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Berrios, 'pen melt down vs. M's in freezing temps

Brian Hall | MLB.com | April 7, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- Pitching in short sleeves in sub-freezing temperatures, Jose Berrios was cruising through the first three innings at Target Field on Saturday, just as he had in his three-hit shutout last weekend.

The cold may not have gotten to Berrios, but the Mariners eventually did. The Twins right-hander ran into trouble in the fourth and fifth innings as Seattle's offense snapped out of an early-season cold spell to top the Twins, 11-4, in one of the chilliest games in Major League history.

Berrios (1-1) retired the first 10 batters he faced, but Kyle Seager's two-run shot off the right-field foul pole capped a three-run fourth inning. Berrios wound up with five runs and six hits on his ledger, while striking out seven in 4 2/3 innings.

"First time around, the game plan was inside -- attack inside," Berrios said. "The second time around, they figured it out."

The temperature at first pitch was 27 degrees, breaking the previous Twins record of 31 degrees, set on April 17, 2014. It was also the coldest recorded start temperature for a Mariners game, breaking the previous mark of 34 degrees in games at Detroit in 1996 and Chicago in 2013. The coldest recorded first-pitch temperature for any MLB contest is 23 degrees in a game between the Rockies and Braves in Denver in 2013.

Berrios said he doesn't feel comfortable pitching in long sleeves, so he stayed with his usual attire, despite some players being bundled up with hoods covering much of their heads.

"I was trying not to think about it," Berrios said of the weather. "Obviously, it's not my climate, my weather. I'm not used to it. It was just the way it is today."

Berrios said he had no trouble gripping the ball as he relied more on his fastball and curveball, staying away from his changeup against the

Mariners.

"He was tremendously efficient there through the first three, including a highlight play by himself coming off the mound to get Ichiro's bunt," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said. "I just felt that he was trusting his fastball, which is fine. If you can hold on to your secondary pitches, that usually works out the second or third time through the lineup."

Mariners starter Mike Leake improved to 2-0 as he allowed three hits and two runs over five frames for Seattle, which broke the game open with a five-run eighth inning in which Guillermo Heredia also homered off the foul pole -- his a lined shot down the left-field line. Miguel Sano had an RBI double and three walks for the Twins.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Morrison misses his chance: Sano's third walk of the game loaded the bases in the seventh with one out, which prompted Mariners manager Scott Servais to turn to right-handed reliever Juan Nicasio with left-handed hitters Eddie Rosario and Logan Morrison coming up.

Rosario struck out and then Morrison popped out in foul territory to preserve Seattle's two-run lead at the time. Morrison, in his first year with the Twins, is 1-for-19 to start the season.

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

Twins double up: The Twins finally got to Leake with leadoff doubles in the sixth by Joe Mauer and Sano, which knocked the Mariners' starter out after 92 pitches. But Leake didn't get a lot of help from Ichiro Suzuki in left field, as Mauer's hit dropped in front of the 44-year-old as he ran to his left in the gap, and Sano's got over his head. Statcast™'s catch probability was 88 percent on Mauer's double and 67 on Sano's. The Twins then cut the lead to 5-3 on RBI singles by Rosario and Eduardo Escobar off lefty reliever Marc Rzepczynski before Dan Altavilla came on for the final two outs.

QUOTABLE

"He's got really good stuff, there's no question. He's a good athlete. We saw the play he made on Ichiro's bunt, the breaking ball. Obviously he's off to a good start this season. We put some good at-bats together, guys got in good hitting counts and put some good swings on him. Good day for our offense." -- Servais, on Berrios

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Because of the cold, both teams decided before the game to forgo use of the bullpens in the open air in left-center field, and instead had relievers warm up in the hitting cages behind the dugout. In the later innings, some players did make their way to the bullpen, with Minnesota's Ryan Pressly and Seattle's Nick Vincent warming up in the pen. Other relievers decided to stick with the indoor approach for warming up.

WHAT'S NEXT

Lance Lynn will make his first career start at Target Field and his second start for Minnesota on Sunday. Lynn gave up five runs on three hits and six walks in his first outing last week at Pittsburgh. It will be his first career start against Seattle. First pitch is scheduled for 1:10 p.m. CT.

Santana to have finger checked on Tuesday

Brian Hall | MLB.com | April 7, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS -- Ervin Santana will return to Minnesota to be checked out by the Twins' doctors as he continues his rehab from middle finger surgery on his throwing hand.

Santana, who was seventh in the American League Cy Young Award voting last year, had calcium deposits in his right middle finger removed in early February. The right-hander will meet with team doctors on Tuesday before returning to Fort Myers to continue his rehab.

Santana began playing light catch last week and now appears likely set for a return in May. He went 16-8 with a 3.28 ERA and tied AL Cy Young Award-winner Corey Kluber for the Major League lead with five complete games and three shutouts.

Hughes near return after rehab start (5 IP, 3 ER)

MINNEAPOLIS -- Phil Hughes got a bit closer to possibly joining the Minnesota Twins by the time they need a fifth starter, after a successful rehab outing on Thursday. Hughes, on the 10-day disabled list with a left oblique strain, allowed three runs in five innings for Class A Advanced Fort Myers. The right-hander gave up eight hits and one walk and struck out five batters in 65 pitches.

"The outing went well the other day," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said Saturday, before the Twins hosted the Seattle Mariners. "He got his pitches up a little bit closer to being able to start, if you will. I saw that he touched 94 the other day.

"We're just going to have to see how things play out here. He's still on rehab assignment, so we're just going to see how that plays out and what happens with the weather and games being played the next couple of days and all of those things."

Minnesota would likely need another starter on April 11, but the cold weather could alter those plans. Snow is in the forecast for Sunday's game against Seattle and the forecast calls for temperatures in the 30s with the Twins on a 10-game homestand.

Hughes, 31, went 4-3 with a 5.87 ERA last season and injuries have limited him to 26 games the past two seasons. He's undergone surgery twice to alleviate thoracic outlet syndrome and had a broken bone in his left leg.

Cold game, cold stats as Twins fall 11-4 to Mariners

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | April 7, 2018

Seven games in, and Logan Morrison is still looking for his Welcome to Minnesota moment.

He had not one, not two, but three chances Saturday to deliver a big blow or at least a productive at-bat but failed to come through.

The Twins' 11-4 loss to Seattle had plenty of culprits. Jose Berrios looked untouchable for three innings before failing to get out of the fifth. The Mariners' five-run eighth inning came with relievers Zach Duke and Trevor Hildenberger on watch. And Morrison wasn't the only Twins hitter to fail with runners in scoring position.

But he has mustered one RBI so far and is 1-for-19 in his Twins career and 0-for-6 with runners in scoring position. Miguel Sano (eight RBI), Brian Dozier (four home runs) and Joe Mauer (.364 batting average) have impacted the offense early. But Morrison, who slugged 38 home runs a year ago for Tampa Bay, is nowhere to be seen in the scoring summaries.

"One of the reasons I decided to come here is that I didn't have to be the guy, I could be a piece," Morrison said. "Sanny and Doz and all those guys are going right now. If they go through something, hopefully I'll be there to pick them up."

The game-time temperature of 27 degrees made it the coldest start to a game in Twins history. Major League Baseball allowed the teams to warm up relievers in indoor facilities at the park rather than the frigid bullpen.

Twins second baseman Brian Dozier took a few practice swings before going to bat in the ninth inning.

The Twins fell behind 5-0 after five innings after Berrios faltered in the fourth and fifth. But the Twins struck for three runs in the sixth inning on an RBI double by Sano and run-scoring singles from Eddie Rosario and Eduardo Escobar. Morrison already had lined out to right with two on in the first when he had a chance to join in on the fun in the sixth but struck out with Rosario on second.

The Twins attempted another rally in the eighth when they loaded the bases with one out. Rosario struck out, bringing Morrison to the plate against Mariners reliever Juan Nicasio. Morrison worked the count full, fouling off some pitches and taking others just off the plate.

On the eighth pitch of the encounter, Morrison got a fastball clocked at 94 miles per hour.

"He was pounding me in, then [threw] a heater away," Morrison said. "I was looking at the film [afterward]. Barreled it. Just got under it a bit."

Morrison hit a popup in foul territory to third baseman Kyle Seager.

"I thought Logan put together a really good at-bat," manager Paul Molitor said. "It didn't end up the way we hoped he ended up, fouling out over there. He put on some good swings. He put up a good fight. We were one hit away from either tying it or taking the lead."

That ended up being the Twins' final big threat of the game, as Seattle followed by scoring five runs in the eighth to put the home team away.

Morrison was left to wonder if the result would have been different had he gotten a hit in the seventh. Maybe the Twins would still be batting.

But he's left still looking for his introductory offensive moment.

"I haven't sensed any type of extra anxiety or panic," Molitor said. "He's been taking pretty good at-bats."

Morrison agreed, but that is not helping things right now.

"It's a process," he said, "but, shoot, it would be helpful if some hits started falling and [I] started getting some good results with the at-bats."

Jose Berrios' strong start for Twins falls apart in middle innings

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | April 7, 2018

For three innings Saturday, it looked like Jose Berrios was going to back up his three-hit shutout from Sunday at Baltimore — and then some.

The Twins righthander tore through the Seattle batting order the first time through, retiring all nine batters he faced with ease, including four strikeouts.

"The first time around, the game plan was throw inside and attack inside," he said.

He did so with plenty of fastballs. He threw only a handful of changeups Saturday, which might have victimized him the second time through the batting order.

In the fourth inning, he gave up an RBI single to Robinson Cano, followed by a two-run homer to Kyle Seager on a 3-1 fastball. The Mariners then scored two more runs in the fifth inning on Dee Gordon's two-run single to center.

"I thought Jose threw the ball fairly well," Twins manager Paul Molitor said after his team lost 11-4 at Target Field. "He got behind a couple good hitters.

"The 3-1 pitch to Seager was the one that hurt him the most."

Molitor acknowledged that Berrios worked on establishing his fastball Saturday. What wasn't clear was why he didn't use his changeup more.

"The plan was fastballs inside," said Berrios, who struck out seven in 4⅓ innings. "I didn't throw the changeup a lot, but that was the game plan. And it just didn't work out today."

What's next for Hughes?

Molitor noted that righthander Phil Hughes gave up three runs on eight hits and a walk in five innings Thursday in a rehab start at Class A Fort Myers. Hughes actually touched 94 miles per hour on the radar gun with his fastball, which encouraged him.

"Means his arm strength is good," Molitor said.

The Twins could use a fifth starter Wednesday when they face Houston — or will they?

If Sunday's game is rescheduled because of weather, which seems quite possible, Lance Lynn can be pushed back to Monday against the Astros. He would be followed by Jake Odorizzi on Tuesday then Kyle Gibson on Wednesday.

Berrios could start on Thursday when the White Sox come to town. The Twins would need a someone to start Friday, however, and could use Hughes then.

Molitor appeared to be thinking that way when talking about the next steps with Hughes.

"He's still on a rehab assignment," Molitor said, "so we'll just have to see how that plays out with the weather and the games being played here the next couple days."

Hardware for Molitor

Molitor on Saturday was recognized for being named AL Manager of the Year last year by the Baseball Writers Association of America. Molitor, while holding the award, posed with former Twins manager Tom Kelly, who won the award in 1991.

As is typical of Molitor, he looked to deflect the credit as he talked about the award.

“For any manager to be in that conversation and have a chance to take home that hardware, other people did their jobs really well,” Molitor said. “We got the right people on the field. They performed. It’s just one of those things where you’re not just blowing smoke. It’s one of those things you can spread around and everyone can feel a part of it.”

Etc.

- The Twins were trying to send Ervin Santana to New York for a checkup on the All-Star righthander’s surgically repaired right middle finger. But the Twins doctors have decided to take a look for themselves. So Santana will fly from Florida to the Twin Cities on Tuesday for the checkup.
- Reliever Tyler Kinley, a Rule 5 draft pick, made his major league debut, pitching the ninth inning.
- Outfielder Ryan LaMarre got his first major league RBI with a pinch-hit single in the ninth inning.

Joe Mauer's \$184 million contract with Twins nearing its conclusion **Sid Hartman | Star Tribune | April 7, 2018**

Twins fans will probably have to wait until 2019 to find out if this was the final season Joe Mauer played for his hometown club.

The 2001 No. 1 overall draft pick, 2009 AL MVP, six-time All-Star and three-time batting champion is in the final year of his historic eight-year, \$184 million deal signed in 2010, and Twins Chief Baseball Officer Derek Falvey has said he will wait until the offseason to do any contract negotiations with Mauer, who would hit free agency at age 36.

However things play out, there is no doubt that Mauer’s career with the Twins has been unprecedented, both in his play and in that mega-deal he signed eight years ago.

To this day, the \$184 million deal reached March 22, 2010, a few weeks before the season began, stands as the most money given to a Minnesota professional athlete in a single contract. There were noteworthy circumstances that led to Mauer and agent Ron Shapiro getting that kind of money from the Twins.

Mauer was coming off not only his best season but one of the greatest seasons in the history of baseball. In 2009 he hit .365 with a .444 on-base percentage and .587 slugging percentage, all of which led the American League. The last person to accomplish that had been Kansas City’s George Brett in 1980.

In addition, the Twins were set to open Target Field, with public money paying for a good portion of its \$555 million price tag. Team ownership had to know that if the Twins let Mauer walk in free agency, it would not look good for public relations.

As Buster Olney wrote for ESPN the day Mauer agreed to the deal, “If Mauer had become a free agent in the fall, he probably would have been the most coveted free agent since [Alex] Rodriguez reached free agency after the 2000 season. With the use of total free-agent leverage, Mauer might have commanded a deal for something in the range of \$250 million in the fall.”

Now Mauer will be a free agent again, in a much different situation.

Historic by any number

While Mauer’s deal was the perfect timing of a pending hometown free agent coming off a historic season, with the team opening a new ballpark, it might not be the most incredible contract in state history.

That probably goes to Kevin Garnett when he and the Timberwolves changed NBA contracts forever after he signed his six-year, \$126 million deal in 1997 at the age of 21. That deal helped lead to the 1998 NBA lockout.

On top of that, Andrew Wiggins’ recent five-year, \$146 million deal will have a higher per-season average. Wiggins will average \$29.2 million

per season, compared to Mauer's \$23 million.

You also have the dual deals that the Wild gave Ryan Suter and Zach Parise in July 2012, which had an unprecedented length at 13 years for \$98 million for each player.

Still there is no question that Mauer's deal remains the most talked-about contract in state history.

You have to wonder if the Twins and Mauer can find a deal like the Wolves gave Garnett late in his career — two years for \$16.5 million in 2015.

Mauer ready, healthy

The good news for Mauer and the Twins is that the first baseman has picked up where he left off last season, hitting .364 through the first seven games of the season, after struggling to regain his form from 2014 to '16.

Mauer said that last year, when he finished the season seventh in the AL in batting average at .305 and fifth in on-base percentage at .384 while playing Gold Glove-caliber defense, came from entering the season feeling truly healthy, which is how he feels this year.

"I was healthy, I felt good, and you know it was just a fun year all around," he said. "We had a lot of guys have great years in the clubhouse, and that translated to the team having success.

"I have been feeling better and better. Going into this year I feel good, too. I'm excited about 2018 and looking forward to building on what we started last year."

When asked if he would like to play more in 2018, Mauer said it's not just about what he wants but about having manager Paul Molitor watching out for his playing time.

"I think I would always say yes, but I think last year with the success, we had I think a similar schedule, I was out there every day that I could," he said. "I think something along the lines of last year worked out pretty well."

Yes, the Twins are hoping for another great season as Mauer approaches 2,000 career hits. The big question for both parties will be what happens after this season.

For his part, he said he's approaching this season much the same as he has done every year, thinking only about the game.

"I think if you asked me that 10 years ago I'm usually focused on the year at hand," Mauer said. "You know I love being a Minnesota Twin and I love this organization and I have chosen to stay here for a long time and I would like to do that.

"But you know right now I'm not looking past 2018. I'm looking forward to just enjoying the heck out of this season and building off of what we did last season."

JOTTINGS

- Recommended for Gophers football fans: Make plans for the spring game at noon Saturday at TCF Bank Stadium. It is guaranteed to be a real football contest.

- Speaking of the spring game, coach P.J. Fleck talked about his expectations for his redshirt freshmen. "There is a reason we redshirted them. They have gotten bigger, stronger, faster. ... But you're still young. You're still freshmen. But again, you can start taking big strides in your redshirt year."

- Former Twins All-Star catcher Tim Laudner is a big booster of current backup catcher Mitch Garver, who hit .291 with 17 home runs in 88 games at Rochester last season.

- The Wall Street Journal ran a story this past week that said venues such as U.S. Bank Stadium, which will play host to the 2019 Final Four, are basically a new breed of stadium and that venues such as San Antonio's Alamodome most likely will not be able to compete for those kinds of

events going forward.

- Two NFL draft analysts, Pete Prisco of CBS Sports and Charles Davis of NFL.com, believe the Vikings will take Notre Dame tackle Mike McGlinchey with their first-round pick, No. 30 overall, later this month.

- The Vikings social media team had a great sideline video of Stefon Diggs “Minneapolis Miracle” catch in the playoffs. That video is now a finalist for a Webby Award, an award for Internet excellence.

- At least 10 former Gophers will be playing in the minor leagues this season. Pitchers Ben Meyer (Marlins), D.J. Snelten (Giants) and Tom Windle (Phillies) are at Class AAA. The rest are expected to start at Class A: catcher Austin Athmann (Tigers), outfielder Matt Fiedler (Cardinals) and pitchers Alec Crawford (Brewers), Lucas Gilbreath (Rockies), Brian Glowicki (Cubs), Jordan Jess (Pirates) and Dalton Sawyer (Athletics).

Saturday's Twins-Seattle game recap

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | April 7, 2018

GAME RECAP

IMPACT PLAYER

Ryon Healy, Seattle

The first baseman cleared the bases in the eighth inning with a double to left-center that broke open the game.

BY THE NUMBERS

27 Degrees at the first pitch, making it the coldest start to a game in Twins history.

3 Walks for Miguel Sano, tying a career high.

7 Consecutive games with a hit for Seattle's Dee Gordon.

1,994 Career hits for Joe Mauer.

ON DECK

Weather permitting, the teams will wrap up their series Sunday. A postponement would mean Seattle would have to make the game up here later this season.

Twins marvel, root for Shohei Ohtani, the Angels rookie designated hitter/pitcher

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | April 7, 2018

When Brian Dozier watches highlights of Shohei Ohtani, the Angels rookie who pitched six solid innings last Sunday to beat the Athletics, then homered as Los Angeles' DH on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, he is reminded of ... Drew Butera?

Wait, better let him tell it.

“Remember when Drew Butera came in to pitch in Milwaukee?” Dozier said of a 2012 blowout loss to the Brewers in which the then-Twins' backup catcher, now with the Royals, took the mound for the ninth inning to preserve the bullpen. “He has a cannon, and he was sitting at like 92 [miles per hour] with ease. Easy cheese, and he could hit 94, 95. There are guys out there who could play both ways if given the chance.”

It's debatable whether there are many players who could deliver star-level performances in both disciplines like the Angels believe Ohtani will; Butera, after all, is a career backup, not an All-Star. But the notion of a true two-way player was a common topic in the Twins clubhouse last week, and Ohtani's challenge clearly intrigues his peers around the game. "I can imagine it," Twins slugger Logan Morrison said, "because I've wanted to do it."

There are instances of players who have given up one side to try the other; new Hall of Famer Trevor Hoffman, for instance, was an overwhelmed middle infielder for the first two years of his pro career before turning himself into one of the greatest closers in history, and former Cardinal Rick Ankiel enjoyed a seven-year career as an outfielder after his promising pitching career was derailed by control problems.

Dozier drew a walk against his former Twins teammate, outfielder-turned-pitcher Jordan Schafer, during a spring training game against St. Louis in February, and the Twins considered using the overall No. 1 pick last June on Brendan McKay, a Louisville star now both pitching and playing first base in the Rays system.

Two-way players are obviously rare, and there's a reason.

"We're talking about some of the best athletes in the world. You can't tell me there aren't guys who could do it. There are guys in this clubhouse who probably could," Dozier said. "But 162 games is so strenuous, there's so much wear and tear on your mind and body, that adding to [your workload] is going to take a toll on your game. And there's too much at stake for that."

In other words, being a star at one position is far more beneficial, competitively and financially, than being less than that at more than one.

Morrison was a part-time pitcher when he was a kid. "Most major leaguers were — the best players pitch and play short" before focusing on their biggest strengths, he said. "I had a pretty good curveball."

He stopped throwing it, though, when his power potential became evident. The division of time is the biggest barrier to an Ohtani feat, Morrison believes.

"Just seeing the work the pitchers put in, to be able to do something like that, a lot of your focus would have to be put on pitching. Then whatever extra time you have would be like, go to the cage," Morrison theorized. "If you can hit, you can hit. Pitchers sort of have to develop [their skills], even if they throw hard."

So would the Twins ever pursue a two-way player? "We tried to get that two-way player," Molitor said, referring to the Twins' fruitless pursuit of Ohtani. The Angels' six-man rotation and off days around Ohtani's DH appearances have caught his attention. "You can't help but think about what it would be like to figure out what would be best for him and for the team to use his skill set at both," Molitor said. "He's got a chance to be something special."

Even opposing players seem to be rooting for him. "If he can sustain both and be successful at both, it's going to be a beautiful thing for the game," Dozier said. "It'll be so much fun to watch."

Central Intelligence

The Twins play 76 games against AL Central foes, so they will quickly become familiar faces. But each team has someone who's familiar already to Twins fans. A quick rundown:

Indians: After the Twins traded closer Brandon Kintzler, Matt Belisle saved nine games in 11 chances down the stretch last year. The Twins let him walk away at season's end, and after signing a minor league deal, Belisle earned a spot in the Cleveland bullpen. The righthander has pitched three scoreless innings, retiring nine of 11 batters.

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Royals: Another veteran who quietly did good work for one year (2015) in the Twins bullpen, Blaine Boyer is now on his fifth team in five seasons. This time it's Kansas City, where Boyer — whose performance slipped (4.35 ERA) with Boston in 2017 — gave up runs in each of his first two games before pitching around a hit and a walk in a scoreless inning Saturday.

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Tigers: Most of the ex-Twins are in the dugout, where Ron Gardenhire hired Minnesota alumni Rick Anderson, Steve Liddle and Joe Vavra for his coaching staff. But Niko Goodrum, the Twins' second-round draftee in 2010 who went 1-for-17 in a September callup last year, made the Tigers as a utility infielder after a strong spring.

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White Sox: After going 0-6 with a 9.67 ERA in a seven-start stretch last year, then publicly questioning his removal by manager Paul Molitor in July, lefthander Hector Santiago never pitched for the Twins again. He has resurrected his career as a long reliever in Chicago, where he pitched from 2011 to '13.

Statistically Speaking

Though the Twins were losing when Kyle Gibson was lifted from Thursday's game, they eventually rallied to win. That marked their 10th consecutive victory when Gibson started (he has been credited with seven of the wins), one of the longest streaks of success in franchise history. Consecutive Twins victories, by starter, with their record in parentheses:

14 Johan Santana (13-0), July 17-Sept. 24, 2004

12 Johan Santana (9-0), July 15-Sept. 10, 2006

12 Brad Radke (12-0), June 7-Aug. 4, 1997

10 Kyle Gibson (7-0), Aug. 22, 2017-April 5, 2018

10 Kevin Tapani (9-0), July 21-Sept. 6, 1991

10 Jim Kaat (4-0), April 21-May 31, 1970

10 Luis Tiant (6-0), April 9-May 28, 1970

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Second baseman Brian Dozier, who has led the Twins in home runs for five consecutive seasons, entered Saturday tied for the AL lead, with four. That's already more homers than he has ever had in any April of his career except one.

Year	April	Season
2013	0	18
2014	7	23
2015	2	28
2016	3	42
2017	2	34
2018	4	?

Central Intelligence: At least one familiar player on each of Twins' Central Division opponents
Staff Writer | Star Tribune | April 7, 2018

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Twins and Mariners about to play a cold one at Target Field
La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | April 7, 2018

The Twins are peeling off whatever covering they put on the outfield so they can prepare the field for today's game. It's 23 degrees as of this writing, and it is supposed to be 26 by gametime. We'll see. Some brave souls already have entered through the gates and are dressed for a very cold afternoon at the park.

Twins manager Paul Molitor repeated before the game that getting Sunday's game in will be a bigger challenge, as snow is supposed to fall during the afternoon. Heard the Twins and Mariners already are eyeing a makeup date in May, but are holding out for sudden change in the forecast that would allow them to get the game in.

Hopefully, they will make a decision on Sunday's game as early as possible, so we can watch the Masters.....er, so fans can get enough advance warning.

"It doesn't look great, obviously," Molitor said. "We're talking about accumulating snow at some point."

Molitor said righthander Phil Hughes had a good outing on Thursday for Class A Fort Myers, despite giving up three runs on eight hits and a walk in five innings. Hughes actually touched 94 miles an hour on the radar gun with his fastball, which was encouraging.

The Twins could use a fifth starter on Wednesday when they face Houston - or will they? If Sunday's game is rescheduled because of the weather - which I expect it will be - they won't need a fifth. Lance Lynn can be pushed back to Monday, followed by Jake Odorizzi and Kyle Gibson. Jose Berrios could start on Thursday when the White Sox come to town. The Twins would need a someone to start Friday, however, and could use Hughes then.

If you're reading between the lines of the following Molitor quote, like I am, I'm predicting that tomorrow's game never starts and Lynn gets pushed back.

"The outing went well the other day," he said. "He got his pitches up a little closer to being able to have a normal start, if you will. Saw he touched 94 the other day, means his arm strength is good. We're going to have to see how things play out here. He's still on a rehab assignment, so we'll just have to see how that plays out with the weather and the games being played here the next couple days."

There will be a pre-game ceremony today in which Molitor will officially receive his AL Manager of the Year award. As expected, Molitor was humble about the honor and looked to deflect the credit.

"For any manger to be in that conversation and have a chance to take home that hardware, other people did their jobs really well. We got the right people on the field. They performed. It's just one of those things where you're not just blowing smoke. It's one of those things you can spread around and everyone can feel a part of it."

Mariners

Dee Gordon, CF

Jean Segura, SS
Robinson Cano, 2B
Mitch Haniger, RF
Kyle Seager, 3B
Daniel Vogelbach, DH
Ryon Healy, 1B
Ichiro, LF
Mike Marjama, C

Mike Leake, RHP

Twins

Brian Dozier, 2B
Joe Mauer, 1B
Miguel Sano, 3B
Eddie Rosario, LF
Logan Morrison, DH
Eduardo Escobar, SS
Max Kepler, RF
Byron Buxton, CF
Jason Castro, C

Jose Berrios, RHP

Twins warm up only briefly, lose coldest game in team history
John Shipley | Pioneer Press | April 7, 2018

It was 27 degrees when Jose Berrios threw the first pitch of an 11-4 loss to the Seattle Mariners on Saturday at Target Field.

“Coldest game in all of baseball, right?” outfielder Robbie Grossman said.

Not quite, but it might have felt that way for the Twins, who fell behind early and never caught up in their first lousy game of the young season. Minnesota clawed back to pull within 5-3 in the sixth inning but never got the big hit it needed, and things fell apart soon afterward.

It was the Twins’ third loss in seven games, and the first by more than one run.

After pulling to within 5-3 on run-scoring hits by Miguel Sano, Eddie Rosario and Eduardo Escobar, the Twins had a chance to tie or go ahead when they loaded the bases with one out in the seventh inning. But Seattle reliever Juan Nicasio struck out Rosario and got designated hitter Logan Morrison to foul out to third baseman Kyle Seager.

“We gave ourselves a chance; that’s what good teams do,” said Grossman. “More than not, we’re going to come through in those situations.”

Berrios (1-1) retired the first nine batters he saw but was chased after giving up five earned runs on six hits in 5 2/3 innings. He struck out seven and didn’t walk anyone, but Seager hit a two-run home run off the net on the right-field foul pole in the fourth, and Dee Gordon drove in two with a soft grounder through a drawn-in infield in the fifth.

Despite the cold, Berrios, who grew up in Puerto Rico, pitched in short sleeves and said he had no issues gripping the ball.

“I was trying not to think about it,” he said through an interpreter. “Obviously, it’s not my climate. It’s just the way it is today.”

The coldest game in Major League Baseball history was April 23, 2013, at Coors Field in Denver, where the Atlanta Braves beat the Rockies 4-3 in a 3:10 p.m. start. The game time temperature was 23 degrees.

The previous record low for a Twins first pitch was 31 degrees in a 7-0 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays on April 17, 2014.

Some hard-hit balls seemed to die in the cold but it didn’t seem to bother the Mariners, who scored a season-high 11 runs on 12 hits and left only

three runners on base. They put the game away with five runs in the eighth off right-hander Trevor Hildenberger, who relieved Zach Duke with the bases loaded and gave up a three-run double to Ryon Healy and two-run home run to pinch-hitter Guillermo Heredia.

“Look, both teams have to deal with (the cold), so it’s really not about that,” Grossman said. “You can’t really say too much about it; it’s something we have to deal with. ... It will be interesting to see what tomorrow brings.”

It might actually be worse. At least it was sunny for Saturday’s game; the forecast for Sunday’s 1:10 p.m. start calls for temperatures between 23 and 33 degrees with an 80 percent chance for snow. The Twins finished a 7-3 win at Pittsburgh in the snow on Wednesday, but Molitor pointed out that had the Twins not ended it in the ninth, umpires might have been forced to stop the game.

Twins center fielder Byron Buxton acknowledged that trying to catch a hard-hit ball in the snow can be dangerous but declared himself game for the possibility on Sunday.

“I mean, it’s our job,” he said. “If that’s what it takes, I’m all in for it — let’s go.”

Twins’ Logan Morrison off to an almost hitless start

John Shipley | Pioneer Press | April 7, 2018

It’s been an inauspicious start for new Twins designated hitter Logan Morrison, who signed a one-year deal worth \$6.5 million after hitting 38 home runs with Tampa Bay last season.

After fouling out with the bases loaded and a chance to put the Twins ahead in the seventh inning Saturday, Morrison is batting .053 (1 for 19) with a double, one run batted in, five strikeouts and two walks.

“I don’t think I’m happy with the way I’ve started, for sure. It’s definitely frustrating,” he said. “But this would be frustrating at any point in the season; it just happens to be at the beginning.”

With the Twins trailing 5-3, Morrison had the bases loaded with two out in the seventh. A left-handed hitter, Morrison pulled a couple of pitches from right-hander Juan Nicasio foul, one of which had the distance to be a long home run had Morrison not been so early. But he wound up sending a high foul ball down the left field line that was chased down by Seattle third baseman Kyle Seager to end the threat.

The Twins didn’t score again until the ninth inning in an 11-4 loss at Target Field.

“(Nicasio) throws hard, put one pitch over the middle and I pulled it foul. But for the most part, he stayed on the corners,” Morrison said. “If I keep one of those fair, it’s a different story in the game. Obviously a big at-bat in the game. I want to come through, but it wasn’t in the cards today. I’ll keep grinding, keep going.”

Logan hit .246 with 85 RBIs and a .345 on-base percentage for the Rays last season, leading the team in homers and finishing second behind Evan Longoria’s 86 RBIs.

“One of the reasons I came here was I don’t have to be the guy, I can be a piece, you know?” he said, noting that Miguel Sano (.296, three home runs, seven RBIs) and Brian Dozier (.290, four HR, six RBIs) “are going right now.”

“If they go through something,” Morrison said, “hopefully I’ll be there to pick them up.”

HUGHES CLOSE?

The Twins haven’t needed a fifth starter yet this season; that’s about to change.

After getting three off days in the season’s first nine days, the Twins played the first of nine straight games on Saturday. It could be Phil Hughes, but the Twins appear comfortable if it’s not.

With offseason additions Jake Odorizzi and Lance Lynn joining Jose Berrios and Kyle Gibson, the Twins’ rotation is deeper than it has been in several years.

Ervin Santana would be the fifth, and No. 1, starter but is rehabbing in Fort Myers, Fla., from February surgery to repair a knuckle on his right hand. Initially expected back by early May, Santana will fly to the Twin Cities for a follow-up visit with Twins doctors on Tuesday.

Hughes, 31, appears recovered from a thoracic outlet syndrome that required two surgeries but is on rehab assignment with Class A Fort Myers because of an oblique strain. He threw five innings in his first start last Thursday, giving up three earned runs on eight hits and a walk.

“He touched 94 (mph) the other day, which means his arm strength is good,” manager Paul Molitor said. “We’re just going to have to see how things play out here.”

Hughes threw a side session on Saturday. Owed \$26.4 million over the next two seasons, Hughes hasn’t pitched since throwing 1 1/3 innings in a 10-5 loss at Houston on June 14, and has appeared in only 26 games since 2015. His rehab assignment officially runs to May 4.

A FIRST FOR LAMARRE

Outfielder Ryan LaMarre, who made the Twins’ roster as a non-roster invite to spring training camp, recorded his first major league RBI in the ninth inning Saturday.

Pinch-hitting for Joe Mauer with one out and a man on third, he drilled a fastball from reliever James Pazos into left field to score Ehire Adrianza from third.

“It was awesome,” he said.

LeMarre, 29, made the team as an extra outfielder after batting .475 with two homers and four doubles in spring training. He played a combined 29 major league games with Cincinnati, Boston and Oakland before signing a free-agent deal with Minnesota.

“I feel like I’m in a good place, and I worked hard to prepare for this role,” he said. “You never take spring too seriously, but I felt like I was in a good place leaving Fort Myers.”

BRIEFLY

Molitor was received his 2017 American League Manager of the Year Award before Saturday’s first pitch. It was presented by former Twins manager Tom Kelly, who managed Molitor in his last three seasons as a player (1996-98). “I didn’t realize TK was going to be here for that,” Molitor said. “When I saw him here this morning, I thought he might be doing some TV today, so he kind of kept it under wraps. It means a lot coming from him, obviously.”

Position-by-position, who’s first in line for a call-up to the Twins?

Jake Depue | ESPN 1500 | April 7, 2018

While much is made of the season-opening roster, we know that no team will get through the year with the same 25 players.

Last season, the Twins used 53 players on their way to a wild card berth, including 36 on the pitching side. With that in mind, and with the rosters now set on the minor league side, let’s take a look at who may be first in line for a promotion to Minnesota.

Catcher

Bobby Wilson (Rochester)

Wilson is a quintessential third catcher. Over the past nine seasons, he’s split his time between the Majors and Triple-A, last appearing in a big league game in 2016. In 849 MLB plate appearances, he owns a .214/.268/.319 career line. Wilson has experience and is thought of as a good defensive catcher, but he’s pretty limited in what he can provide offensively.

Others: Willians Astudillo, Jordan Pacheco

First base/DH

Kennys Vargas (Rochester)

Vargas had quite the journey over the past three weeks. After being DFA’d by the Twins, he spent about 48 hours on the Reds’ roster, before being DFA’d again and getting reclaimed by the Twins. Minnesota was able to get him through waivers the second time around, and he now finds himself back in Rochester and off the 40-man roster. Tough deal for Vargas, but good for the Twins, who will likely call on his bat at some point this season. Vargas is a career .252/.311/.437 hitter in parts of four major league seasons.

Others: Brock Stassi, Brent Rooker

Middle infield

Gregorio Petit (Rochester)

Like Wilson, Petit is in his 30s and has been a Quadruple-A player through much of his career. He's spent most of the past ten seasons in Triple-A, but has gotten into 171 big league games, hitting .249/.291/.353 in 426 plate appearances. Petit last saw time in the Majors in 2016 with the Angels. He can play around the diamond and provides nice depth, but is more or less a replacement-level player.

Taylor Featherston (Rochester)

Like Petit, Featherston has been up and down in his career, and can play multiple positions in the infield. He came up in the Angels system, and played 101 games in his age-25 season with the big club. He struggled mightily at the plate, hitting .162/.212/.247 that year. He spent most of the last two seasons at Triple-A.

Nick Gordon (Chattanooga)

Gordon, as one of the Twins' top prospects, has a very different profile than Petit and Featherston. The guess here is those two would be called upon if a short-term need arises. If the Twins suffered multiple serious injuries in their middle infield and needed a full-time replacement, it's possible they'd turn to the talented Gordon this year. More likely, they'll let him develop in the high-minors, and call him up in September or the beginning of 2019.

Others: Ryan Walker

Third base

Leonardo Reginatto (Rochester)

The Twins don't have a clear replacement for Miguel Sano in the Minors. Reginatto had a nice year for Rochester in 2017, hitting .303/.369/.390. He's in his age-28 season, though, and has never appeared in the big leagues. If Sano got injured, the more likely solution would be to call up Petit or Featherston, move Eduardo Escobar to third, and hand over the shortstop job to Ehire Adrianza. Jorge Polanco's PED suspension has put the Twins in a bit of a tight spot in terms of their infield depth.

Outfield

Zack Granite (Rochester)

Granite just missed making the roster this spring, getting beaten out by Ryan LaMarre. Granite is on the 40-man roster, and saw time with the Twins last year, hitting .237/.321/.290 in 107 plate appearances. He provides speed off the bench, and can play all three outfield positions well. Assuming he stays healthy and puts up solid numbers again in Triple-A, there's a good chance he'll get more big league time this season.

Jake Cave (Rochester)

Acquired from the Yankees this spring, Cave is an interesting prospect. Across Double-A and Triple-A last year, he hit .305/.351/.542 in his age-24 season. Like Granite, Cave can play all three outfield positions, and is on the 40-man roster. Granite stuck with the Twins in spring training longer than Cave, so he may be first in line for a call-up, but if Cave hits well again to start the season he's an interesting option for the Twins.

LaMonte Wade (Chattanooga)

Wade is one of the more intriguing prospects in the Twins' system, because of his elite ability to get on base. With a career OBP of .403, he's demonstrated a refined approach at the plate throughout his minor league career. He's generally viewed as more of a corner outfielder, though he's seen time in center field and started there Opening Day for the Lookouts. Like Gordon, Wade isn't on the 40-man and probably wouldn't be the Twins' first choice for a bench role or short-term call-up, but if he repeats his success again this season he could be in line for a September call-up.

Others: Nick Buss

Starting pitchers

(Note: I'm not including Phil Hughes here, who may be activated from the disabled list in time to start Wednesday.)

Aaron Slegers (Rochester)

Slegers got the nod for the Opening Day start in Rochester, suggesting he may be first in line if the Twins need a starter. He had a very good year in Triple-A last season, with a 3.40 ERA, 19.2% strikeout rate and 4.7% walk rate. That performance earned him a promotion to Minnesota, where he had a 6.46 ERA in 15.1 innings. Slegers doesn't have the upside of some others on this list, but he's on the 40-man roster and a good

candidate to make a spot start, perhaps in a doubleheader.

Adalberto Mejia (Rochester)

Mejia spent most of 2017 in the Twins' rotation. He had a 4.50 ERA, 19.2% strikeout rate and 9.9% walk rate in 21 starts. Command issues led to him rarely pitching deep in games, and the Twins likely want to see improvement there before he earns another call-up.

Fernando Romero (Rochester)

As arguably the Twins' top pitching prospect, Romero likely won't be rushed to the Majors or get called up for a spot start. It's noteworthy, though, that they started him at Triple-A, while fellow top prospect Stephen Gonsalves got sent back to Double-A. Romero has electric stuff and a high ceiling, though durability is a concern. There's talk of him potentially transitioning to the bullpen, where his high-90s fastball would play up. He could make it to Minnesota as a starter or reliever this season, though likely not until the second half.

Others: Stephen Gonsalves, Zack Littell

Relievers

Alan Busenitz (Rochester)

Following an outstanding year in Triple-A and the big leagues last year, Busenitz was the victim of a numbers crunch this spring. There's a good chance he'll be the first reliever called up this season, and if Rule 5 pick Tyler Kinley struggles and gets sent back to the Marlins, Busenitz is the logical replacement.

Tyler Duffey (Rochester)

After spending most of the past two and a half years in Minnesota, Duffey finds himself back in Rochester, where he'll pitch as a long man. Like Busenitz, Duffey has a good chance to see ample time in the Majors, likely in a multi-inning role.

John Curtiss (Rochester)

Curtiss pitched his way to the big leagues last season, putting up outstanding numbers in Double-A and Triple-A before earning the late-season promotion. He's probably a little further down the food chain than Busenitz and Duffey, but he's on the 40-man and has a chance to pitch his way back to Minnesota again.

Jake Reed (Rochester)

Unlike the first three on this list, Reed isn't on the 40-man, which complicates his situation. With a big fastball and good strikeout numbers, he has the ability to get big league hitters out. Limiting walks will be a key.

Tyler Jay (Chattanooga)

Jay is the wild card of the bunch. The former top prospect had an injury-plagued first three years in the Minors. When healthy, Jay features a mid-90s fastball and devastating slider. If he's healthy and effective in Double-A, he could be an impact arm for Minnesota as soon as this year.

The big chill: Twenty-seven degrees at first pitch is coldest for Twins home game

Judd Zulgad | ESPN 1500 | April 7, 2018

When is it too cold to play baseball?

That was a question asked several times this week as temperatures in the Twin Cities remained frigid and the Twins' home opener approached.

Well, we found out Saturday that 27 degrees isn't considered too cold for a ballgame.

That was the announced temperature at first pitch for the Twins-Mariners game, making it the coldest game-time temp for a Twins home game. That includes the time the club spent at Metropolitan Stadium from 1961 to 1982.

This comes after the Twins beat Seattle on Thursday in a game that started with the temperature at 38 degrees. The previous low temp for a Twins game was 31 degrees in the first game of a doubleheader on April 17, 2014 at Target Field. Kyle Gibson pitched eight scoreless innings that day

in a 7-0 Twins victory.

The Twins are scheduled to complete the three-game series against the Mariners on Sunday. The forecast calls for a high of 32 degrees and a low of 27. Two to 4 inches of snow also are possible starting in the afternoon.

Just chillin': Record low cold in Minny, Mariners win 11-4

Staff Writer | Associated Press | April 7, 2018

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) On a frigid afternoon at Target Field, relief pitchers had no trouble warming up.

They simply abandoned the bullpens and found a more comfortable spot to get loose.

It was a Twins-record low of 27 degrees at gametime Saturday as the Seattle Mariners beat Minnesota 11-4.

Because of the below-freezing chill, relievers moved out of the shaded bullpens in left-center field. Instead, they got ready in the indoor batting cages near the clubhouses.

When summoned, they ran to the mound from the dugout.

"The bullpens were probably 15-20 degrees colder. There's no sun down there," Mariners manager Scott Servais said. "MLB worked with us on that, as did the Twins. It was the right thing to do."

Both teams employed five relievers on a day when facemasks and hooded sweatshirts were a standard part of the uniforms.

"That's the coldest ballgame I've ever been a part of," Servais said.

The first-pitch temperature beat the Minnesota mark of 31 degrees for a game in 2014. The Twins began playing outdoors in 1961 at Metropolitan Stadium – from 1982-2009, their home was inside the Metrodome.

Coors Field in Denver holds the major league low with a 23-degree day in April 2013 when Atlanta visited the Rockies.

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

Kyle Seager and Guillermo Heredia homered, and Ryon Healy drove in three runs as the Mariners helped Mike Leake (2-0) win again.

Seattle didn't manage a hit against Twins starter Jose Berrios (1-1) through three innings. Robinson Cano had an RBI single in the fourth and Seager connected for a 3-0 lead.

The Mariners added two more runs in the fifth off Berrios when Gordon rolled a two-run single through a drawn-in infield to make it 5-0.

Berrios was pulled from the game after 4 2/3 innings – his shaky start came one outing after he tossed a shutout in his season debut at Baltimore.

"The early part of the game, I thought Jose threw the ball fairly well," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "He got hurt when he got behind on a couple of good hitters."

Minnesota chipped away with a three-run sixth inning. Joe Mauer and Miguel Sano led off with back-to-back doubles, and Eddie Rosario and Eduardo Escobar followed with RBI singles.

The Twins threatened in the seventh by loading the bases with one out but couldn't push across another run against Seattle's bullpen.

The Mariners added insurance during a five-run eighth inning, including a three-run double by Healy and a two-run homer by Heredia.

MOLITOR HONORED

Before the game, Molitor was presented with his trophy for being chosen as the AL Manager of the Year in 2017.

"It's a very nice award," Molitor said. "For any manager to be in that conversation and have a chance to take home that hardware, a lot of other

people did their jobs really well.”

Molitor led the Twins to an 85-77 record and a wild-card slot after the team won just 59 games one year earlier.

1,000 HITS FOR SEAGER

Seager picked up his 1,000th career hit with a single in the eighth. He became the ninth player in Mariners history to reach that milestone.

”That’s pretty special,” he said. ”That’s something I’m pretty proud of.”

Seager now needs just 2,085 more hits to match teammate Ichiro Suzuki.

”At the rate I’m going, I think if I play until I’m about 73, I think I’ll catch him,” he said.

TRAINER’S ROOM

Mariners: C Mike Zunino (right oblique strain) could join the team when the Mariners return to Seattle next week after their current road trip, Servais said. He was eligible to return from the disabled list on Saturday.

Twins: RHP Phil Hughes (strained left oblique) threw a side session after pitching five innings in a rehab assignment Thursday in Fort Myers, Florida. Manager Paul Molitor said the team will continue to monitor Hughes on a day-to-day basis. ... RHP Ervin Santana (finger) will fly back to Minneapolis on Tuesday to be examined by team doctors.

UP NEXT

Mariners: LHP Marco Gonzales (1-0, 4.26 ERA) makes his second start of the year after earning a win in 6 1/3 innings against San Francisco.

Twins: RHP Lance Lynn (0-1, 11.25) is looking to bounce back from his first start with the Twins, a loss against Pittsburgh.

Lynn looks to bounce back against Mariners

Staff Writer | Associated Press | April 7, 2018

Lance Lynn didn’t exactly make a strong first impression in his debut performance for the Minnesota Twins.

Signed to a one-year, \$12 million deal midway through spring training, Lynn was expected to add some stability to the Twins’ rotation as they build off a surprising wild card season a year ago.

But after giving up five runs in his first inning of work last week at Pittsburgh, Lynn is hoping for a much better showing when the home fans get their first look at him Sunday afternoon against the Mariners at Target Field.

”It was a little bit of a battle,” Lynn said after that outing. ”When you give them five in the first, you put your team in a deep hole. I’ve got to be better next time out.”

Neither Lynn nor manager Paul Molitor would use it as an excuse but having a shortened spring training certainly didn’t help Lynn. The slow winter free agent market left him without a job until agreeing to terms with the Twins on March 10. Lynn only appeared in two Grapefruit League contests, covering seven innings, though he also made a handful of starts on the minor league side to build up his arm strength.

”I don’t really think it’s related to that,” Molitor said. ”He’s been around enough. (Jake) Odorizzi didn’t have a lot of innings down there either. It was a little bit rushed, we get that, but I don’t really want to try to connect the two.”

Lynn never pitched at Target Field during his six seasons with the Cardinals. He will also be making his first career appearance against the Mariners, who snapped a two-game losing skid Saturday with an 11-4 rout behind home runs from Kyle Seager and Guillermo Heredia.

Left-hander Marco Gonzales would welcome another offensive outburst like that Sunday when he makes his second start of the season.

The Mariners’ bats provided him an early boost in his 2018 debut, scoring four runs in the first inning. Gonzales went on to work a career-best 6 1/3 innings, holding the Giants to three runs on six hits with a pair of strikeouts on Tuesday at San Francisco.

"The credit goes to our offense," Gonzales said. "The four runs in the first, couldn't ask for a bigger boost of confidence honestly, and the way they played in the field it was a huge team win all the way around."

Gonzales missed all of 2016 after undergoing Tommy John surgery that April. He returned to action last season and went 1-1 with a 5.40 ERA in 10 appearances (seven starts) after he was acquired in a July trade with St. Louis. He earned a spot in the Mariners' rotation with a strong showing this spring, going 1-1 with a 2.08 ERA in seven starts.

"We knew that last year was his first full year and now it's his second full year off it," manager Scott Servais said Gonzales' recovery. "Now he's got all of his weapons and he's attacking hitters a little differently than we saw last year."

Sunday will mark his first career appearance against the Twins.

The five dumbest things about the first week of the 2018 Major League Baseball season

Matt Snyder | CBS Sports | April 7, 2018

A quick glance at the calendar on one's phone or computer will show that it is Thursday, April 5. That is exactly one week since the start of the 2018 Major League Baseball season. With seven days in the books, it's as good a time as any to run down the dumbest things we've seen in the first week.

Who better to do that than me, our resident dumb expert? Wait. Expert on dumb. That's better, though I've heard many times it's both, so if the shoe fits, why argue? I'm the dumb expert!

By way of reminder, this is a fun exercise in subjectivity. That is, the following includes my opinions. It's also for fun. If anyone gets angry, I hereby release all liability and this is an absolutely legally-binding paragraph. I watch lots of cop shows that have court scenes and I'm telling you, this is true. It's damn true.

Got all that? Good. Here are the dumbest things of the first week in MLB.

1. The Twins and Buntgate

The Twins won over the Orioles on April 1, 7-0. Jose Berrios throwing a shutout in his first outing of the season should have been the story. It was a story. It wasn't the story, though, thanks to his teammates.

In the bottom of the ninth, Orioles catcher Chance Sisco stepped into the left-handed batter's box. The Twins put on the shift, expecting Sisco to pull and obviously wanting to keep Berrios' shutty intact. Sisco decided -- presumably because he's a professional baseball player -- he was going to put on his best effort to get on base and he bunted for a hit down the third-base line.

The Twins didn't think this was acceptable.

A group of adults being paid to play baseball had a 7-0 lead and their feelings were hurt because a player got a base hit by bunting against a shift they voluntarily employed. Think that through.

Twins All-Star second baseman Brian Dozier was among the most vocal. He tried to clarify his stance a few days later, but it really didn't help. Via twincities.com:

"When they didn't hold our runner on, they conceded to the fact they didn't want us to steal, so we didn't steal," Dozier said. "We could have very easily stolen and put up more runs, so therefore in return you don't bunt. That's what everybody is missing in this whole thing."

"Everyone just thinks, 'He's whining because they bunted against the shift,' " Dozier said. "That's how baseball is played. That's just how the game is played. That's just how it is."

"We all have our opinions on the shift and whether it's then OK to do that," he said. "My personal opinion is I think this is a perfect scenario: They weren't holding us on, so therefore don't bunt. That's where it starts. Other than that, you try to find a way to help your team win."

I like Dozier and he's been great the few times I've spoken with him in person. This is more an issue with baseball players as a whole and how they seemingly can't escape this feeling of constantly being aggrieved by the actions of the other team.

Notice how he thought that it didn't matter that the Twins were shifting (and, therefore, still trying to prevent hits), but Sisco still shouldn't have

been allowed to bunt? He's bringing up a previous Twins runner not being held on, but his scenario is actually arguing the opposite. If the runner was being held on, the opponent is saying, "you can still steal," right? With the Twins employing a shift, they are saying "we're still trying, so you can still try and get on base via a bunt," right?

I think the most amazing thing about Dozier's doubling down was when he said "other than that." He's talking about Sisco, a rookie catcher, needing to worry about the feelings of his opponent before trying to help his team. Let's be real, too, by pointing out this is a rookie. He has to worry about more than his team winning. He has to perform as an individual in hopes to establish himself as a big-leaguer and carve out a career. You want him worrying about the opposing team's feelings when down 7-0, too?

That we're even discussing this is oh-so-dumb. A team was winning 7-0 and it won 7-0. Just play the game and quit worrying about stuff that just isn't that damn important.

Get outta here with that. MLB players are among the most mentally tough athletes in the world, but in the face of their so-called unwritten rules, they lose all sense of logic and mental toughness. Then it's all about how you didn't do things the way I wanted you to, so now I'm going to throw a temper tantrum and claim you violated the sanctity of baseball. Again, get outta here.

It's a very, very bad look.

And, yes, it's the dumbest thing we've seen so far in the 2018 season. More to come, I'm sure. When it happens, the Dumb Expert will be here to sort it out.

Former Michigan standout Ryan LaMarre has been a hit with the Twins **George Sipple | Detroit Free Press | April 7, 2018**

MINNEAPOLIS — Former Michigan standout Ryan LaMarre has accomplished more in four games with the Minnesota Twins than he did over the past three seasons with a trio of Major League Baseball teams.

LaMarre, who attended Jackson Lumen Christi, entered Saturday's game with three hits in his first five at-bats. He hit .054 (2-for-37) over 29 career games with the Reds, Red Sox and Athletics from 2015-2017.

LaMarre was one of the feel-good stories of spring training. He beat out Zack Granite to make the Twins' 25-man roster as a reserve outfielder, when nobody really expected him to do so.

"I think it might have just been a combination of stuff," LaMarre said. "In Cincinnati, a lot of the opportunity was coming off the bench, pinch-hitting. In Boston, it was the same way, a lot of time between starts. I feel that's kind of an adjustment."

LaMarre was limited to 17 minor league games in 2014 due to a right knee sprain, a stress fracture in his left leg and a sports hernia. After making his Major League debut in 2015, he was non-tendered by the Reds. He signed as a minor league free agent with the Red Sox in December 2015. He was called up for five games in June 2016 and went 0-for-5 with a walk and a run scored.

A free agent again in November 2016, he signed with the Angels, only to be traded to the Athletics in April 2017 for a player to be named later or cash. He released two months later, after going 0-for-7 in three games.

He was a non-roster invitee of the Twins and hit .475 (19-for-40) this spring.

"It's been an awesome journey, an awesome ride," LaMarre said Saturday morning at Target Field.

The changes he made in the off-season — simplifying his approach at the plate — have paid off in a short sample size. But it didn't take much to surpass what he'd previously done in his Major League career.

He figured if he made the Twins it would be as a reserve, trying to be prepared when called on late in games.

"That's all maturity, stuff I learned in Cincinnati, when I was in Boston, the brief time I was in Oakland," LaMarre said. "Now it's just a matter of executing them a little better."

LaMarre was already comfortable with Minnesota outside of baseball. His wife, Whitney (Taney), is from Edina, Minn., and played college tennis at U-M.

"I'm spent a lot of time in Minneapolis with her family," LaMarre said. "There was a bit of a comfort level. It was an added bonus."

And having teammates who were rooting for him to make it in spring training was another plus. Twins outfielder Byron Buxton said LaMarre has already made an impact on him in the short time they've played together.

"I got a chance to play with him in the Fall League a few years before now," Buxton said. "Great person. Great guy that you want to be around. Always positive, always smiling. He gives 100 percent, no matter what it is, no matter what he's going through. He always puts the team first and I think that shows a lot of character in him. Even though we haven't played together long, I feel like he's helped me out in numerous ways."

Buxton said once he and the other outfielders found out LaMarre had made the 25-man roster, they were thrilled for him.

"You seen the hard work he put in in spring training," Buxton said. "He's very lucky and blessed to come here and put on this uniform. That's the biggest thing for me. I'm a big people person.... Him being a great person, it's unbelievable just to have him in the clubhouse."

Outfielder Robbie Grossman agreed.

"To see what he's gone through to get to this point and make it like he did, it's pretty cool to see," Grossman said.

LaMarre said he hoped he'd make it.

"Just for it all to come together has been special," he said. "I'm just trying to soak it in, one day at a time."

LaMarre has never faced the Tigers in his major league career. The Tigers will visit Target Field for a three-game series starting May 21. The Twins don't visit Comerica Park until a three-game series starting June 12.

"I remember being there for Kenny Rogers' World Series game," LaMarre said. "I feel like when I was in high school was when they started getting really good. It was a fun time to be a baseball fan in Detroit. Been to Comerica quite a few times."

LaMarre said he was always more a fan of the Red Wings than the Tigers. "I was more of a Steve Yzerman, (Sergei) Fedorov fan."

LaMarre said he considered signing with the Tigers in 2016.

"I ended up signing with Anaheim," LaMarre said. "Anaheim gave a major league contract. The Tigers just offered a minor league deal. The Tigers were definitely in the list of the top couple (considerations), until Anaheim came through with that offer."

"Everything happens for a reason and I'm just super excited to be here right now."

The coldest game in Twins history and a rough loss to the M's, by the numbers

Dan Hayes | The Athletic | April 8, 2018

Though Saturday's 11-4 loss to the Seattle Mariners got interesting for a few minutes in the seventh inning, the Twins won't be using many moments from the contest in their highlight reels.

After what appeared to be another sharp performance to back his first, Jose Berrios struggled in the middle innings and exited trailing by five runs. Miguel Sanó walked three times and doubled but also made a throwing error on a ball he probably should have put in his back pocket. Logan Morrison also continued his "frustrating" start with a long day at the plate, and the Twins did it all in the coldest contest in team history, one that lasted three hours and 36 minutes.

Here's a look at some numbers from the game.

27: Degrees at first pitch, the lowest temperature for the start of a game in Twins history. The wind chill was an estimated 17 degrees. The team's previous all-time low was 31 degrees on April 17, 2014 for the first game of a doubleheader against the Toronto Blue Jays, a contest the Twins won 7-0. Saturday's temperature eventually reached 30 degrees with a wind chill of 20. An announced crowd of 18,416 attended the record-breaking contest. The lowest recorded temperature for a first pitch was 23 degrees on April 23, 2013 between the Atlanta Braves and host Colorado Rockies.

"It was freezing out there," rookie pitcher Tyler Kinley said.

7: Runners left on base for Logan Morrison, who popped out with the bases loaded to end a seventh-inning rally after fouling off several pitches hard. Morrison went hitless in four at-bats and also flew out deep to right. Though he's frustrated to be 1-for-19 with a lone RBI to start the season, Morrison said he'd feel the same way if he endured the same stretch in July. Seattle quickly seized the momentum after Morrison fouled out and stretched its lead to 8-3 on a three-run Ryon Healy double.

"I think it's a totally different game if I get a hit there," Morrison said. "Tie it up, maybe they tighten up a little bit and we're able to come through and win later. Like I said, didn't happen. So, frustrating, forget about it and go on to tomorrow."

10: Consecutive hitters retired by Berrios to start the contest following last Sunday's dominant effort in Baltimore. The stretch extended Berrios' shutout innings streak to 12 1/3 to start the season. But Berrios ran into trouble immediately when the streak ended as Jean Segura reached on an infield single and advanced to second on Sanó's throwing error. Robinson Cano singled Segura in, and two batters later, Kyle Seager ripped a two-run homer off the right-field foul pole to put Seattle up 3-0.

Berrios allowed five earned runs and six hits in 4 2/3 innings with seven strikeouts.

"Physically and mentally I felt OK," said Berrios, who wore short sleeves in the frigid temps because long sleeves feel uncomfortable. "First time around the game plan was inside, attack inside. The second time around they figured it out."

11: Percent chance that Dee Gordon's fifth-inning roller up the middle would go for a hit, according to BaseballSavant.com. But with the infield drawn in, Gordon's grounder on an 0-2 offering from Berrios found a hole and allowed Ichiro Suzuki and Mike Marjama to score to give Seattle a five-run lead. Gordon's hit exited his bat at 62.5 mph, the second-softest exit velocity of the day.

"That was a little bit deflating," Molitor said. "We tried to find a way to keep it within three and then they added on."

5: Times the press box phone rang to inform the media and the other team a relief pitcher was warming up inside. Because of the cold weather, both teams decided their relievers could warm up indoors and out of the view of the other team if they chose to.

Pitchers threw in the batting cages where no cameras are available to show who's up and throwing as there are in other parks with indoor bullpens. As agreed upon by both teams and communicated to Major League Baseball, whenever a pitcher began to get loose, the team's bench coach had to call the press box, which then relayed to the opposing team what pitcher was warming up to enter the game. Gabriel Moya warmed up inside but Molitor had the rest of his relievers head out to the bullpen in the fifth inning.

"I wasn't sure where to point," Molitor said. "We had a plan here to do that early and when it got later in the game we put our guys back out there because there's only one mound available in case you need to get two guys hot at the same time. It was a little strange to just point to your dugout instead of the 'pen. We haven't done that unless it's Chris Gimenez coming in. It was a little different.

"We made sure that when we had somebody up we called the press box and the call was immediately made to the opposite dugout. We were trying to be as transparent so everyone knew what was going on."

11: Days in between outings for Kinley, the Twins Rule 5 pitcher who made his major-league debut in the top of the ninth. A former Miami Marlins farmhand, Kinley allowed a run and a hit with a walk, a wild pitch and two strikeouts in his one inning of work. Kinley got two swings and misses among the 17 fastballs he threw. The right-hander's four-seamer averaged 95.9 mph and touched 96.9 mph. He hadn't pitched since he appeared in the team's March 27 exhibition at Washington.

"Priceless," Kinley said. "It really was. I had some friends and family and coaches before that told me try to soak it all in before it happened because it happened so quick. I tried to enjoy that jog, see the stadium really quick and then lock it in and get to work.

"The jog is awesome."

1: Career runs batted in for outfielder Ryan LaMarre, who is 4-for-6 to start the season after he entered 2018 with two hits in 37 career trips. Molitor had to be informed it was the first RBI for LaMarre, who joked that it's not something you'd expect from a 29-year-old. Molitor acknowledged LaMarre's RBI and Kinley's first strikeout in the clubhouse after the game.