



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
Tuesday July 10, 2018

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White Sox claim LaMarre off waivers from Twins

Chad Thornburg | MLB.com | July 9, 2018

The White Sox claimed outfielder Ryan LaMarre off waivers from the Minnesota Twins on Monday, the club announced. Chicago's 40-man roster is now at 39 players.

LaMarre, 29, hit .263 with five doubles and eight RBIs in 43 games with Minnesota this season before he was designated for assignment on July 2. He played in 13 games with Triple-A Rochester, batting .313 (15-for-48).

The White Sox will be LaMarre's sixth team in four years since he broke into the big leagues with Cincinnati in 2015. A second-round pick of the Reds out of the University of Michigan in the 2010 Draft, LaMarre also appeared in a handful of games for the Red Sox ('16) and A's ('17). He began the 2016 season with the Angels organization, but he didn't reach Majors before he was dealt to Oakland in late April.

LaMarre is a .206/.264/.243 career hitter through 72 games in the big leagues.

All-Star Berrios superb as Twins win 5th straight

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | July 10, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- Jose Berrios showed why he was named an All-Star for the first time in his career, throwing seven strong innings, while Eddie Rosario and Eduardo Escobar showed why they're also deserving of All-Star consideration, helping spark a seventh-inning comeback to lift the Twins to a 3-1 win over the Royals in the series opener Monday night at Target Field. It stretched Minnesota's win streak to five games while extending Kansas City's losing streak to 10 games.

Berrios, named the club's lone All-Star representative on Sunday, scattered six hits and a run with eight strikeouts to improve to 9-7 with a 3.41 ERA on the season. It looked like he was headed for a tough-luck loss before the Twins' offense woke up in the seventh against Kansas City's bullpen after lefty Danny Duffy threw six scoreless frames, with nine strikeouts.

"We stranded guys, but the pitch count got up there where after six pretty good innings, we got him out of the game, which was good for us," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "We've gotta keep pushing. We talked about it when we got home to reset. Try to take advantage of the opportunity that the homestand presented. We're not quite halfway there yet, but we've just gotta keep trying to find ways to win. Starting pitching certainly helps."

Catcher Bobby Wilson started the rally with a leadoff double to left off sidearming lefty reliever Tim Hill before Joe Mauer singled to put runners at the corners with nobody out. Rosario, one of five players vying for the final spot on the AL All-Star roster as part of the Camping World MLB Final Vote, tied the game with an RBI groundout on the ninth pitch of his at-bat after falling behind 0-2 in the count to score pinch-runner Jake Cave.

"I was not comfortable," Rosario said. "[Hill] has good stuff. Difficult for me. I wanted to try to put it in play, and I was fighting. I think I did a good job with the ground ball, and Cave got a good jump to home plate."

That set the stage for Escobar's go-ahead RBI single into center off right-hander Kevin McCarthy. Escobar was not a Final Vote candidate, but he leads the Majors with 35 doubles and could be a late replacement to the roster, given his versatility.

"Fifty-plus extra-base hits. That's what jumps out as well as where he's at in the doubles category," Molitor said. "Tough matchup for him with Duffy, then elevated fastballs from the right side [from McCarthy] for Esco is not his favorite thing. But he battled and got a couple hits."

Berrios didn't have his best stuff, but worked his way out of several jams, including one in the third inning after serving up back-to-back doubles to Alex Gordon and Alcides Escobar to bring home the game's first run. Berrios escaped further trouble that inning and also got out of a jam in the fourth with two runners in scoring position and nobody out without allowing a run.

"I felt great today out there," said Berrios, who registered 15 swinging strikes. "My last two outings, I felt a little low on energy, a little tired. But today I felt better, and the game plan worked for us."

After hitting Mike Moustakas and issuing a double to Salvador Perez in the fourth, Berrios struck out Lucas Duda looking -- which prompted Royals manager Ned Yost to get ejected by home-plate umpire Will Little for arguing -- before getting helped by a nice play by Escobar at third base on a hard-hit grounder from Rosell Herrera. Gordon grounded out to first to end the frame.

"The big inning for him was after the hit batsman and then Perez's first-pitch ambush for the double there," Molitor said. "To get a strikeout, Escobar making a nice play, then getting off the field. Keeping it at one was really important to where the game was headed."

Mauer added an insurance run with an RBI single in the eighth, while relievers Trevor Hildenberger and closer Fernando Rodney each threw a scoreless inning to preserve the lead.

SOUND SMART

Rodney reached the 20-save plateau for the seventh time in his career and for the sixth time over the last seven seasons. He's just the sixth closer to reach 20 saves in a season after turning 41 years old, joining LaTroy Hawkins, Mariano Rivera, Trevor Hoffman, Dennis Eckersley and Hoyt Wilhelm.

HE SAID IT

"I think he should be fine. If something happens between now and the end of his next start, if we have any concerns, we would alert somebody. But I think there's a good chance if he gets called on, he will be available." -- Molitor, on whether Berrios will be available to pitch in the All-Star Game on July 17 with his final start of the first half set to come on Saturday

UP NEXT

Right-hander Aaron Slegers (1-0, 2.38 ERA) is set to make his second start of the year when the Twins host the Royals for Game 2 of the three-game series on Tuesday at 7:10 p.m. CT. Slegers is coming off a strong outing against the Orioles, allowing one run on three hits over six innings to earn his first career win. The Royals are expected to start veteran righty Ian Kennedy.

Twins going all out to help Rosario win Final Vote
Jarrid Denney | MLB.com | July 9, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- Before Monday's game, Twins players and coaches ditched the normal dry-fit shirts and warmup layers for a look that was more -- or less -- casual.

The squad was sporting tuxedo T-shirts with "Vote Rosie" printed on the back and have launched a full campaign in order to get Twins outfielder Eddie Rosario into the 2018 All-Star Game presented by Mastercard at Nationals Park. Rosario is one of five players vying for the final spot on the American League roster as part of the Camping World MLB Final Vote.

"I feel good right now when I see everybody trying to help me," Rosario said. "I feel happy that everybody is trying to say, 'Hey, you should be going to the All-Star Game. You're doing a good job right now.' I'm working hard for them. Now it's out of my hands. It's the fans' decision."

The Twins' public relations staff hatched the idea for the shirts and are unleashing them in tandem with the Twitter campaign #AcceptThisRosie -- a play on words from the popular reality show "The Bachelor."

Rosario has been a crucial part of the Twins' offense this season. With many of their everyday players slowed by injuries, Rosario has stepped up and become one of the more dangerous bats in the Minnesota lineup. He leads the club with a .301 batting average and has 18 homers and 53 RBIs while playing above-average defense in left field. According to Baseball-Reference, he has 0.6 defensive WAR, a marked improvement over last season (minus-1.6).

"I look at everything he's accomplished in the first half of this year," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "He's amongst the league leaders in several categories, he leads the Twins in almost every offensive category. It doesn't even include what an exciting player he is, what he can do on the bases, what he can do on defense. For me to imagine that there are x amount of players on that All-Star team that are better is almost unfathomable."

Rosario broke out during the second half of last season while helping the Twins make a late playoff push. This season, Molitor believes the dynamic 26-year-old has been able to play with more discipline while still bringing that same energy to the ballpark each night.

"He's been a lot better than even last year," Molitor said. "It was a process, but not atypical for a lot of guys who learn how to apply themselves day in and day out, not taking days off, understanding how your teammates depend on you and being one of those guys who can be depended upon."

"Little comments that he makes to me on a daily basis give me an indication that his head is in the game, about the situation, about, 'Would this be a good time to bunt?' The other day he was DHing and asked, 'You want me to start thinking about going and playing defense the last couple innings?' He's just seeing the bigger picture so much better."

Kyle Gibson

✓

@kgib44

It's pretty simple really. The guy deserves to be in the game, and hopefully with everyone's help we can make it happen.....so here's the link, and now its time to go vote 🗳️ -ie! #VoteRosario <https://www.mlb.com/twins/fans/all-star-ballot-offers> ...

Fans can cast votes for the final player on each league's roster -- on computers, tablets and smartphones -- exclusively online as part of the 2018 Camping World MLB Final Vote, as well as via the MLB At Bat and MLB Ballpark mobile apps, until Wednesday at 3 p.m. CT.

Then on Tuesday, July 17, while watching the 2018 All-Star Game presented by Mastercard live on FOX, fans can submit their choices for the Ted Williams Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet with the 2018 All-Star Game MLB.com 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, visit AllStarGame.com and follow @MLB and @AllStarGame on social media.

Minnesota re-signs Jorge

The Twins announced Monday that they have re-signed 24-year-old right-hander Felix Jorge. Jorge had been designated for assignment by the club on June 29.

When a player's contract is designated for assignment -- often abbreviated "DFA" -- that player is immediately removed from his club's 40-man roster, and 25-man roster if he was on that as well. Within seven days of the transaction (it was previously 10 days), the player must either be traded, released or placed on irrevocable outright waivers.

In an injury-marred season, Jorge has made just two appearances for the Twins' Rookie-level affiliate in the Gulf Coast League, with his last one coming June 22.

Prior to his release, Jorge was the Twins' No. 16 overall prospect. He made his Major League debut with Minnesota in 2017 and went 1-0 with a 10.57 ERA in two appearances.

All-Star Jose Berrios shines as Twins winning streak hits five

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | July 10, 2018

Jose Berrios made his first start as an All-Star on Monday, and afterward, there was plenty of room for second-guessing the choices that went into the American League team.

Not about why Berrios made it. About why a couple of teammates didn't.

Berrios lived up to his newly bestowed title of All-Star by bewitching Royals hitters for seven innings, particularly when runners reached scoring position. The 24-year-old righthander limited Kansas City to six hits and no walks, surrendered only one run, and even picked off a runner for the first time since 2016, leading the Twins to their fifth consecutive victory, 3-1 over the Royals at Target Field.

"It feels weird when I hear it — 'Jose Berrios is an All-Star,' " he said. "But I'm proud of it."

While Berrios held down the Royals offense, Eddie Rosario and Eduardo Escobar, each of whom had hopes of, and cases for, inclusion in next Tuesday's game, came through with clutch at-bats that turned into runs and handed Kansas City its 28th loss in its past 33 games.

Rosario, the subject of the Twins' "Will you accept this Rosie?" promotion in the final-five vote for a spot on the team, fought off several pitches from lefthanded sidearmer Tim Hill before hitting a slow roller to third base, scoring Jake Cave with the tying run. After Brian Dozier walked, Escobar, left off the team despite leading the league in doubles, lined a single to center to score Joe Mauer with the go-ahead run.

Escobar also made a brilliant defensive play that prevented a couple of runs, snagging a hot smash by Rosell Herrera and turning it into an out. The stuff of an All-Star, right?

"Yeah, there's no doubt about it — [51] extra-base hits, that's what jumps out," manager Paul Molitor agreed about his third baseman. And Rosario? "He fouled some tough ones off. And he put it in play and got a guy in scoring position as well as plating a run."

The Twins also got a run-scoring single from Mauer, a six-time All-Star, and a save from Fernando Rodney, who has pitched in three All-Star games. Rodney's save was his 20th, making him the sixth closer in big-league history to reach that mark in a season after his 41st birthday.

But the night belonged to Berrios, who received a hearty ovation worthy of an All-Star as he took the mound. He quickly became locked into a duel with Royals lefthander Danny Duffy, who pitched six scoreless innings and left with the lead.

That's because Berrios briefly stumbled, giving up back-to-back doubles from Alex Gordon and Alcides Escobar to open the second inning, surrendering a run. He didn't allow another ball to leave the infield that inning.

And the fourth inning was a masterwork in evading trouble. Mike Moustakas was hit by a pitch, and Salvador Perez — he will be in Washington, too — doubled, sending Moustakas to third. But working carefully, Berrios struck out Lucas Duda looking on a chest-high fastball, a call that so incensed Royals manager Ned Yost, he came out to argue with umpire Will Little and earned an ejection.

After the delay, Berrios got Herrera to bounce a ball to third base, where Escobar snagged it as it bounced past, freezing the runners as he threw Herrera out. And Gordon grounded out to first, ending the threat. Kansas City was 1-for-8 with runners in scoring position vs. Berrios.

"He's got the confidence he can make pitches to try to minimize," Molitor said. "It's not too often when you get a zero after second-and-third, nobody out. But you make pitches, you don't get rattled."

All-Star or not, Eddie Rosario rewards Twins' faith in him
Chip Scoggins | Star Tribune | July 10, 2018

The interview was finished, but Eddie Rosario still had something on his mind as he sat at his locker stall.

This was spring training 2015. Rosario was a Twins prospect coming off a season in which he served a 50-game suspension after a second positive test for drugs. Rosario told the Star Tribune that he had smoked marijuana.

The organization stood by him, and I asked Rosario during a clubhouse conversation about his second chance and his future. He answered in English, his second language, but he seemed uncertain with his words.

I wandered to another part of the clubhouse after the interview. Rosario called over Twins senior director of communications Dustin Morse, who asked me to return to Rosario's locker.

Rosario was worried his answer had gotten lost in translation and wanted to make sure he articulated his feelings accurately with the help of Morse and a translator.

"It's my world, my life, and I've tried to change," he said. "It was difficult for every-body, but I've got another opportunity. I work hard in the offseason, and when I come back here I try to let everybody see me again."

The Twins left fielder has made good on that promise. And he doesn't need to win a fan vote for a spot in the All-Star Game to validate his career arc. He has become the Twins' best position player and a foundation piece moving forward.

Rosario likely will need hanging chad irregularities to be triumphant in Final Vote voting this week, considering his large-market competition. Rosario deserves to be an All-Star, but snubs happen every year in every sport.

The fact that he is in the All-Star discussion at all is a testament to his maturation and also the team's acceptance of his risk-reward exuberance as a player.

"People change," Rosario said. "In my time here I learn a lot. Right now I have goals I'm working for — something special that I want to do in my career."

Rosario is the type of talent that Major League Baseball needs and should showcase. Young, athletic and exciting to watch because he doesn't play conventionally.

Teammate Brian Dozier described Rosario's style as "chaotic," which was a compliment. Rosario has improved his plate discipline, but he's still a free swinger at heart, capable of hitting balls and strikes alike. He takes chances on the basepaths and is itching to steal home.

Rosario's aggressiveness occasionally ends in a blooper, but so what? The entertainment value is always high when he's involved because he plays stress-free baseball.

"How many times has he made decisions that maybe he's the only guy on the field who would try it but they've worked out?" manager Paul Molitor said. "You have to probably give something to get something."

Molitor notices substantive changes in Rosario behind the scenes. He sees a player more in-tune with game situations. Rosario asks strategic questions in the dugout now. If he screws up, he doesn't need a lecture on what he did wrong.

"He's just seeing the bigger picture so much better," Molitor said.

"What I like is I rarely have to go to him with something he does [wrong]," Molitor elaborated. "It used to be, you'd have to explain it and he'd say, 'But I thought I had a chance.' I'd say, 'Well, a chance isn't good enough in that situation.' Now he sees how a game works."

The talent is undeniable. Those quick hands, the power, his strong arm in the outfield. He combines those traits with supreme confidence.

"He loves being a major league player, he loves to compete, he loves big moments," Molitor said. "I think Rosie can get a hit off the best pitcher on the other team. You need those kind of guys."

As Miguel Sano and Byron Buxton work to repair their games in the minors, Rosario has emerged as an organizational cornerstone. He encountered his own crossroads three years ago. He had to prove himself and win back trust. Now he's a potential All-Star and fan favorite.

“Everybody accepts me, my talent, my personality on this team,” he said. “The fans show a lot of love for me. I appreciate that.”

Postgame: Losing DH works out for Twins; Berrios can win 10th Saturday

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | July 10, 2018

Three extras from the Twins’ fifth consecutive victimization of a last-place team:

American League managers don’t like giving up the designated hitter. But taking the risk on Monday paid off for Paul Molitor.

With the Twins trailing 1-0, catcher Bobby Wilson opened the seventh inning with a double to the warning track in left-center. Molitor immediately sent Jake Cave to run for Wilson, even though the team’s other catcher, Mitch Garver, was the DH. That meant that when Garver went behind the plate in the eighth, the Twins could no longer use a designated hitter.

The move worked, though. Cave moved to third on Joe Mauer’s single to right, hit too sharply for him to score. But when Eddie Rosario chopped a slow roller toward third base, Cave got down the line too quickly for Mike Moustakas to have any play at the plate.

“Cave got a good jump,” Rosario said of the play. “It tied the game.”

Trevor Hildenberger pitched the eighth, and was in the fifth spot in the batting order, where Robbie Grossman had been, since Cave stayed in the game and played center field, moving Max Kepler to right. The Twins sent six hitters to the plate in the eighth inning, scoring another run — Cave was in the middle of it, contributing a one-out single — but the pitcher’s spot never came up. If it had?

“I was going to put [Willians] Astudillo in there [at catcher] and roll with it,” Molitor said. “I talked to him before the game. I haven’t had a chance to play him since the interleague games, but you know, he’s staying ready.”

XXX

Rosario may have hit only a weak grounder to score that run, but he was proud of it. That’s because it came against Royals reliever Tim Hill, a tall lefthander with an unorthodox sidearm delivery.

“I was not comfortable. This guy has good stuff. Difficult for me,” Rosario said. “I wanted to try to put it in play. I was fighting, fighting, fighting. I think I did a good job.”

He did. Rosario quickly fell behind 0-2, but didn’t give up on the at-bat. He fouled off four pitches, working the count to 2-2. One of them was a chopper that went straight down into the ground, then hit Rosario on the leg. Had he been out of the batter’s box, he would have been out. But Rosario froze, his feet just inside the chalk line, so when it hit him, it was a foul ball.

“He made a smart play,” Molitor said. “He realized he was in the box and let it hit him before he took another step.”

Well, Rosario couldn’t take credit, he said. “I was scared a little bit. The umpire told me I was in the box and it was a foul ball,” Rosario said. “I said, ‘OK. Woof.’ “

On the ninth pitch of the at-bat, Rosario made weak contact, weak enough that Moustakas didn’t have a play except at first base.

“Those kind of guys are tough,” Molitor said. “Putting it in play is sometimes the best you can do and get rewarded.”

XXX

Jose Berrios pitches again on Saturday, and at 9-7, he’ll be trying to become the fifth Twins pitcher in the past decade to win 10 games before the All-Star break, joining Ervin Santana (2017), Phil Hughes (2014), Carl Pavano (2010) and Kevin Slowey (2009).

Starting Saturday against Tampa Bay means Berrios will have two days of rest before Tuesday’s All-Star Game in Washington; it would be his normal between-starts bullpen day. That should be enough to allow him to pitch an inning at Nationals Park, Molitor said.

“I would imagine that however [AL manager A.J. Hinch] decides to work that pitching staff, he should be fine,” Molitor said. “If something happens between now and the end of the next start, if we have any concerns, we would alert somebody. But there’s a good chance if he gets called on, he will be available.”

Twins' Logan Morrison tries small ball to beat shift

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | July 9, 2018

Baltimore first baseman Chris Davis was laughing when Logan Morrison reached Sunday. Both are burly lefthanded power hitters who face increasingly extreme shifts every time they step to the plate, both are trying to dig out of terrible first halves, and both constantly get the same advice from frustrated fans: bunt.

Well, Morrison finally did, shoving a first-pitch fastball from Alex Cobb into the acres of empty dirt near third base, his first bunt single in more than two years. Davis congratulated him for his chutzpah.

“He was like, ‘Shoot, if they give it to you again, do it again,’” Morrison said of his friendly welcome. “He hears it, just like I do.”

Morrison’s decision, if not necessarily his form, impressed his manager. “It’s not pretty, really. It’s kind of almost like a half-swing. But he wants to take the pitcher out of the play,” Paul Molitor said. “I told him from the start, if you show it five to 10 times a year and you get two or three down, maybe it will discourage someone along the way [from shifting]. Even better than that, it will start a rally.”

This one did. Morrison’s single, his eighth in 12 career bunt attempts, came early in the Twins’ eight-run sixth inning. And the timing was important, Morrison said, because Eduardo Escobar had just homered to double the Twins’ lead from 2-0 to 4-0.

“You have to pick your spots. It’s really tough to get a pitch early in the count to do that on. If it’s in, it’s really hard to maneuver the bat to get it down the baseline. And a curveball away is harder to bunt past the pitcher,” Morrison said. “But I had a feeling I was getting a fastball after the homer. It kind of put [Cobb] on his heels a little bit, and I was able to keep the pressure on.”

Morrison, hitting just .192, knows plenty of fans want him to bunt more. “My father-in-law is on me all the time. Trust me, it’s not something I don’t think about,” he said. “But at the same time, I’m not going to do it, say, with two outs, just to get on first base. I’m not going to do it when we’re up big or down big. And you don’t want to do it so much that they move the shortstop over to guard against it. You want to save it for the right time.”

Santana inching back

Ervin Santana will start for Class AA Chattanooga in Jacksonville, Fla., on Tuesday, and Molitor said he is optimistic it will be a major milestone for the righthander’s return, perhaps right after the All-Star break.

“Hopefully it’s a step forward in a lot of ways, not only in length but quality, and we see how he responds to going deeper into a game against better competition,” Molitor said of Santana, who has yet to pitch more than four innings in a rehab start. “The goal is to get him up to [Class AAA] Rochester and have another start before we head into the [All-Star] break on Sunday. What we learn from those two starts will go a long way to determining what we want to do [with the rotation] coming out of the break.”

Etc.

- The Twins pitching staff, minus Jose Berrios, was on the field for a half-hour before batting practice, getting a refresher course in their fielding responsibilities. “There’s been some good things on our defensive work by our pitchers, and some things we need to clean up,” Molitor said.
- The Twins considered moving center fielder Byron Buxton to Chattanooga this week, because Rochester has three days off for the Class AAA All-Star break. But they ultimately decided to give him the days off — sort of. Buxton is working with Red Wings hitting coach Chad Allen each day of the break, Molitor said.
- Righthander Felix Jorge, released last week when the Twins needed a 40-man roster spot, agreed to a minor league contract to remain in the organization. Jorge, who started two games for the Twins last season, has pitched only twice this season in rookie ball, because of a triceps injury.
- Outfielder Ryan LaMarre, designated for assignment last week, was claimed off waivers by the White Sox. LaMarre, 29, batted .263 in 43 games for the Twins.

One positive for Twins: Starting pitchers are actually getting strikeouts

Michael Rand | Star Tribune | July 9, 2018

As things have generally gone sideways for the Twins this decade, an abundance of flaws have been rightfully described as culprits.

Chief among them: An organizational philosophy of pitching to contact — espoused when the team’s defense was sharper and before conventional baseball wisdom had so many batters working for either a walk or a home run — led to what seemed like the cultivation of starting pitchers who didn’t miss a lot of bats.

As a result, from 2011-17, Twins starting pitchers never finished higher than No. 26 in MLB in strikeouts. Think about that: seven seasons, all in the bottom five — including three that were dead last, the most recent being 2016.

If there is good news this year — aside from a four-game winning streak that has helped the Twins climb within 9.5 games of first-place Cleveland in the AL Central and within 16 games of Seattle for the second Wild Card spot they secured a season ago — it is that their starting pitching has been both improved overall and better at securing strikeouts.

Heading into Monday, Twins starters rank No. 14 in MLB with 459 strikeouts this season. Three of them — Jose Berrios, Kyle Gibson and Jake Odorizzi — already have more than 100. They are all threats to reach 200, which hasn’t happened for a Twins starter since Francisco Liriano notched 201 in 2010.

You have to go all the way back to 2007 — the last season Johan Santana was here, which is not at all a coincidence — to find a Twins team whose starters finished in the top half of MLB in strikeouts.

It could happen this year. Now if only they could do something about those walks (third-most in MLB as a starting staff this season).

Twins closer Fernando Rodney and the art of the ageless save

Staff Writer | Star Tribune | July 9, 2018

Fernando Rodney joined a select group of relievers to record at least 20 saves in a season after turning 41:

Year	Pitcher	Total
2018	Fernando Rodney	?
2014	LaTroy Hawkins	23
2013	Mariano Rivera	44
2011	Mariano Rivera	44
2009	Trevor Hoffman	37
1997	Dennis Eckersley	36
1996	Dennis Eckersley	30
1965	Hoyt Wilhelm	*21
1964	Hoyt Wilhelm	*27

*-Saves not an official stat until 1969

Monday's Twins-Kansas City game recap
Phil Miller | Star Tribune | July 9, 2018

GAME RECAP

IMPACT PLAYER

Jose Berrios, Twins

By holding the Royals to 1-for-8 with runners in scoring position, the new All-Star gave up one run over seven innings, throwing a career-high 111 pitches.

BY THE NUMBERS

3 Fly balls caught by Twins outfielders; Twins pitchers got nine groundouts, three popups, 11 strikeouts and a pickoff.

20 Appearances, of his past 21, in which Trevor Hildenberger has not given up a run.

ON DECK

Aaron Slegers makes his fifth career start against Ian Kennedy, who makes his 285th.

Milroy vs. Milroy at Target Field? Twins president proposes the idea
Staff Writer | Star Tribune | July 9, 2018

For the last three years, the Minnesota Twins have hosted the Town Ball Classic, which brings a half-dozen teams to Target Field for a day of baseball in the summer.

After reading Patrick Reusse's story about the two teams in Milroy, Minn., which have never played each other owing to a family feud that caused the creation of a second team a few years ago, Twins president Dave St. Peter took to Twitter on Sunday with an idea.

The Milroy Yankees and Milroy Irish should play at Target Field for charity.

The day of baseball is sponsored by ESPN 1500 radio and this year featured teams from Kimball, Lake Henry, Miesville and Victoria, as well as an All-Star Game between two metro area teams.

The Town Ball Classic is a benefit for the Twins Community Fund.

Twins wearing faux tuxedos to back Eddie Rosario's All-Star candidacy
Phil Miller | Star Tribune | July 9, 2018

The Twins are wearing T-shirts with a tuxedo look on the front, and "Vote Rosie" on the back during batting practice for the next couple of days, a way to support Eddie Rosario in the five-way online vote for the final spot on the AL All-Star team. It's a play on the TV series "The Bachelor," with the tagline: "Will you accept this Rosie?"

"Vote Rosario" is also being stenciled into the dirt behind home plate, just in case you might forget. Rosario said before the game that he's a little disappointed not to be chosen for the team, especially by the vote of his fellow players. "Everybody votes for whoever they want — close friends or teammates," he said. "I know my numbers are there. I thought I was good in the first half, but it's not in my hands."

The Twins will try to extend their winning streak to five games, which would match their longest of the season. The last-place Kansas City Royals are in town, making the job a little easier. Confidence borne of a sweep of the Orioles can't hurt, Paul Molitor said.

"The whole idea of momentum is guys going out there collectively believing you're going to win a game," Molitor said. "And when you're

coming off a series where you did a lot of aspects of the game — you pitched well, you got timely hitting, you took advantage of the other team’s mistakes — you start to get that feeling.”

Jose Berrios is on the mound for the Twins tonight, his first start since learning he will represent the Twins in next Tuesday’s All-Star game at Nationals Park. That new status can’t hurt his confidence, Molitor said. “I would imagine that’s an affirmation for him,” Molitor said. “The fact that the people who make those decisions are in the game, I’m sure that carries some weight.”

Berrios will throw to Bobby Wilson, but Mitch Garver will play too, as the designated hitter. Logan Morrison gets the night off against Royals lefthander Danny Duffy, who is 5-1 with a 2.43 ERA in 14 career starts against the Twins.

Here are the lineups for the first of three with Kansas City:

ROYALS

Merrifield 2B

Bonifacio RF

Moustakas 3B

Perez C

Duda 1B

Herrera CF

Gordon LF

Escobar SS

Mondesi DH

Duffy LHP

TWINS

Mauer 1B

Rosario LF

Dozier 2B

Escobar 3B

Grossman RF

Garver DH

Kepler CF

Polanco SS

Wilson C

Berrios RHP

Collusion? Free agents at Target Field make shambles of that argument
Jim Souhan | Star Tribune | July 9, 2018

There were no ceremonies held to honor this winter's batch of free agents at Target Field on Sunday. That was a missed opportunity for baseball's owners.

Baseball braintrusts spent most of the winter making suspicious people like me think they were engaging in collusion. Now they can claim to have been displaying intelligence.

Sunday, when the Twins beat the woeful Orioles 10-1, Alex Cobb, Lance Lynn and Logan Morrison were in attendance. As contributors to two of the most disappointing teams in the American League, the three might have helped set back free agency to the days when Jack Morris signing with the Twins for one year at \$3 million was considered a risk.

Remember this winter? Until a late flurry of bargain-shopping, the Twins were being accused of cheapness because they weren't signing someone like Cobb, and owners were being accused of collusion for letting so many free agents sit on the market like charred burgers on a hot grill.

Free agency is Giancarlo Stanton. It produced a home run, a few doubles and a slew of strikeouts. The Red Sox signed J.D. Martinez, who leads baseball in home runs. Jake Arrieta has been pretty good for the Phillies, and Lorenzo Cain was an important addition for the Brewers.

Consider the players the Twins seemed to be mulling:

Lynn has a 5.21 ERA. Morrison is batting .192. Cobb has a 6.57 ERA. Yu Darvish has a 4.95 ERA. If owners did engage in collusion, they did so wisely.

The Twins aren't even enjoying the other potentially productive aspect of free agency — the contract year.

In 2009, Joe Mauer was heading into free agency and he produced by far the best season of his career. He missed a month and hit 28 home runs. He has never hit more than 13 in any other season. He turned his power spike and MVP award into an eight-year, \$184 million contract.

In 1996, Chuck Knoblauch anticipated potential free agency by hitting a career-best .341 and landing a then-lucrative five-year, \$30 million deal.

One of the Twins' many problems this season is that players in their so-called contract years are performing like they hate money.

Brian Dozier was frustrated the Twins didn't want to discuss a lengthy contract this spring. He's hitting .222. Lynn and Morrison signed one-year deals and are destroying their value. Only Eduardo Escobar, who will become a free agent this fall, has created a market for himself.

Or has he? Dozier has been the Twins' best player for years, yet the Twins didn't find much interest in him on the trade market two years ago, and seem set against investing in a 31-year-old middle infielder.

Twins starter Jake Odorizzi earned the victory Sunday. He shares a clubhouse with Lynn and is friends with Cobb. He believes the uncertainty faced by free agents this winter affected their performances.

"I think so," he said. "We're all creatures of habit. ... You see things on TV about spring training getting underway and you still don't have a job, you don't know where you're going to be."

Odorizzi noted that Lynn and Cobb started slowly after signing late. "With Lance, you see how good he can be once he's back to his normal self," Odorizzi said. "We'd all be guilty of rushing back to pitch in a big league game again. It's tough. Hopefully, there's a lot better to come from [Cobb]. I know that for a fact.

"Give it some time and you'll see a really good pitcher."

Modern general managers are less inclined than their predecessors to bow to public pressure to spend money on players, or to reward players for what they have accomplished instead of what they are expected to accomplish. That's one of the benefits of analytics — removing sentiment from big decisions.

Free agency has always been a risky endeavor. The Twins and Orioles have provided a reminder this season that throwing money at a baseball problem can be the financial version of throwing to the wrong base.

Strange sight: Twins pitchers work on their fielding in the July heat
Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | July 9, 2018

Early work for hitters is a regular part of the baseball routine, but it's not nearly as common for pitchers.

So it was somewhat jarring to see 11 Twins pitchers — all but Monday starter Jose Berrios and Sunday starter Jake Odorizzi — out in the 89-degree Monday afternoon heat for 30 minutes' worth of pitchers' fielding practice.

"There have been some good things on our defensive work by our pitchers and some things that we need to clean up," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "Practice isn't like a game, but you just want to get a chance to tighten it up when you can."

Twins pitching coach Garvin Alston made the suggestion during the disastrous 1-8 road trip, but due to logistics the midseason PFP had to wait until Monday. There will be another such session on July 20 in Kansas City, coming out of the All-Star break.

Veteran Lance Lynn and since-demoted rookie Fernando Romero have been among those Twins pitchers who failed to cover first base on grounders to the right side, but bullpen coach Eddie Guardado stressed the extra session wasn't a punishment.

"I don't know if there's really a message," Guardado said. "It's more a reminder of what's important in the game: Covering your bag, doing the little things right. Don't forget about the small things that will help you win ballgames. That's what it's for."

Pickoff moves to second base were reviewed as well.

"It's nice to stay sharp," reliever Taylor Rogers said. "You go over the signs again and some stuff you don't normally use a lot. Kind of a refresher. It was good to knock some dust off. You can always get better at everything."

That the session came before Game No. 88 against a Kansas City Royals team that had lost 27 of 31 coming in might not have been coincidental either.

"We've got a lot of baseball left," Guardado said. "We get paid to play the game of baseball and we've got to respect the game. When you respect the game, good things happen. When you disrespect the game, you might as well put your cleats up and go home."

PINEDA PLAN

Michael Pineda, who had Tommy John surgery last July 18, threw 50 pitches off the game mound with Ehire Adrianza standing in on Monday afternoon.

Pineda, signed to a two-year, \$10 million deal this offseason, is due for another such session on Friday before flying back to Fort Myers, Fla. Pineda is then scheduled to rest for a few days before throwing to hitters in live batting practice a couple of times and then working in a simulated game.

His rehab assignment could start around Aug. 1 with the realistic possibility he will return to face big-league competition in September.

"It's exciting," Pineda said with a smile. "I feel really good. I'm getting close to being ready for the show, for the real games."

BUXTON WORK

With Triple-A Rochester on its three-day all-star break, the Twins considered sending Byron Buxton down to Double-A Chattanooga so he could continue to get regular at-bats.

After consulting with Buxton, it was determined he would stay in Upstate New York to work out all three days with Red Wings hitting coach Chad Allen. Rochester opens the second half on Thursday at Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

In 17 games since being sent to Rochester, first on rehab assignment and later on minor-league option, Buxton was hitting .239 with a .311 on-base percentage and 22 strikeouts in 74 plate appearances.

BRIEFLY

Outfielder Ryan LaMarre, designated for assignment last week, was claimed off waivers by the Chicago White Sox. LaMarre joins another ex-Twins outfielder, Daniel Palka, who has 11 homers in 60 games as a rookie since the White Sox claimed him off waivers in November.

Right-hander Felix Jorge, who was designated and released last week, cleared release waivers as an injured player and was re-signed by the Twins to continue his rehab (strained triceps) in Fort Myers.

Super utility man Taylor Motter, currently at Double-A, should head to Triple-A on Thursday after the International League all-star break ends.

Right-hander Ervin Santana is due to start Tuesday for Double-A Chattanooga and again on Sunday for Rochester. If those outings go well, he could be slotted back into the big-league rotation coming out of the all-star break.

Second baseman Luis Arraez, recently promoted to Double-A, was named Florida State League player of the month for June by Minor League Baseball. Arraez, a 21-year-old Venezuelan who missed last season with a knee injury, hit .449 and slugged .617 for Class A Fort Myers in June.

Would-be all-star Eddie Rosario does his part in 3-1 win over Royals

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | July 9, 2018

The surest sign Eddie Rosario had morphed into a ballplayer-candidate came when he trotted out to his position Monday night carrying a single long-stem red rose.

Instead of heading directly to his spot in left field, Rosario veered toward the side wall and bestowed his chivalrous gift upon a young female fan attending this 3-1 Twins win over the woeful Kansas City Royals. He did this with AC/DC's rock classic "Whole Lotta Rosie" blasting throughout Target Field, the racier parts scrubbed in the interest of ballpark wholesomeness.

All part of the #AcceptThisRosie campaign to send the deserving breakout star to July 17 All-Star Game in Washington, D.C. Passed over by his fellow American League players and Houston Astros manager A.J. Hinch, Rosario could still make it via injury or, less likely, the Final Vote process that runs through late Wednesday afternoon.

"Vote Rosie" read the black batting practice T-shirts his Twins teammates wore Monday, complete with tuxedo outline on the front. More gimmicks are in store over the next two days as the Twins try to offset the big-market advantages of Rosario's competition: Giancarlo Stanton (Yankees), Andrew Benintendi (Red Sox), Andrelton Simmons (Angels) and Jean Segura (Mariners).

"I wanted to try something funny," Rosario said of his grand entrance. "I want to say thank you to the fans in left field. It was a good opportunity to see the smiles on the little kids. I think I'm doing a good job."

Rosario, 26, is the Twins' seventh candidate since the Final Vote system was instituted. He joins Lew Ford (2004), Torii Hunter (2005), Francisco Liriano (2006), Pat Neshek (2007), Delmon Young (2010) and Brian Dozier (2015).

None prevailed in the voting, although Liriano and Dozier made the game as injury replacements, the latter thanks to a late pull-out by Jose Bautista.

"I feel like I'm in the final five because I deserve to be there," Rosario said. "The numbers are there. It's difficult because I'm playing well."

More important than Rosario's words, while accurate, will be his actions in these final frantic days. There again he did his part on Monday as the Twins claimed their fifth straight win, tying their season high and pulling them back within 8 1/2 games of the division-leading Cleveland Indians.

Rosario reached out and poked an 0-2 slider from lefty Danny Duffy into center field for a first-inning single that gave him 105 hits, seventh-most in the AL. In the seventh, again down 0-2 against funky lefty Tim Hill, Rosario battled back to even before tapping the ninth pitch toward third for a game-tying groundout.

"I was not comfortable," Rosario said with a smile. "This guy has good stuff. I was fighting, fighting. I wanted to try to put the ball in play."

<https://youtu.be/lyc1XIDR3EA>

That pushed Rosario's team-leading total to 54 runs batted in, although moments later Eduardo Escobar (another all-star snub) lined the go-ahead single to center for his 53rd RBI.

It also made a winner of the Twins' sole All-Star selection to date, right-hander Jose Berrios, who improved to 9-7 with his 10th start of seven

innings or more. With 121 1/3 innings, Berrios moved into a tie for fifth, five innings behind Corey Kluber's AL pace.

Berrios struck out eight and avoided walks for just the second time in his past 15 starts. He also piled up 16 swinging strikes, seven more than he had in his past two starts combined (on the road against the Chicago Cubs and Milwaukee Brewers).

"It feels weird when I hear it: 'Jose Berrios is an All-Star,' " he said through a team-issued translator. "But I'm proud of it."

He also believes he should not be alone when he travels to the nation's capital after the Twins close out the first half on Sunday. He said it was "pretty neat to see" Rosario take the field with a rose in his hand and throw his weight behind his fellow Puerto Rican's candidacy.

"We all know that he's deserving to be there," Berrios said. "He deserves to go to the All-Star Game."

With a final pitch count of 111, Berrios set a new career-high that was two more than his prior best. Of the 10 times in 58 career starts that Berrios has thrown 106 pitches or more, six have come this season.

Fernando Rodney worked the ninth for his 20th save, moving him past Todd Jones for 19th all-time.

Escobar, Berrios lead Twins past Royals **Associated Press | Fox Sports North | July 9, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS — Jose Berrios said it feels weird to be described as an All-Star after being named to the American League team for the first time in his career.

His pitching on Tuesday showed the honor isn't misplaced.

Eduardo Escobar had three hits and drove in the go-ahead run in the seventh to support Berrios' strong outing as the Minnesota Twins beat the Kansas City Royals 3-1 on Monday night.

Escobar plated Joe Mauer with a seventh-inning single as Minnesota took advantage of Kansas City's struggling bullpen to win its fifth straight game.

Berrios (9-7) allowed one run on six hits in seven innings. He struck out eight while throwing a season-high 111 pitches.

"I feel great today out there," Berrios said. "My last two outings, I felt a little low on energy, a little tired. But today I felt better and the game plan worked for us."

Fernando Rodney allowed a walk and hit in the ninth but secured his 20th save.

Tim Hill (1-3) surrendered both runs and got just one out in relief after starter Danny Duffy's six scoreless innings. The Royals started the game with a league-worst 5.29 relief ERA.

"We score more runs, get a little more leeway, it would be easier on the bullpen," said Kansas City manager Ned Yost, who was ejected in the fourth inning. "Right now, they're just walking that thin line. They can't make a mistake. But Danny was fantastic."

Duffy and Berrios nearly matched each other through seven innings as both teams couldn't convert scoring chances.

The Royals were 1 for 8 with runners in scoring position and stranded five runners against Berrios. Minnesota was 0 for 5 with runners in scoring position and left eight on base against Duffy, who has a 3.07 ERA over his past nine starts after a slow start to his season.

"I feel like I figured out quite a bit over the last couple starts," Duffy said.

The Twins had a runner reach third in three of Duffy's six innings and failed to drive him in.

Alex Gordon and Alcides Escobar hit back-to-back doubles to lead off the third for the only run against Berrios.

"He's got the confidence he can make pitches to try to minimize at the very least," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said of Berrios. "He's got that feel about just pace of game, what he's doing, continue to execute, and it's just part of that progression we keep talking about with him."

YOST EJECTED

Kansas City manager Ned Yost was ejected after Lucas Duda was called out on strikes by home plate umpire Will Little. It was Yost's 43rd career ejection and the first of this season.

"I yelled at him just to get his act together, and he looked at me and shrugged his shoulders," Yost said. "Like, what does that mean? Does that mean you don't care? Is that what it means? That's what set me off. Got my player working out there and then you're going to shrug your shoulders at me, and you're missing a call, a crucial call? Yeah, I didn't like it."

WHOLE LOTTA ROSIE

The Twins started their marketing campaign to get left fielder Eddie Rosario voted to the All-Star game as part of the league's final ballot.

Minnesota players and coaches wore tuxedo T-shirts for the pregame batting practice that had "Vote Rosie" on the back. The idea behind the campaign is based on 'The Bachelor TV' show, which is known for handing out roses to chosen participants.

Rosario took the field in the first inning with a rose in hand and gave it to a female fan in the stands near left field.

Rosario, who drove in the tying run on Tuesday on a groundout, was seventh in the AL in hits starting Monday's games. He was also tied with Boston outfielder Mookie Betts for fourth in the league with 185 total bases.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Twins: RHP Ervin Santana (60-day disabled list, finger surgery) is scheduled to start Tuesday for Double-A Chattanooga as he tries to work his way back to the Minnesota rotation. Manager Paul Molitor said Santana is likely to move his rehab to Triple-A Rochester for one start before the All-Star break and the team will decide on his future depending on the two starts.

UP NEXT

Royals: RHP Ian Kennedy (1-8, 5.11 ERA) will be activated from the disabled list to start Tuesday evening's game in Minnesota. Kennedy has been out since June 29 with a left oblique strain. He has gone 15 starts without a win, the longest active winless streak in the majors.

Twins: RHP Aaron Slegers (1-0, 2.38) will make his second start and third appearance of the season on Tuesday. He earned his first major league win on July 5 with one run allowed in six innings against Baltimore.

Twins starter Berrios piling up K's

Associated Press | Fox Sports North | July 9, 2018

Jose Berrios is racking up strikeouts at a rate not seen in Minnesota in nearly a decade.

The 24-year-old All-Star reached 300 career K's last week, 18 starts into his third season and 57 starts into his young career.

He's now the fifth-fastest Twins starter to reach the milestone, tied with Jim Merritt, who spent four seasons with the Twins in the late '60s.

Dave Boswell, Francisco Liriano, Johan Santana and Bert Blyleven are the only Twins pitchers to get to 300 faster. It took Boswell, Liriano and Santana four seasons to reach 300, while Blyleven reached it in just two.

Twins, fewest starts to 300 K's in MLB career – Since 1961

*Started career w/ Twins; K's in starts only

Player	Starts	Date/Opp.
Dave Boswell	48	06/15/1967 vs. DET
Francisco Liriano	52	07/09/2009 vs. NYY
Johan Santana	54	06/09/2004 vs. NYM

Bert Blyleven	55	08/22/1971 at BAL
Jose Berrios	57	07/04/2018 at MIL
Jim Merritt	57	04/17/1968

Berrios' performance is part of a larger Twins trend. Minnesota pitchers are averaging 8.92 strikeouts per nine innings this season after averaging just 7.61 a year ago. It's the fifth-largest such increase of the divisional era.

Largest increase in SO/9 IP – since 1969

Team	Years	1st Year	2nd Year	Diff.
New York Mets	1983 -> 1984	4.45	6.41	+1.96
Cleveland Indians	2012 -> 2013	6.78	8.61	+1.83
Seattle Mariners	1981 -> 1982	4.31	6.11	+1.80
Arizona Diamondbacks	1889 -> 1999	5.71	7.35	+1.64
Minnesota Twins	2017 -> 2018	7.31	8.92	+1.61

Other notes:

— Twins outfielder Max Kepler, himself a lefty, had a .453 OPS against left-handed pitching a year ago, but has a .900 OPS against southpaws so far this season. It's the largest such increase for a left-handed batter since 1978.

— The Twins open a three-game series with the Kansas City Royals on Monday night. Third baseman Mike Moustakas leads the Royals in RBI (56), runs (39) extra-base hits (36) and home runs (17). Only four other players are currently leading their respective teams in all four categories.

— Royals catcher Salvador Perez has been extremely productive in Minneapolis over the years. He's hitting .349 with a .993 OPS in 209 career at-bats at Target Field, both his highest in an American League ballpark.

— Twins first baseman Joe Mauer has swung at the first pitch just 3.3 percent of the time this season. If the season ended today, it would be the second-lowest first-pitch swing percentage on record since the league began tracking the stat in 1988.

Statistics courtesy of STATS

The one player all 30 teams should trade before the deadline

David Schoenfield | ESPN | July 10, 2018

The trade deadline is heating up ... well, the rumors are anyway. Manny Machado to the Yankees! Scooter Gennett to the Dodgers! J.T. Realmuto to the Red Sox! Maybe all these blockbuster will happen, and even if they don't, hey, it's fun to speculate. One thing seems clear about this deadline: It's going to be weak in starting pitchers, so teams needing to plug a hole in their rotation might instead look to upgrade the bullpen or the offense.

Keep in mind, as well, how the deadline has changed in recent years. As Joe Sheehan pointed out, the teams making the biggest moves haven't been those fighting to get into the playoffs, but those who have already locked down a playoff spot and are looking to improve their postseason roster -- think Yu Darvish to the Dodgers and Justin Verlander to the Astros last year (although that was an August trade) or Aroldis Chapman to the Cubs and Andrew Miller to the Indians in 2016.

Still, it should be an active deadline period this year, even if Machado ends up as the only really big name traded. Here is one guy every team should trade:

AL CENTRAL

Cleveland Indians -- Francisco Mejia, C/OF. With Yan Gomes still under contract for up to three more seasons (with team options), Mejia's path to being a starting catcher isn't clear, especially given how much the Indians love Gomes' defense. Mejia has bounced back in Triple-A from a terrible start, but the bat looks merely good more than special right now. The Indians haven't won a World Series since 1948. Mejia for Machado?

Minnesota Twins -- Eduardo Escobar, 3B/SS. The Twins might be the most disappointing team of 2018, failing to take advantage of a weak division. They might just run the course and hope to get hot in the second half, but Escobar and Brian Dozier are both free agents and potential trade bait if Minnesota decides to sell.

Detroit Tigers -- Leonys Martin, CF. Martin is on the disabled list with a hamstring strain, but he's a plus defender in center and was having a solid enough year at the plate (.257/.327/.431). He's a potential fit for the Indians (28th in the majors in wOBA from their center fielders) or the

Astros, who could use another left-handed bat if rookie Kyle Tucker isn't ready. They could play Martin in center with Josh Reddick and George Springer in the corners.

Chicago White Sox -- Joakim Soria, RHP. The easiest thing for contenders to do is load up in the bullpen, and Soria is having another solid season. The best thing I see is the way he has limited home runs the past two seasons (just three in 89 2/3 innings).

Kansas City Royals -- Mike Moustakas, 3B. A cheaper alternative to Machado if you want a third baseman, although with a .309 OBP, he's not really a major impact bat. One rumor had the Yankees interested in him as a first baseman with Greg Bird continuing to struggle.

Report: Dodgers looking beyond Manny Machado, have had conversations about Brian Dozier
Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | July 9, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — The Los Angeles Dodgers ought to be familiar with Twins second baseman Brian Dozier by now. Two winters ago, Dozier was at the center of trade speculation and rumors involving the Twins and Dodgers for weeks on end.

Now, the Dodgers are rekindling their interest, according to a report from Yahoo's Jeff Passan.

The Dodgers, according to Passan, have had talks centered on Scooter Gennet (Reds), Asdrubal Cabrera (Mets) and Dozier. It's always possible at this time of year that front offices are posturing with their information, but Passan is well versed in the season of subterfuge.

Dozier is currently hitting .222/.305/.402 with 13 home runs, and he's also been known to get hot in the second half of the season. He is well known as a go-to player for the local media, and he's believed to be a good clubhouse guy. He's in the final year of a team-friendly 4-year contract.

The Dodgers lost shortstop Corey Seager for the year following Tommy John surgery, a relative rarity for a position player. Chris Taylor has stepped in to replace him. That's left the Dodgers to shuffle things in center field, and they've most often relied on Joc Pederson, Enrique Hernandez and Cody Bellinger. With Bellinger, Max Muncy and Justin Turner in the infield, it's not obvious to me how the Dodgers would use Dozier right now. Because unlike Machado, you likely wouldn't move Dozier back to his roots on the other side of the second-base bag. It's not like the Dodgers have the luxury of the DH, either.

The most interesting thing to me about the Twins and Dozier is simple. Are you more interested in trying to get a prospect in a trade? Or would you be willing to extend him a one-year Qualifying Offer this winter, thereby netting a first-round draft pick if he bolts?

Twins lose Ryan LaMarre to the White Sox
Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | July 9, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS — Ryan LaMarre was the feel-good story at the start of the Twins' season. The outfielder was invited to spring training on a minor league deal and made the club's opening day roster.

But the Twins last week designated LaMarre for release or assignment to make room on the 40-man roster for returning shortstop Jorge Polanco. Now, the White Sox have claimed LaMarre off waivers, the teams announced Monday.

That would appear to put an end to LaMarre's days in a Twins uniform. He hit .263/.321/.313 in 109 plate appearances for the Twins this year and played some center field in Byron Buxton's absence. In that way, perhaps the fact the Twins felt LaMarre could be taken off the roster is a good sign for the progress of Buxton at Triple-A Rochester. Or perhaps it's just a nod to the left-handed-hitting outfielder Jake Cave, who has made some highlight reel catches in his latest stint with the Twins, highlighting a little speed and power along the way.

Twins have begun to make a strong push to get Eddie Rosario into All-Star Game
Dan Hayes | The Athletic | July 10, 2018

Tuxedo T-shirts. Ballpark rose ceremonies. A potential first pitch thrown by "The Bachelorette."

The Twins are pulling out all the stops to try and get Eddie Rosario into the 2018 All-Star Game. You don't have to look any further than his seventh-inning at-bat on Monday night to understand why the Twins are so desperate to help their young outfielder accomplish a career goal.

Despite the uneasy feeling brought on by Kansas City left-hander Tim Hill, Rosario fouled off pitch after pitch in a key at-bat before driving in the tying run. The Twins continued to rally afterward and went on to post their fifth straight victory with a 3-1 win over the Kansas City Royals. The hard-fought RBI groundout provided yet another example of just how formidable a figure Rosario has become for the Twins in key moments. Even when he's not blasting the ball out of the park, Rosario can frustrate a pitcher to no end.

"There was never really a lot of debate about Rosie having the ability to hit up here," manager Paul Molitor said. "We all wondered if the free swinging was going to be too frequent to allow him to compile numbers or to get better pitches, not necessarily strikes. I think we started to see he's not going to be a 50-to-75- walk guy, but he's going to be able to do some damage."

"He loves being a major-league player. He loves to compete. He loves big moments. That's one of the things that makes him valuable. ... He's one of those guys who can hit the other team's best."

With a 6.04 ERA, Hill currently might not receive many votes as Kansas City's top pitcher. But Hill undoubtedly has one of his team's funkiest deliveries.

Dustin Morse

✓

@morsecode

The look on her face says it all...

🌸🌸🌸🌸🌸🌸 <http://www.twinsbaseball.com/vote>

Working from a low angle, Hill throws a sinker, four-seamer and slider from the left side. Twins catcher Bobby Wilson — who began the game-winning rally with a double off Hill — suggested the Bacone College-product wasn't an easy at-bat for Rosario, who is among the American League's Final Vote candidates along with New York's Giancarlo Stanton and Andrew Benintendi.

"It probably felt like he was throwing from first base," Wilson said. "It's a weird, hard angle."

Rosario's second swing provided all the evidence. He stepped to the plate with runners on the corners and no outs and the Twins down a run. After Hill got ahead 0-1 with a slider for a called strike, Rosario swung late at a 93-mph fastball over the middle. The resulting foul ball nearly killed anyone on the top row of the visiting dugout because Rosario got to the fastball so late.

"I was not comfortable," Rosario said. "This guy has good stuff. Difficult for me. I wanted to try to put it in play, this ball. I was fighting, fighting."

No matter how much he desired to put the ball in play, Rosario managed to hold up on Hill's 0-2 offering despite nearly coming out of his shoes to swing at a high fastball. Though he's yet to meet a pitch he doesn't like, Rosario has reduced his strikeout rate from 24.9 percent in 2015 to 17.7 percent this season.

"He always tries to swing at pitches up out of the zone," assistant hitting coach Rudy Hernandez said. "But he was really focused trying to make contact to try to get him in. He loves those moments. ... He's not trying to be a hero, but he wants to be a part of the big thing."

Rosario nearly had his heroic moment cut short. He fouled off the next two pitches, one bouncing in front of the plate and making contact with Rosario while he was still standing in the batter's box. Had he been a foot further, Rosario would have been out and stranded runners on the corners.

"I was scared a little bit," Rosario said. "The umpire told me I was in the box and the ball hit me and it was a foul ball. I said, 'OK. Woof.'"

Rosario took another ball to even the count at 2-2 before he fouled off two more pitches.

"It's hard to throw anything past Eddie," said bench coach Derek Shelton, who previously served as a hitting coach in Toronto and Tampa Bay.

On the ninth pitch of the at-bat, Rosario got just enough of his bat on a 93-mph fastball several inches outside to chop it toward third base. Pinch-runner Jake Cave made a nice read on the ball and scored the tying run. Though the ball only traveled 69 feet, according to Baseball Savant, and resulted in an out, it got the Twins rolling.

"It kind of looks nasty," Molitor said. "It's not super high in terms of actual sheer velocity. But the angle it comes out at, it's kind of an upshot fastball. It just, you can tell it gets on guys. (Rosario) fouled some tough ones off, made a smart play on the little chopper in front of the plate where he realized he was in the box and let it hit him before he took another step. And then, you know, he put it in play and got a guy in scoring position as well as plating a run. ... Putting it in play is sometimes is the best you can do and you get rewarded."

The Twins hope Rosario's bigger battle results in the ultimate reward, a trip to Washington, D.C., for next week's All-Star Game. Hitting .300/.340/.531 with 18 home runs and 54 RBIs, Rosario is a deserving candidate to play in the Midsummer Classic.

To get there, Rosario will have to beat Stanton and Benintendi, who play in decidedly larger markets with rabid fan bases, in a battle to see which team has more people addicted to stuffing the online ballot box.

Knowing what they're up against, the Twins got creative with their campaign platform to help Rosario take down Stanton, Benintendi, the Los Angeles Angels' Andrelton Simmons and Seattle's Jean Segura. The team settled on the slogan #PickThisRosie, a play on words off "The Bachelor" and "The Bachelorette," one of the TV's most popular reality shows. Before the game, Twins players handed out tuxedo T-shirts to one another with "Vote Rosie" written on the back. Rosario also walked out to the stands before the game with a rose and handed it out to a female fan seated near the foul line, the Twins' own version of the show's rose ceremony.

Dustin Morse

✓

@morsecode

Everything is coming up Rosie! #AcceptThisRosie

If that weren't enough, rumors flew about Monday that this season's "The Bachelorette" contestant, Rebecca Kufirin, would attend Tuesday's contest and throw out the first pitch. Kufirin was born in Prior Lake, Minn., about 25 miles southwest of Minneapolis, and is a Twins fan. The team has also reached out to Puerto Rican singer, songwriter and rapper Daddy Yankee, who has more than 11 million Twitter followers in an attempt to find additional online support. Mr. Yankee visited with Rosario and Twins All-Star José Berríos, among others, in April when the team played a pair of games against the Cleveland Indians at Hiram Bithorn Stadium in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Dustin Morse

✓

@morsecode

I know @daddy_yankee voted for @EddieRosario09 did you? #MNTwins<http://www.twinsbaseball.com/vote>

"We all know that he's deserving to be there," Berríos said. "He deserves to go to the All-Star Game."

Berríos shines in victory over Royals

The Twins' lone All-Star candidate looked every bit the part on Monday as he bounced back from a pair of difficult starts. Not only was the fastball velocity back — he averaged 93.5 mph and topped 95 — but so were the swings and misses. Berríos induced 15 swings and misses among his 111 pitches thrown.

The effort allowed Berríos to dodge a few trouble spots and stick around long enough to earn his ninth victory. Berríos limited the lowly Royals to a run and six hits while striking out eight in seven sharp innings.

"It feels weird when I hear it, 'Jose Berrios is an All-Star,'" Berríos said. "But I'm proud of it."

Odds and ends

Byron Buxton plans to work with Triple-A Rochester hitting coach Chad Allen through the three-day All-Star break this week. Molitor said Buxton didn't want to stop working on the swing adjustments he has worked to implement during his time at Rochester. Molitor said it's a good opportunity for Buxton to continue working without having to play in games. Buxton had three hits in five at-bats, including a double, in Saturday's game. He's hitting .239/.311/.388 in 74 plate appearances at Rochester.

"He didn't want to get away from hitting," Molitor said. "My understanding is he's going to continue doing some of the drills and things he has been doing. ... Back off the games and have a chance to work on hitting and give his body a chance to take a break, which he probably is ready for."

The Twins announced they re-signed pitcher Felix Jorge to a minor-league deal after he was designated for assignment and cleared waivers. Jorge has been dealing with a triceps issue.

Pitcher Ervin Santana is expected to make his next rehab start on Tuesday for Double-A Chattanooga.

"Hopefully it's a step forward in a lot of ways, not only in length, but quality and we see how he responds to going deeper into a game against better competition," Molitor said. "The goal is to get him up to Rochester and have another start before we head into the break on Sunday. I think what we learn from those two starts will go a long way to determining what we want to do coming out of the break."