Bradenton
March 13 Boston, Fort Myers (JetBlue Park)
March 14 vs. Washington, 1:05 p.m.
March 14 (split squad) Baltimore, at Sarasota
March 15 vs. Baltimore, 1:05 p.m.
March 16 Tampa Bay, at Port Charlotte
March 17 Toronto, at Dunedin
March 18 vs. Boston, 1:05 p.m.
March 19 Baltimore, at Sarasota
March 20 vs. Pittsburgh, 1:05 p.m.
March 21 off
March 22 vs. Boston, 6:05 p.m.
March 23 Baltimore, at Sarasota
March 24 vs. N.Y. Yankees, 1:05 p.m.
March 25 vs. Class AAA Rochester, 1:05 p.m.
March 26 vs. Colorado, 1:05 p.m.

Wednesday's Twins-Indians game recap
Phil Miller | Star Tribune | August 29, 2018

TWIN RECAP

Impact player

Taylor Rogers, Twins

Faced the heart of the Cleveland lineup and had little problem, allowing only one baserunner in his first two-inning stint since July.

BY THE NUMBERS

3 Runs allowed by Kohl Stewart, the same number he's given up in each of his four career starts

405 Estimated distance, in feet, of Willains Astudillo's first career home run

109 Runs scored by Francisco Lindor this season, most by any major leaguer

UP NEXT

The Twins, who will send Jake Odorizzi to the mound, can win the season series over Cleveland with a victory.

Postgame: He only pointed at umpire, but for Rogers, it was an outburst
Phil Miller | Star Tribune | August 29, 2018

CLEVELAND — Taylor Rogers was angry, which wasn't surprising. But this was: He let it show.

Rogers, uniformly stoic on the field, turned toward home plate and pointed at umpire Ed Hickox after Melky Cabrera's one-out single. It was a small gesture, but coming from Rogers, it was telling.

"He missed a pitch," Rogers said of Hickox, who called a 1-2 fastball, which replays showed crossed the plate knee-high, a ball, extending the at-bat. Rogers turned around and said he didn't notice that the umpire took a couple of steps toward him. But there was no confrontation, and the inning ended one pitch later, when Jason Kipnis lined into a double play.

"Trying to preserve a one-run ballgame, I'm not going to apologize for emotions," Rogers said. "I probably should have directed them differently."

Actually, manager Paul Molitor sounded delighted to see Rogers get upset.

"We see it, like, once a year," Molitor said with a laugh. "He's got a lot of fire in his belly, as they say. He doesn't always show it. There are certain times when it kind of comes out."

And he had good reason this time, Molitor added. "We thought we had Cabrera struck out, and then he got the hit," Molitor said.

Mostly, the manager was appreciative of Rogers' two-inning outing. The third-year lefthander has pitched 14 consecutive scoreless innings, a streak that now dates back more than a month, to July 27. And he did it by facing the second through seventh hitters in Cleveland's powerful batting order.

"To get us six outs, [against] that lineup, at that stage of the game, that's a really good outing," Molitor said.

XXX

Kohl Stewart knows he was the problem in the first inning, and he fixed it. He gave up a run in the fifth inning, too, that felt more like baseball randomness.

After somehow surviving an eight-batter, two-run, 36-pitch first inning, Stewart was nearly perfect, retiring 12 of 13 batters until there were two outs in the fifth. But MVP candidate Jose Ramirez singled and Edwin Encarnacion doubled him home, and Stewart's fourth career start ended abruptly.

"I thought the pitch to Ramirez was really good. It was an inside heater, and it jammed him and he snuck it down the line," Stewart explained. "The pitch I made to Encarnacion was a cutter away. It looked like it cut off the plate and he didn't hit the ball well. But it just carried, and hit the wall. It's frustrating, but I'm happy with the way those pitches were executed. You live and you learn."

What he learned on Wednesday was, be ready from the first pitch.

"At first, I wasn't being aggressive" in the first inning, he said. "Once you get pinned against the wall, you have to trust yourself. 'Let's go!' I just started trusting myself. The sinker and the movement came back a little bit, and the ball was diving down."

Robbie Grossman silences heckler as Twins topple Indians
Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | August 29, 2018

CLEVELAND — If Wednesday night's mostly meaningless game between the Twins and Cleveland Indians taught us anything, it might be this: Don't heckle Robbie Grossman.

Grossman's two-run, two-out single in the seventh inning off Cleveland Indians reliever Cody Allen sent the Twins to a 4-3 win at Progressive Field. It also gave Grossman the last word on a leather-lunged gentleman seated about 30 rows up behind home plate.

"ROBBIE GROSSMAN!" the fan barked as the switch-hitter led off the sixth. "You're not a very good baseball player!!!"

Grossman, having a rough night in right field and on the bases to that point, responded with a ringing double into the gap.

“Oh, yeah, I heard him,” Grossman said. “He kept saying that I suck — while I was batting. It made me laugh.”

The next inning, after the Twins loaded the bases on Eddie Rosario’s single and a pair of walks, Grossman pulled a 1-2 fastball through the hole. It was just his second run-scoring hit since landing on the disabled list Aug. 5 with a strained hamstring.

Did that give Grossman, released by the Indians out of Triple-A in May 2016, any added satisfaction after getting heckled so brutally?

“We’re in Cleveland,” he said. “It is what it is. They pay good money to come to the games. They can do whatever they want. It just made me smile, but that’s about it.”

Reliever Taylor Rogers worked two innings to push his month-long scoreless streak to 14 innings, and Trevor Hildenberger worked a perfect ninth for his fifth save in six tries. The Twins and Indians have split the first 18 games of their season series heading into Thursday afternoon’s finale.

Joe Mauer doubled and scored in the fifth, giving him 1,000 career runs after an eight-day wait. Only Kirby Puckett (1,071) and Harmon Killebrew (1,047) scored more runs in a Twins uniform than Mauer.

Mauer’s 422nd career double moved him past Joe Judge for second in combined Twins/Washington Senators history. With three more extra-base hits, Mauer will tie Tony Oliva (597) for fourth on the Twins’ list.

For the fourth time in as many career starts, rookie right-hander Kohl Stewart failed to complete five innings. After recording two quick outs to start the fifth, Stewart gave up a shift-beating single to Jose Ramirez followed by Edwin Encarnacion’s tiebreaking double off the wall in right.

Already at 94 pitches after working out of jams in the first and the fourth, Stewart was left to watch from the dugout after a mostly encouraging outing.

His earned-run average down slightly to 6.61, Stewart worked around a one-out double to Jason Kipnis in the fourth while retiring 12 of 13 batters. Stewart left the bases loaded in a two-run first, getting Yan Gomes on a screamer to third.

It was a two-out rally in the first as well, with Yonder Alonso and Melky Cabrera supplying the run-scoring hits. Reliever Matt Magill was throwing in the bullpen as Stewart, likely down to his last batter, escaped a 36-pitch test.

“It was a nice recovery,” Twins manager Paul Molitor said. “He could have fallen apart, but he hung in there.”

This was the third time in four starts that Stewart has been knocked out in the fifth. He managed just two swinging strikes: a first-pitch changeup to Alonso and a 93-mph fastball to Gomes for a nine-pitch strikeout in the fourth.

Rookie catcher Willians Astudillo homered to left in the third off Adam Plutko for his first career big-league homer. This was Stewart’s second time working with Willians Astudillo, including Aug. 4 at Triple-A Pawtucket.

Byron Buxton doesn’t sound like a lock for September call-up

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | August 29, 2018

CLEVELAND — Just because Byron Buxton is hitting .386 over his past 10 games for Triple-A Rochester, Twins fans shouldn’t automatically assume the star-crossed center fielder will headline this year’s September call-ups once rosters expand Saturday.

No decision had been made as of Wednesday on how to proceed with Buxton, who had a 1.072 combined on-base/slugging percentage in 44 at-bats since returning from his latest physical malady, a strained left wrist.

“He’s been on a good run,” Twins manager Paul Molitor said. “He’s putting it in play. It’s fun to watch him get hits. He’s still pulling the ball probably at a very high rate.”

Sending Buxton, 24, home at season’s end would give him extra time to heal up from a season that saw him miss time with migraines, a broken big toe and the wrist injury. His OBP was just .183 in 94 big-league plate appearances while attempting to play through pain and mechanical overhauls to his swing.

Unless Buxton accrues another two weeks of big-league service time this year, the Twins would delay his first crack at free agency by one full season. While the chance to control Buxton in his age-28 season (2022) seems far more valuable than a few meaningless September at-bats this season, chief baseball office Derek Falvey batted away a suggestion that could drive the decision.

“That’s not something we’re factoring in,” Falvey said. “Honestly, the way we’ve approached it is: ‘What do we think is the best thing by all the players and ultimately how we build our team?’ We’re going to take that approach with this decision. No different.”

Molitor has called or texted Buxton several times since he returned to Rochester for a fourth straight season.

“I think he’s OK, Molitor said. “It’s been a trying year for him overall. Hopefully it makes you better on the other side, right?”

With fellow outfielders Zack Granite and Johnny Field the only other position players currently on the 40-man roster who aren’t in the majors or on the disabled list, the Twins’ call-up list figures to be pitcher-heavy. Zack Littell, Fernando Romero, Lewis Thorpe or trade acquisition Chase De Jong could be called up to join a six-man September rotation, while relief options on the 40-man include John Curtiss, Tyler Duffey and the rehabbing Matt Belisle.

Triple-A relievers who could be added to the 40-man roster include Jake Reed, Nick Anderson, Ryan Eades and lefty Andrew Vasquez.

POLANCO STILL OUT

Shortstop Jorge Polanco missed a second straight start with what is now being described as left hamstring tightness.

Rainy conditions at Progressive Field on Wednesday kept Polanco from going through a pregame on-field test, so Molitor elected to back him off another day. With a day game scheduled Thursday, it’s possible Polanco won’t start again until the weekend series at Texas.

“Just being cautious given where we’re at,” Molitor said.

Polanco, who took swings in the indoor cage, said his leg was showing improvement. He originally left during Sunday’s game at home with what was announced as general cramping in both legs.

BRIEFLY

Arizona Fall League rosters are due to be announced Thursday. Class A Fort Myers outfielder Alex Kirilloff, who leads in hits (172), runs batted in (98) and extra-base hits (68), seems a good bet to headline this year’s Twins class along with Double-A outfielder Brent Rooker.

According to Detroit Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire, Class A Cedar Rapids manager Toby Gardenhire will be among Twins minor-league staffers to receive a September call-up. The Midwest League playoff schedule could affect the timing, but the Twins have six games left with the Tigers over the season’s final two weeks.

Reliever Matt Belisle (knee inflammation) threw live batting practice (25-30 pitches) for the second time on Tuesday. Another session is scheduled for Friday with a September activation likely once he’s fully healthy.

Catcher Bobby Wilson (sprained right ankle) is making good progress in his rehab and is hopeful of being activated from the DL early next week.

Grossman’s clutch RBI single lifts Twins over Cleveland **Associated Press | Fox Sports North | August 30, 2018**

CLEVELAND — Cody Allen only knows one way out of his pitching funk.

“You gotta kinda keep grinding, grinding, grinding,” he said.

Fortunately for the Indians, there’s still time for Allen to grind before October arrives.

Cleveland’s struggling closer gave up a two-out, two-run single to Robbie Grossman in the seventh inning as the Minnesota Twins rallied for a 4-3 over the Indians on Wednesday night.

Down 3-2, the Twins came back against Allen (4-6), the Indians’ career saves leader who has not been himself of late. In his last five appearances, Allen has allowed six runs in four innings. Last Friday, he blew a save and the game by giving up consecutive homers in the ninth inning at Kansas City.

His confidence is shaken.

“I’m sure it’s not at an all-time high,” Indians manager Terry Francona said. “That’s part of the game. He’s going through a tough time. He’ll

work and for us to get to where we want to go we need him real bad, so we'll work with him."

Minnesota's Joe Mauer became the third player in club history to score 1,000 career runs. Mauer doubled and scored on Eddie Rosario's double in the fifth to join Hall of Famers Kirby Puckett (1,071) and Harmon Killebrew (1,047).

Twins rookie Willians Astudillo hit his first career homer in the third.

As Allen looks to find his command, Francona is looking for other places to use him than in the ninth. Allen came in earlier than usual to protect a one-run lead in the seventh and got two quick outs before walking Logan Forsythe.

Eddie Rosario singled and Allen gave up a four-pitch walk to Miguel Sano, drawing boos from Indians fans before Grossman ripped his two-run single through the right side.

"Didn't make pitches," Allen said. "Even the first two guys, quality pitches weren't great. It's just the name of the game, though. The odds are in my favor. Didn't make any good pitches that whole inning. Was able to get two quick outs and I just couldn't get that third out.

"We've seen this year, myself and our bullpen at times as a whole, that third out can be kind of elusive. And for me personally, that's just how it is right now."

Trevor May (3-0) picked up the win and Trevor Hildenberger worked a 1-2-3 ninth for his fifth save as the Twins improved to 9-9 against the AL Central leaders.

With a win Thursday, Minnesota can take the season series from Cleveland — a consolation prize against a team the Twins have chased all season.

"It's not going to save your season by beating the Indians 10 of 19," manager Paul Molitor said. "But I wouldn't mind accomplishing that."

Allen's latest outing wasn't the only issue with Cleveland's bullpen. Before the game, the team placed left-hander Andrew Miller on the disabled list with shoulder soreness. It's the third stint on the DL this season for Miller, who has been limited to just 27 games.

Miller compared his soreness to what he experiences in spring training.

"Minor setback," Miller said. "It's frustrating. It's been a frustrating stretch for quite a while for me, but I think it's the right thing to do. It's going to make a big difference and it'll help me."

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor and third baseman Jose Ramirez both have reached at least 20 homers and 20 steals, becoming the first pair of Cleveland players to do it since Bobby Bonds and Toby Harrah in 1979.

RUN, JOE, RUN

Molitor praised Mauer for reaching his latest milestone.

"Pretty good company there," Molitor said. "You've got to get on base a lot. He's probably not quite the base runner he was when he was younger. He's always been pretty astute about decision making. I've always said there's an art to scoring runs. He's climbing up a lot of ladders in Twins history."

FAMILY AFFAIR

Toby Gardenhire, who manages the Twins' Class A team at Cedar Rapids, will be added to the big league coaching staff when Minnesota plays at Detroit next month. Gardenhire's father, Ron, is Detroit's manager. He also managed the Twins from 2002-14.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Twins: SS Jorge Polanco (strained left hamstring) was out of the lineup for the second straight day. He took swings in the indoor cages, but couldn't work out on the field before the game because of rain.

Indians: OF Rajai Davis (non-baseball medical condition) served as designated hitter and Neil Ramirez (back spasms) pitched at Double-Akron. Davis went 0 for 3 with a strikeout and Ramirez worked one scoreless inning.

UP NEXT

Mike Clevinger will face the Twins for the third time this season, facing right-hander Jake Odorizzi, who has already pitched against Cleveland four times in 2018.

Minnesota Twins release 2019 spring training schedule
Staff Report | FOX 4 | August 29, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- The Minnesota Twins announced Wednesday their home schedule for their 2019 Spring Training campaign, the club's 29th at the CenturyLink Sports Complex in Fort Myers.

Twins pitchers and catchers are scheduled to begin their workouts on Wednesday, February 13. The first full-squad workout is scheduled to take place on Monday, February 18 in conjunction with the club's annual Spring Training Open House for fans at the CenturyLink Sports Complex.

The Twins 2019 spring schedule features 33 games (18 home, 15 road) starting with Opening Night at the CenturyLink Sports Complex against the Tampa Bay Rays, February 23 at 6:05 p.m.

TWINS HOME SPRING TRAINING GAMES:

Saturday, February 23, Tampa Bay Rays

Monday, February 25, Baltimore Orioles

Tuesday, February 26, Pittsburgh Pirates

Friday, March 1, Boston Red Sox

Sunday, March 3, Philadelphia Phillies

Monday, March 4, Baltimore Orioles

Tuesday, March 5, Tampa Bay Rays

Friday, March 8, Tampa Bay Rays

Sunday, March 10, Toronto Blue Jays

Monday, March 11, Detroit Tigers

Thursday, March 14, Washington Nationals

Friday, March 15, Baltimore Orioles

Monday, March 18, Boston Red Sox

Wednesday, March 20, Pittsburgh Pirates

Friday, March 22, Boston Red Sox

Sunday, March 24, New York Yankees

Monday, March 25, Rochester

Tuesday, March 26, Colorado Rockies

Single-game tickets for the 2019 Spring Training campaign go on sale December 4. Tickets can be purchased online at www.twinsbaseball.com or by calling 800-33-TWINS (800-338-9467) or 612-33-TWINS (612-338-9467). The Hammond Stadium Box Office at CenturyLink Sports Complex will open on Saturday, January 5.

Reunited with an old friend, Tyler Austin is off to a strong start with Twins
Dan Hayes | The Athletic | August 29, 2018

When he heard Tyler Austin was part of the return for Lance Lynn, James Rowson admits he got a little excited.

The Twins hitting coach looked forward to being reunited with a player he'd known from the start. Given how Austin has performed since his recall from Triple-A Rochester, it's not difficult to understand Rowson's eagerness.

Austin, who was acquired with minor-league pitcher Luis Rijo in the July 30 trade for Lynn, is hitting .304/.340/.717 with six home runs and nine RBIs in 50 plate appearances since he joined the Twins. While Austin's early performance will be difficult to maintain, Rowson has believed in the first baseman's swing since the two first met in the Florida Gulf Coast League in 2010.

"You remember that swing," Rowson said. "His swing, he's got incredible right, opposite-field power. It's something from Day 1 when he showed up at Yankee camp that he had. He's got a swing that works really well, middle, middle away. He can drive it the other way as good as anybody. Honestly, it's been pretty cool to watch his swing transform over the years ... he can handle those balls middle, middle-in now too and drive those out. Experience has got him to do that. But he's always had a really good, compact swing. He's incredibly strong and he's able to power baseballs out of the ballpark."

Once the No. 75 prospect in baseball circa 2013, according to MLB Pipeline.com, Austin has displayed that type of power whenever he has been in the majors. He's homered once every 15.1 plate appearances in parts of three seasons.

But the Yankees have always had strong competition for playing time. First, they had Mark Teixeira at the end of a costly contract. They also had another young first baseman, albeit a left-hander with power in a park tailored for lefty hitters, in Greg Bird.

In order to acquire Lynn, the Yankees were willing to part with Austin. Ironically, Austin's Triple-A Scranton was playing at Rochester at the time. All Austin had to do was switch clubhouses after the completion of a suspended game.

"I packed my stuff and walked over across the locker room," Austin said. "Played the next three games with the team I'd just ridden a bus up there with. It was pretty fun."

Austin's Twins tenure has been much more enjoyable since his promotion to the majors on Aug. 10. With Logan Morrison's hip surgery sidelining him for the rest of the season, the Twins had plate appearances to give and an extensive opportunity for Austin. He walked in his first plate appearance and homered in his third in his Aug. 11 Twins debut at Detroit and hasn't slowed down.

"He's got really good extension through contact," manager Paul Molitor said. "It's just one of those things where as he gets better and more at-bats at this level. There's a little bit of (Miguel Sanó) there on the swing-and-miss and recognition. He gets behind and sometimes they make pitches, it's going to be tough. But the guy on the mound knows that mistakes have a chance to go a long way, and those guys, when they can provide, whether it's middle or bottom of the lineup, it just makes you dangerous throughout."

"We want to get a pretty good look here, and we'll get him in there as much as we can ... but he's showing some life, he's covering some pitches the first couple of games we saw him swinging through or hitting somewhat meekly. He's staying on the ball better."

Austin struck out three times in four trips in Tuesday's loss at Cleveland, giving him 15 strikeouts in 50 trips to the plate so far with the Twins. Austin's current 30-percent strikeout rate would represent a solid reduction from his previous career rate of 39.5 percent.

Rowson said the Twins haven't made any serious changes with Austin regarding his approach. He thinks the slugger's early success is more about taking advantage of his situation.

"I've still watched him over the years and seen what he's done when he had an opportunity," Rowson said. "He's performed well. He's shown he can swing the bat at the major-league level. It was just for him to find the right spot where he can get the opportunity to go out there and do it every day. He's making the best of that opportunity right now and opening up some eyes and what he can do at this level."

Rowson and Austin haven't had to build rapport because that foundation was poured eight years ago in Tampa, Fla. Mostly, Rowson said the two have discussed pitch recognition.

"The transition was seamless just because you spend some time with a lot of new guys trying to build relationships," Rowson said. "His routine has been short, quick and we're really not overdoing anything. We're keeping it really simple and that works for him."

Austin appreciates having the familiarity of an old friend around. Then an 18-year-old prospect, Austin, who was taken by the Yankees in the 13th round of the 2010 draft, spent much of his first summer around Rowson. Austin is aware of how important it is for him to swing at good pitches.

He's increased his swings at pitches in the strike zone by five percent over his career rate to 77.1 percent this month.

"He was the first hitting coordinator I had with the Yankees, so to have a guy like him in your corner is big," Austin said.

"The big thing is what we talked about earlier, trying to get good pitches and not miss them, and stay in the strike zone. When I can stay in the strike zone and not expand, I'm pretty good for the most part. I have to continue working on that and getting better every day and working my approach. ...

"I'm just looking to compete and have good at-bats every single day, and hopefully good things will happen."