



**Minnesota Twins Daily Clips
Tuesday, September 18, 2018**

- Twins' pitching strategy, big inning pay off. MLB.com (Fenwick) p.1
- Rosario aggravates right quad, '18 return unclear. MLB.com (Fenwick) p.2
- Molitor mulling over Twins' future use of 'opener'. MLB.com (Fenwick) p.2
- Twins-Tigers features clash of Gardenhires. MLB.com (Beck) p.3
- Gardenhires are in opposite dugouts with Twins visiting Detroit. Star Tribune (Neal) p.4
- Kohl Stewart shines, Eddie Rosario injured as Twins beat Detroit 6-1. Star Tribune (Neal) p.5
- Amid his hot streak, twin brother is on Taylor Rogers' mind. Star Tribune (Miller) p.6
- Monday's Twins-Detroit game recap. Star Tribune (Neal) p.8
- Twins postgame: Polanco misses a home run...then gets one. Star Tribune (Neal) p.8
- Rosario back in left, Sano available tonight against Tigers. Star Tribune (Neal) p.9
- Alex Smith was reportedly nicer to Patrick Mahomes than Jack Morris was to Mahomes' dad. Star Tribune (Rand) p.9
- It's a very Gardy evening as Twins beat Tigers 6-1. Pioneer Press (Berardino) p.10
- Twins' Eddie Rosario leaves after re-aggravating his right quad. Pioneer Press (Berardino) p.11
- Wetmore's 5 thoughts: Will the Twins close the gap and overtake the Indians in 2019?. ESPN 1500 (Wetmore) p.12
- Moya opens, Stewart stars in Twins' 5-1 win. Fox Sports North (AP) p.14
- Norris seeks first win as Tigers host Twins. Fox Sports North (Sports Xchange) p.15
- A surprise call-up turns Twins-Tigers series into Gardenhire family reunion. The Athletic (Horrobin) p.16

Twins' pitching strategy, big inning pay off

Tyler Fenwick | MLB.com | September 18, 2018

DETROIT -- After making the seventh appearance of his rookie season Monday night against the Tigers, Kohl Stewart could confidently say he felt comfortable on the mound during a 6-1 Twins win at Comerica Park.

Stewart was what Twins manager Paul Molitor has been calling the "primary pitcher," meaning he comes on after the "opener" throws an inning or two. On Monday, the opener was Gabriel Moya, who threw a scoreless 20-pitch first inning. The only blemish was a double by Nicholas Castellanos. Stewart said that's when the call came to the bullpen to activate him for the next inning.

The 23-year-old worked six innings of three-hit ball in a role that's becoming more familiar to him: Monday was Stewart's third consecutive game going in after an opener, and the second consecutive time he did so without allowing a run. Stewart has a 1.88 ERA in those games and hasn't allowed more than three hits per outing.

"I felt comfortable tonight," he said. "I knew what to expect. The more you do something, the better you're gonna understand it."

Stewart said he thinks Moya would have stayed in for a second inning had it not been for Castellanos' double.

"Things worked tonight how you would draw it up if you were hoping for success with the opener format," Molitor said.

Stewart allowed one run in the fourth inning, but it was unearned. With Castellanos on first base, Eddie Rosario fielded a single hit by Jim Adduci to left field, but fell awkwardly as he turned around to throw. He rolled the ball to center fielder Jake Cave, but not before Castellanos scored from first base for the Tigers' lone run. Rosario left the game with an aggravated right quad and was replaced by Johnny Field.

Before his injury, Rosario started the scoring for the Twins with a solo home run in the first inning. It was his 24th homer of the year, three shy of his career high set last season.

The Twins are one of a few teams experimenting with the opener, and they will use one again for Wednesday's series finale in Detroit. Their

record is now 2-3 when using an opener, and both wins have come with Stewart as the primary pitcher.

"I think it's there," Molitor said. "I think [Stewart] gets a little frustrated at times, but that's a good thing. You expect a lot. And really, his outings have been very solid, other than the fact that every once in a while he loses the feel for that sinker. ... So far, he's looked like he's been able to handle the moment."

Helping Stewart along was the Twins' offense, which got to Tigers starter Jordan Zimmermann with a four-run fourth inning to build a 5-0 lead. Four Twins recorded RBI singles in the frame, including Joe Mauer, whose 64th career RBI at Comerica Park is the most hit by any opposing player in the park's history. Zimmermann got two outs but didn't finish the inning.

In the ninth inning, Jorge Polanco hit a line-drive home run to right field for his sixth big fly of the season. It came one pitch after he nearly hit a towering home run over the right-field foul pole. The ball was called foul, and a 27-second review confirmed the call.

SOUND SMART

Robbie Grossman legged out two doubles Monday night. It was the third time this season Grossman has hit multiple extra-base hits in a game, and the 18th time he's done it in his career.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

With two outs and a runner on first in the third inning, Cave made a diving catch in left-center field to rob Tigers rookie Christin Stewart of an extra-base hit and RBI. Cave covered 58 feet in 3.7 seconds (15.7 feet/second), according to Statcast™. The ball had a 38 percent catch probability, making it a four-star catch.

HE SAID IT

"I've seen it on highlight shows and things, where guys come back and hit the next pitch for a homer, but that's the first time I've seen one live. It was a pretty good moment." -- Molitor, on Polanco's home run

UP NEXT

The Twins will return to a traditional starter Tuesday during a 6:10 p.m. CT game against the Tigers. Jake Odorizzi (6-10, 4.41 ERA) will take the mound for Minnesota. Odorizzi took a no-hitter into the eighth inning during in his last start against the Yankees. The Tigers will turn to Daniel Norris (0-4, 6.14), who allowed five runs over 4 2/3 innings during his last start against the Astros.

Rosario aggravates right quad, '18 return unclear

Tyler Fenwick | MLB.com | September 17, 2018

DETROIT -- Twins left fielder Eddie Rosario left Monday night's 6-1 win against the Tigers at Comerica Park after aggravating his right quad in the bottom of the fourth inning.

Rosario fielded a single hit by Jim Adduci, but fell awkwardly as he tried to turn around for the throw. He rolled the ball to center fielder Jake Cave, but not before the Tigers scored a run and Adduci made it to third base.

"I was afraid he was gonna blow his knee out, or his ankle or something," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor said after the game. "Obviously, the leg bent awkwardly. That quad is not doing very well right now. We'll re-evaluate [Tuesday] and see where he's at."

Rosario laid on the ground, visibly frustrated as trainers made their way to him. After speaking with staff, he walked off the field under his own power. Rosario hit his 24th home run in the first inning to get Minnesota's offense moving early.

Molitor said it's too early to say whether Rosario's season is finished, but the Twins are going to be cautious.

"Reaggravating an injury with only 12 games to go, or whatever it is, we're probably gonna be pretty careful," Molitor said.

Rosario returned to the Twins' lineup on Sept. 7 after missing six games with a right quad strain, and this was only his second game in the field since then.

Molitor mulling over Twins' future use of 'opener'

Tyler Fenwick | MLB.com | September 17, 2018

DETROIT -- The concept of using an "opener" pitcher for some games has slowly weaved its way through Major League Baseball this season. The Twins began their experiment with the role in the beginning of September, and though manager Paul Molitor said the sample size isn't large enough to make any major conclusions, he spoke Monday about the possible future of the strategy.

"It's early on in the information return aspect of it," Molitor said before the Twins' series opener against the Tigers at Comerica Park. "I think there's a lot of brain cells being spent on trying to figure out if you have the right personnel in the right situations, and maybe it's something you're interested in pursuing."

Minnesota is set to implement the strategy on Monday and Wednesday in Detroit. The Rays and A's have also utilized the opener this season. If the strategy is going to catch hold in baseball, there are questions Molitor and other managers will need to answer.

"How many times you're willing to do it throughout the course of your rotation during the year, and how much that's going to tax your bullpen, and different things like that," Molitor said. "Those are things that are gonna be valid questions."

One possible area of concern for teams using an opener is how to handle their traditional starters, some of whom will see a drop in official starts and innings. Those can be important markers when it comes to contracts and marketplace values. Molitor is confident in the game's ability to adjust to these changes, but he also understands the practical worries.

"I think we'll get some pushback," Molitor said. "... I always feel that if you do your job well, you're gonna be taken care of."

Sano close to return

Molitor said Miguel Sano might be back in the starting lineup at third base for Tuesday's game against the Tigers. He could even be available later in Monday's game if needed.

The third baseman has been sidelined since he suffered a lower left leg injury while sliding into second base and colliding with Astros shortstop Carlos Correa in Houston on Sept. 4. Sano has said he wants to finish this season on a high note, and Molitor reiterated that Monday.

"I think it would be good," Molitor said. "I know it's hard for him, as it is for hopefully everybody, to feel the disconnect of not playing and wanting to be out there and contributing. He's been talking about trying to get ready here for a while, and we're just trying to be as smart as we can."

Garver still sidelined

Mitch Garver is in Detroit, but he's still dealing with concussion-like symptoms. Molitor said they haven't seen "much improvement" from Garver since taking a foul ball off the mask on Wednesday. There isn't yet a timetable for his return.

"I was given indication that this morning was similar to the last few, which is still somewhat problematic," Molitor said.

Twins-Tigers features clash of Gardenhires

Jason Beck | MLB.com | September 17, 2018

DETROIT -- The No. 81 Twins jersey was waiting for Toby Gardenhire when he walked into the visiting clubhouse at Comerica Park. So was his father, in the other clubhouse.

"I try to forget all the stuff that he tells me," joked the younger Gardenhire, a Twins coach for the series as a reward for his work managing the team's Class A Cedar Rapids club. "I remember the little things. I try to forget most of it."

Tigers skipper Ron Gardenhire has traded phone calls with his son all season, two managers trying to make the most of their chances working at opposite ends of the developmental ladder. For a few days this week, they're on opposite sides of the baseball diamond at Comerica Park.

"Maybe my 7-month-old grandbaby will root for me," Ron Gardenhire lamented before Monday's Tigers-Twins series opener. "I don't know about the wife or anybody else. I have my doubts."

After seeing the family Sunday night, Toby Gardenhire isn't buying it.

"My girlfriend's here; she's got the Twins stuff on. Everybody else is wearing Tigers gear," he said. "We asked little Ronnie -- that's my nephew -- and he said, 'Tigers! Tigers! Tigers!' I said all right, I'm not going to try to fight it right now. They can do whatever they want."

While Ron Gardenhire got back into managing this year with a chance to lead the rebuilding Tigers, Toby landed his first full-time pro managerial gig in the Midwest League after working on the Triple-A Rochester coaching staff last year, and coaching at Division III Wisconsin-Stout before that.

It's a natural extension for the younger Gardenhire after growing up around the game. His dad never encouraged a baseball career, but he didn't have to.

"He's a baseball kid," Ron Gardenhire said. "He's been in baseball his whole life from the time being in the clubhouse when I managing in the lower Minor Leagues. When I played, he was around, and then coaching in the Major Leagues under Tom Kelly and managing. He was always around the ballpark, always taking BP. He's a baseball rat, always done it, played college baseball. That's all he knows, really. He loves it, absolutely loves it, and he's good with people. He's handled himself real well."

Said Toby: "I'd hoped to play up in the big leagues at some point. I played for a little while in the Minor Leagues, didn't get up here as a player. I kind of grew up in the clubhouses. I know all these pretty well. When I was a kid, I think the last time I was in these clubhouses, I was a bat boy."

Father and son followed each other's seasons from afar, watching games online. When they talked after games, it was more about what was happening on the field, one baseball guy talking to another.

"He'll call and ask me about our games and stuff," Toby said. "We've always had a relationship where we talk a lot about baseball stuff. There's not a ton of off-the-field stuff, just because we're such baseball people."

When Toby received word that he would join the big league staff for a few games in Detroit, though, it became a family event. The rest of the Gardenhire kids came to Detroit for the occasion with their families, and they went out to dinner Sunday night.

"He came by the place. All my family came up for this. Not for me," Ron Gardenhire said. "They're all at the house, grandbabies, the whole package, so it was fun seeing them all."

"This is a great opportunity the Twins are giving him to be on the field in the big leagues, and he's worked really hard. He had a good year as a manager, so good for him. Now let's just see who the family roots for."

At least there will be one Gardenhire celebrating a victory each night. But there's only one Gardenhire at risk of leaving the dugout: While the family resemblance is easy to see in the face and the speech traits, the temper is much different.

"He's so much more calm than I am," Ron said. "He's got a good head on his shoulders."

There might be a good reason for that.

"I got ejected a couple times this year, and he did not pay the fine," Toby said. "He may say that he's going to pay the fine, but he does not pay any fines for me."

Gardenhires are in opposite dugouts with Twins visiting Detroit

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 18, 2018

DETROIT – It was a well-intentioned move to reward a hard-working successful minor league manager.

But could the Twins' call-up of Class A Cedar Rapids manager Toby Gardenhire for this week's series against the Tigers create a family divided?

Toby Gardenhire, whose Kernels went 77-62 overall and employed some of the Twins' top prospects, was asked if anyone in his family will root for him and the Twins this week.

"I doubt that, they all got Tigers gear on," Toby said. "My girlfriend is here. She's got the Twins stuff on. Everyone else is wearing Tigers gear. We asked little Ronnie — that's my sister's nephew — and he said, 'Tigers, Tigers, Tigers.' I'm not going to fight it right now. They can do whatever they want."

Ron Gardenhire, who enters the series with a career managerial record of 1,129-1,127, was asked if his wife, Carol, will root for him.

"Debatable," the former Twins manager said. "Maybe my 7-month-old grandbaby will root for me. I don't know about the wife or anybody else. I have my doubts."

So the stage is set as the Twins play the Tigers this week at Comerica Park. Carol picked up Toby from the airport Sunday night and brought him home for family dinner. His sisters, Tiffany and Tera, are in town for the series as well.

But that's it. He wouldn't even spend the night at the house.

"I'm staying with the team," he said. "I said I'm not staying with the enemy."

The Gardenhires met before the game to exchange lineup cards with the umpires. Though they posed for a photo, Toby didn't even shake his

father's hand before the game — only after it.

“He was pretty calm about the whole thing. I thought he was going to crack some big joke on me,” Toby Gardenhire said of the lineup card exchange. “I always think he’s going to do something. I didn’t really know what to expect. I was introducing myself to the umpires and he told them I was his son. I wasn’t going to say anything. Just try to keep it quiet.”

Toby Gardenhire laughed as he talked about his father while discussing his own his path from being a baseball kid hanging out in clubhouses to playing in college, playing in the minors, coaching in college, coaching in the minor and now getting a chance to be a minor league manager. After his playing days ended, he was the coach at Wisconsin-Stout from 2012 to ’16, where he was 81-117.

The Twins brought him on last year. He was supposed to be the hitting coach the Gulf Coast League rookie team but was needed to be the third base coach for Class AAA Rochester as manager Mike Quade recovered from shoulder surgery. This season, he moved to Quad Cities and managed a team that included several top prospects such as Alex Kirilloff, Royce Lewis, Brusdar Graterol, Ben Rortvedt and Jose Miranda.

“I had hoped to play in the big leagues at some point,” said Toby Gardenhire, 36. “I played in the minor leagues and didn’t get up here as a player. I kind of grew up in the clubhouses. I know all these guys pretty well. When I was a kid I think the last time I was in these clubhouses I was the bat boy, but I did it quite a bit growing up.

“To get a chance to be here in this kind of role with this type of scenario is pretty awesome for me.”

That begged a question, if he was in the major league clubhouse and saw what it did to the old man, why get into the business?

“No idea,” Toby Gardenhire said with a laugh. “He asks me that all the time. I said I have no idea. He keeps telling me my hair is going to fall out. I said I think you are about right. I think I lost more hair this year than I’ve lost ever, so it seems about right.”

The two speak by phone frequently, and Toby Gardenhire said that he was constantly needed by his team for having Twins games on the television in his office — while having Tigers games on his computer.

And, in a sign that he’s like his old man, Toby Gardenhire was ejected twice this season.

The Twins routinely call up some of their minor league personnel in September for development purposes. But the Twins made sure Toby Gardenhire would serve his stint against the Tigers.

“He’s excited,” Ron Gardenhire said. “This is a great opportunity the Twins are giving him, to be on the field in the big leagues. He’s worked really hard. He had a good year as a manager. Good for him. Now we’ll see who the family roots for.”

Kohl Stewart shines, Eddie Rosario injured as Twins beat Detroit 6-1 **La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 18, 2018**

DETROIT – Eddie Rosario ran in the outfield Monday, felt good, then made his case to Twins manager Paul Molitor that he’s ready to play in the outfield again after injuring his right quadriceps Aug. 30 in Cleveland.

Rosario has been eager to end his run at designated hitter.

“My numbers are not good at DH,” said Rosario, who is batting .188 this season as a DH.

Rosario got the go-ahead to start in left Monday — and celebrated by blasting a home run to left field off Jordan Zimmermann in the first inning.

But he was not on the field for the end of the Twins’ 6-1 victory over the Tigers after aggravating his quadriceps injury in the fourth inning. He is out indefinitely and, with the season nearly over, is likely done on defense for 2018.

Rosario was injured as he chased down a single to left-center by Jim Adduci with a runner on first. Rosario tracked down the ball and was slowing down to throw it back in — but then he slipped on the grass, fell backward and had his leg fold up under him.

“I was afraid he was going to blow his knee out or his ankle or something,” Molitor said. “Obviously the leg bent awkwardly.”

Rosario tried to flip the ball to center fielder Jake Cave, as he was in pain, but the ball scooted past Cave. That enabled Nick Castellanos to score from first while Adduci pulled into second. Rosario was charged with an error for allowing the runners to advance.

Molitor and Twins head trainer Tony Leo ran out to left field to check on Rosario, who eventually walked off the field.

“With the slip, and we don’t have a great angle from where we are, it just looked like it was very awkward and obviously was in immediately pain,” Molitor said. “We were able to get him off the field on his own.”

It took from Aug. 30 until Monday for Rosario to get back on the field. With this injury, it’s questionable if he will be anything other than a DH the rest over the final two weeks of the season — once he is able to do that.

The Twins had just taken a 5-0 lead in the fourth inning on RBI singles by Jake Cave and Ehire Adrianza, an RBI groundout by Williams Astudillo and a run-scoring single by Joe Mauer.

Righthander Kohl Stewart, who entered after Gabriel Moya opened with a scoreless inning, held the Tigers to one unearned run over six innings on three hits and three walks with five strikeouts. The only run during his watch came on the plate in which Rosario was injured.

“I felt comfortable tonight,” said Stewart (2-1). “I knew what to expect. I guess the more you do something, the better you’re going to understand it.”

Jorge Polanco added a home run in the ninth, his second game in a row with a homer, one pitch after he hooked one just foul.

Amid his hot streak, twin brother is on Taylor Rogers' mind

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | September 18, 2018

Taylor Rogers is in the midst of the best couple months of his career so far, one of the best stretches in Twins history, in fact. But it’s been a disappointing September anyway.

Because of the Twins. And because of the twin.

Rogers has appeared in 24 games since July 30, and hasn’t given up a run in any of them, a stretch of 22 innings that includes 26 strikeouts and only two walks. His ERA, bloated all summer by a couple of bad April outings, is down to 2.80, and he has become manager Paul Molitor’s favorite option for late-inning lefthanders.

But pitching well means less to Rogers if his team isn’t in the pennant race — and if his twin brother isn’t in the major leagues.

“Sometimes I feel guilty that I’m here and he’s not, because I haven’t worked any harder than he has,” Rogers said of his identical twin Tyler, a reliever in the Giants system. “I haven’t done anything different from he has. It’s just where you’re at, where you’re drafted. Who gives you an opportunity.”

Rogers was optimistic that the Giants would give Tyler a chance this September, after his righthanded, side-arming brother posted a 2.13 ERA for Class AAA Sacramento, following his 3.08 mark, with 10 saves, a year earlier.

“I really had my hopes up this year that it would happen. But they called him in and told him they weren’t” going to add him to the roster, Rogers said. “I think I was more upset than he was. He doesn’t want anybody feeling sorry for him. He’s got a good mind-set.”

Still, the chance to become the 10th pair of twins to play in the majors is a goal the Rogerses, now 27, have had for a long time.

“If you think about it, baseball’s been around 150 years, to only have 10 sets to do it, that’s pretty sweet,” Taylor said. “I know it’ll happen one day. We’ve just taken different paths. We look the same, but we’re completely different pitchers, apples and oranges on the mound. He just has to take his own path, and I do the same, and we’re both rooting for each other.”

There has been plenty to root for this year. Taylor Rogers established himself as a valuable member of the Twins bullpen in 2016, and last season led all major league relievers in holds. But this year, concerned that his fastball-and-curveball approach wasn’t giving him enough options, especially against righthanders, Rogers developed a third pitch.

“Incorporating a slider has been good, as a whole. You work on something every day for awhile, it has a tendency to get better,” he said. “It’s still in the working stages, but I’ve been using it since May, and it’s giving hitters a new look.”

Rogers has thrown his slider 13 percent of his pitches this year, according to Fangraphs, but it has been much higher during his scoreless streak. He is still almost unhittable by lefties — they are hitting .188 against him this year, and Rogers has somehow not given up an extra-base hit to a lefthander all season — but the slider had helped him limit righthanders to a .233 average, more than 50 points lower than 2017.

“It’s been a nice weapon to incorporate, both to give the lefties a look at a second breaking pitch, but also the righties — it’s a tough pitch for them to lay off,” Twins manager Paul Molitor said. “He’s been on a nice run here for quite awhile.”

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

Longest scoreless inning streaks by Twins relievers:

36	J.C. Romero, 2004 (above)
29	Joe Nathan, 2004
28 $\frac{2}{3}$	Johnny Klippstein, 1965-66
26 $\frac{1}{3}$	Juan Berenguer, 1988
25 $\frac{2}{3}$	Johan Santana, 2002-03
25 $\frac{2}{3}$	Larry Casian, 1993
25 $\frac{1}{3}$	Tom Edens, 1992
22 $\frac{2}{3}$	Joe Nathan, 2009
22	Taylor Rogers, 2018

Only one player in Twins history has appeared in more games and been to the plate more times than Joe Mauer, whose career could end in less than two weeks.

1,939	Harmon Killebrew
1,846	Joe Mauer
1,783	Kirby Puckett
1,747	Kent Hrbek
1,676	Tony Oliva

Most plate appearances in Twins history:

8,018	Harmon Killebrew
7,909	Joe Mauer
7,831	Kirby Puckett
7,137	Kent Hrbek
6,980	Rod Carew

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

For 80 percent of the AL Central, 2018 has been a forgettable year. But there were still some performances worth celebrating. Here are the MVPs around the rest of the division:

Cleveland: In some seasons, piling up 78 extra-base hits, 101 RBIs, 32 stolen bases and more walks (96) than strikeouts (72), as Jose Ramirez (above) has done, would be enough to earn the AL MVP award. Ramirez, or almost-as-qualified teammate Francisco Lindor, don’t figure to take the big prize, but they’re back in the playoffs.

Detroit: Nicholas Castellanos will head into a contract year next spring as the Tigers’ leader in hits, doubles, home runs and RBIs, not to mention

batting average, on-base percentage and slugging percentage. Yet it's not clear yet whether Detroit intends to lock up their only consistent threat in the lineup with a long-term deal.

Chicago: They used the season to give their young team some experience, but nobody had a break-out year. Well, in the lineup, anyway. Lefthander Carlos Rodon, who missed two months with a shoulder injury, returned to deliver on his first-round-pick promise, reeling off nine consecutive quality starts at one point.

Kansas City: His power numbers are down a bit from last year, but Whit Merrifield has established himself, in just his second full season, as the most reliable hitter in Kansas City's admittedly depleted lineup. An .802 OPS from the leadoff spot is respectable, and Merrifield will likely lead the AL in steals for the second straight year.

Monday's Twins-Detroit game recap

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 18, 2018

IMPACT PLAYER: Kohl Stewart, Twins

The rookie gave up one unearned run over six innings on three hits and three walks.

BY THE NUMBERS

2 Home runs hit this month by Eddie Rosario.

64 RBI at Comerica Park for Joe Mauer, tops among all Detroit opponents.

8-6 The Twins' record against Detroit this season.

ON DECK

Jake Odorizzi threw 120 pitches Wednesday in taking a no-hitter into the eighth inning against the Yankees. But he's had five days of rest since then. Lefthander Daniel Norris will start for the Tigers, and he is expected to face Miguel Sano, who is set to return to the Twins lineup for the first time since Sept. 4.

Twins postgame: Polanco misses a home run...then gets one

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 18, 2018

Jorge Polanco on Monday homered for the second straight game. This was one more interesting.

In the ninth inning, Polanco sent an Alex Wilson pitch drive down the right field line that hooked foul. But it was hit so high that Twins manager Paul Molitor thought it might have cleared the pole before hooking.

"I'm not right down the line," he said, "but I thought it had the height maybe to get over the top of it. It was worth a look. I still think they are going to put cameras on those poles one day to kind of make it kind of more clear than they do."

The umpires checked replay and, after about 20 seconds, confirmed that the ball went foul. Back to action.

Polanco promptly blasted the next pitch over right field wall for his sixth homer of the season, giving the Twins a 6-1 lead.

"I've seen it on highlight shows where guys have come back and hit the next pitch for a homer," Molitor said. "That was the first time I've seen it live. It was a pretty good moment."

After hitting no homers in his first 32 games, Polanco has hit six in his past 33 games.

Showtime for Sano

Molitor said Miguel Sano was available as a pinch hitter on Monday. Sano wasn't used, but after the game Molitor said Sano is expected to be in the starting lineup on Tuesday.

Sano has been absent from the lineup since Sept. 4, when he suffered a lower left leg contusion while sliding into second base. It's the same leg in which a titanium rod was inserted during the offseason, and he had to overcome the initial concern that he had re-injured the leg.

He's felt much better in recent days and has been going through full pre-game drills.

"He wanted to play [Monday]," Molitor said, "which is really good."

Etc.

- Tyler Austin took a nasty-looking tumble over the railing and into the camera bay in Kansas City on Sunday as he ran down a foul ball. He remained in the game and flied out to right in his next at-bat, but left the game afterward. He was just recovering from a sore back suffered in Houston when he fell backwards while trying to avoid the railing while in pursuit of a foul ball there. Molitor said Austin was available off the bench Monday.

- Mitch Garver was making progress in his recovery from a concussion, but Monday did not see much improvement. He remains out indefinitely.

Rosario back in left, Sano available tonight against Tigers

La Velle E. Neal III | Star Tribune | September 17, 2018

By this time tomorrow, the Twins lineup should look more familiar.

Eddie Rosario ran before the game, met with manager Paul Molitor and told him that he was ready to play in the outfield. So he's starting in left field tonight for the first time since Aug. 30 in Cleveland. That's when he strained his left quadriceps.

Molitor has used Rosario as a DH in the recent games, but Rosario prefers to be in the outfield.

"My numbers aren't good at DH," he said.

He's right. In 12 games as a DH, Rosario is batting .188. So back to the outfield.

"I don't know if you can actually put a number on percentage of his health, but I think he can make the plays he's going to need to try to make as a left fielder and we'll see where it goes," Molitor said. "We're not anticipating any setbacks. This gives Robbie Grossman a chance to get out of the outfield for a day after all the games he's played consecutively and give him a little bit of a blow."

There's a little risk there, because Grossman is swinging the bat as well as he has all season, batting .333 with a .436 on base percentage over his last 25 games.

While Rosario is back in left, Miguel Sano is available to pinch hit tonight and is expected to start at third base tomorrow after recovering from a lower left leg contusion suffered Sept. 4 in Houston when he slid hard into second base.

"I know it's hard for him as it is for hopefully everybody feeling disconnected and not playing and wanting to be out there contributing," Molitor said, "so he's been talking to me about trying to get ready here for awhile. we're just trying to be as smart as we can. But I think he's ready to give it a go tomorrow."

Alex Smith was reportedly nicer to Patrick Mahomes than Jack Morris was to Mahomes' dad

Michael Rand | Star Tribune | September 17, 2018

Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes II is off to a scorching start to his season, throwing for 10 touchdowns and no interceptions in two outings in leading Kansas City to a 2-0 record.

Mahomes is taking over as the starter for Alex Smith, who was traded to Washington in the offseason (a move that cemented Kirk Cousins' departure and eventually led him to Minnesota). Mahomes has a closer connection to Minnesota as well: his dad, Pat Mahomes, pitched for the Twins starting in 1992.

With that, we get this anecdote from Peter King's "Football Morning In America" column:

Dads understand and appreciate help given to their children. So Pat Mahomes told Smith several times last year how much he appreciated what he did for his boy. Unspoken was the fact that they both knew Patrick was there to take Smith's job.

"That's what's so admirable about what Alex did all season for him," Pat Mahomes said. "I know how it was when I came up [to the Minnesota Twins, in 1992]. I remember one time that year asking Jack Morris how he threw his split-finger fastball. He said, 'Get away from me, you little ... You'll be trying to take my job next year.'"

Now, first a small problem with the parenthetical as it appears in King's piece: Morris did not pitch for the Twins in 1992, having moved on to the Blue Jays after his one huge season (and World Series title) in 1991. Mahomes did not make his debut for the Twins until 1992.

The best guess here is that Mahomes spent some time in spring training with the Twins in 1991, which would make sense given that he was in his fourth professional season, was a rising prospect and would eventually start the year in Class AA — and therefore he is not making up this anecdote but rather the years are mixed up and this moment happened in the spring of 1991. (If so, it proved prescient. When Morris moved on, Mahomes was tapped as a starter in 1992 despite being just 21 years old, essentially taking Jack's job).

Anyway, this was more than a quarter-century ago. I don't think Morris was under any obligation to help Mahomes — nor is it surprising to learn he might have been salty when approached.

It's a very Gardy evening as Twins beat Tigers 6-1 **Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | September 17, 2018**

DETROIT — As lineup exchanges go, Monday's was about as memorable as they come for the Gardenhire family.

You could tell it was an emotional moment for Detroit Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire because he remembered to shake the hands of all four umpires for this 6-1 loss to the Twins but initially forgot to greet his son. Perhaps that had something to do with Toby Gardenhire's mock refusal to spend Sunday night at his parents' house after flying into town for his first September coaching call-up.

"I'm not staying with the enemy," he told his parents. "I'll stay at the team hotel."

Gardy the Elder clued in Jerry Layne and his crew on the identity of this fresh-faced Twins representative, sent up by Twins bench coach Derek Shelton at the last moment out of respect for a proud baseball family.

"I thought he was going to crack some big joke on me," Toby said of his father. "I always think he's going to do something. I didn't really know what to expect."

What he got instead was a keepsake photo that came at the suggestion of the umpires.

"They were the ones who said, 'Let's take a picture,' " Toby said. "Those are good guys. It's a once-in-a-lifetime type thing. It's not something you see every day, where you get a chance to do something like that with your dad in a big-league ballpark."

Coming off a highly successful debut season managing at Class A Cedar Rapids, where the prospect-loaded Kernels went 77-62 and reached the Midwest League semifinals, Gardy the Younger went to dinner Sunday with his parents, his two sisters and their families.

Monday, as father and son met on the field, Toby Gardenhire looked up and saw his mother Carol and the rest of the family waving down from a stadium suite.

While Sara Hanson, Toby's girlfriend, sported Twins gear, she was alone in that regard. Little Ronnie Gardenhire, Toby's 3-year-old nephew, made his loyalties clear before this matchup between two American League Central also-rans.

"We asked Little Ronnie, and he said, 'Tigers! Tigers! Tigers!' " Toby said before rookie right-hander Kohl Stewart permitted just one unearned run in six relief innings. "I said, 'All right. I'm not going to try to fight it right now. They can do whatever they want.' "

Gardy the Elder already did his thing a few weeks back when he let it slip to the local media that his son would be in uniform for this three-game series. The assignment hadn't yet been announced, so that prompted a call from Toby, 36.

Monday marked Toby's first day in the visitors' clubhouse at Comerica Park since his youthful days as a bat boy for his dad's old Twins teams. Drafted twice in the late rounds by the Twins — 38th round out of high school, 41st round in 2005 out of the University of Illinois — the light-hitting middle infielder reached Triple-A Rochester for 153 games over parts of two seasons (2010-11) before calling it a career.

From 2012-16, Gardenhire spent five seasons as head coach at Division III Wisconsin-Stout before returning to the Twins organization that summer.

Given his familiar No. 81 by the Twins' equipment crew, the same no-hope number he wore for several straight springs as a non-roster invitee to big-league camp, Gardy the Younger offered to throw as many rounds of batting practice or hit as many pregame grounders as his father's successor, Paul Molitor, requested.

Toby, who will head down to Fort Myers for instructional league after this series, mostly looked forward to soaking up as much knowledge as

possible during his short stint. His arrival also had to make his dad feel a little better about what should soon be the fifth straight 90-loss season on his watch after guiding the Twins to six division titles in nine years.

Gardy the Elder, who managed the 1988 Kenosha Twins to 81 wins and the Midwest League finals in his only season at that level, also served as bench coach for an Arizona Diamondbacks playoff team last season. That came after a battle with prostate cancer that caused the 60-year-old to miss part of the 2017 season.

“He loves it here; he’s had a blast with it,” Toby Gardenhire said. “When he left Minnesota, I didn’t know if he would get another chance to manage. I think this opportunity was pretty perfect because he’s been through this situation a few times where they have young players and they’re trying to build back up.”

Twins’ Eddie Rosario leaves after re-aggravating his right quad

Mike Berardino | Pioneer Press | September 17, 2018

DETROIT — Eddie Rosario’s season could be over.

Limited to designated hitter duties since aggravating his strained right quadriceps on Sept. 7, Rosario returned to left field Monday but exited in the fourth inning with a re-aggravation of the muscle.

As he tried to plant and spin upon corralling Jim Adduci’s single into the gap, Rosario slipped to the turf. Before collapsing face-down in a heap, he flipped the ball toward center fielder Jake Cave to avoid a two-run inside-the-park homer but was still charged with his ninth error.

Head athletic trainer Tony Leo and assistant trainer Matt Biancuzzo raced out to check on Rosario along with Twins manager Paul Molitor. Rosario was able to walk off on his own, but was limping noticeably after the game.

“I was afraid he was going to blow his knee out or his ankle or something,” Molitor said. “The leg bent awkwardly. That quad is not doing very well.”

Earlier, Rosario hit his 24th homer on the second pitch he saw, leaving him three shy of his career high from last season. With 77 runs batted in, he is one shy of his career high, also from last season.

While saying “it’s too early” to say Rosario’s season is over for sure, Molitor noted that “with only 12 games to go you are going to be pretty careful.”

If the Twins decide to bring up another outfielder to finish out the season, LaMonte Wade Jr. would seem to be the top candidate. He needs to be added to the 40-man roster in November anyway, and Byron Buxton and Zack Granite have already been sent home to recuperate from injury-marred seasons.

“He’s been anxious to get back out on the defensive side of the game,” Molitor said before the game. “I don’t know if you can actually put a number on percentage of his health, but I think he can make the plays he’s going to need to try to make as a left fielder and we’ll see where it goes. We’re not anticipating any setbacks.”

SANO CLOSE

Miguel Sano, his left knee feeling much better, nearly talked his way into the Twins’ lineup Monday at Comerica Park.

Instead, the Twins third baseman was given another day to recuperate before likely ending a two-week absence with a start on Tuesday night.

“Miggy had a good day,” Molitor said. “He wanted to play today, which is really good.”

For the first time since being taken off the field on an electric cart Sept. 4 in Houston, Sano was deemed available off the bench Monday. He took early grounders at third base and added to that total during batting practice — so figures to return at his main position rather than serving as designated hitter.

What would a healthy final two weeks mean for Sano heading into the offseason?

“I think it would be really good,” Molitor said. “I know it’s hard for him, as it is for hopefully everybody feeling disconnected and not playing and wanting to be out there contributing. So, he’s been talking to me about trying to get ready here for a while. We’re just trying to be as smart as we can, but I think he’s ready to give it a go (Tuesday).”

GARVER UPDATE

Catcher Mitch Garver was still dealing with concussion-related symptoms on Monday after making the flight from Kansas City.

“I don’t think we’ve seen much improvement there yet,” Molitor said. “The timetable on those things is difficult to predict.”

Garver, who took a foul tip off his catcher’s mask on Sept. 12, went to Comerica Park on Monday after spending time in the dugout before Sunday’s game against the Royals. He also participated in the rookie dress-up routine after Sunday’s game, donning a full horse-and-jockey costume but restricting his race to a moderate walking pace.

Garver’s symptoms on Monday were similar to those he felt over the weekend in Kansas City, which Molitor said was “still somewhat problematic.” It’s believed Garver would still have to pass concussion protocol before returning to action, even though he wasn’t placed on the concussion disabled because of the expanded September roster.

AUSTIN PLAN

First baseman Tyler Austin, removed from Sunday’s game after a dangerous fall onto concrete in Kansas City, took batting practice on Monday and appeared to be working his way back.

“He took quite a fall,” Molitor said. “He’s a little bruised and battered, but I don’t think it’s as connected to his back injury as much as he got whacked pretty good there.”

Austin, who has now evenly split his 16 homers between the Twins and New York Yankees, entered Monday in a 5-for-43 (.116) tailspin with 19 strikeouts. He did homer on Sunday for the first time this month.

BRIEFLY

Don’t read too much into it, but super utility catcher Willians Astudillo was spotted taking grounders at shortstop during Twins batting practice Monday. The cult hero already has appeared at nearly every defensive spot in the majors. All that’s left: shortstop, first base and right field.

Wetmore’s 5 thoughts: Will the Twins close the gap and overtake the Indians in 2019?

Derek Wetmore | ESPN 1500 | September 18, 2018

The Cleveland Indians over the weekend clinched their third consecutive American League Central division title. The Twins have a long ways to go to catch up to the champs.

In the next breath and with a straight face we can say that it’s entirely possible that Minnesota is right back in the mix next year. Closing the gap will take a good offseason, some positive development internally, and probably some good fortune.

Right now the Twins (68-81) are about to assure a sub-.500 season, and there’s an outside chance that the club could lose 90 games despite an easy home-stretch schedule. So how can we reasonably expect Minnesota to close the 15-game gap that currently separates them from the Cleveland Indians?

Since division relevance is the next step on their path to perennial contention, it’s a question that demands deeper examination. We’ll spend a lot of time on each of these subjects between now and the time the Twins report to Fort Myers for spring training. This column presents 5 thoughts on how the Twins can close the gap with the Indians.

Starting Rotation

This to me is the most glaring and obvious difference between the Twins and the Indians. Cleveland just has a better starting rotation, both in terms of depth and top-end quality. It’s also fair to say that the Indians have had better luck with keeping their guys healthy.

The Indians have asked 7 different pitchers to start a game for them this season. Their top-4 guys have all made at least 25 (Trevor Bauer got hurt with line drive), and a “depth” option like Shane Bieber has made 17 starts and been really good.

The Twins meanwhile have used 16 different starters if you count the late-season “openers.” Only 3 pitchers have started more than 25 games (although Lance Lynn – 20 – would have hit 25 if the Twins had wanted him to; They did not).

Fernando Romero was impressive out of the gates but faltered, was sent to the minor leagues, and then sent home in September along with Byron Buxton. Ervin Santana’s disaster final season in Minnesota helps to explain the surprising instability within Minnesota’s rotation. They counted on him for 30 starts and he made 5 uneven starts.

All told, Twins starters have patched together a 4.59 ERA to date, while Indians starters are second in the American League with their collective 3.41 ERA. There’s a significant gap to be closed in the starting rotation if the Twins want to dethrone the Indians next year. Free agency? Trade?

Bullpen

Last winter you might have had this circled on the wall-mounted calendar as an opportunity. Cleveland had just lost Bryan Shaw and Joe Smith in free agency, and in 2019 they'll face the possibility of losing Cody Allen and Andrew Miller.

But for all the talk centered on how bad Cleveland's bullpen has been this season, the Twins have been worse. Together the relievers in Minnesota have posted a 4.75 ERA to Cleveland's 4.60, and we're ignoring some of the bad outings Twins relievers have had as openers in recent weeks. Only the Orioles and Royals have been worse than the Twins in the bullpen.

Cleveland might still lose those good pitchers from their bullpen next season, but they swung a big trade with the Padres to land Brad Hand, who is under contract for the next few years. That should help offset any losses realized in free agency this winter.

The Twins on the other hand have several nice pieces that will look good in the 2019 bullpen picture, but they don't have that top-end relief ace that the Indians boast in Hand and Miller (when healthy). The Twins have some good options in Taylor Rogers, Trevor May, Trevor Hildenberger and Fernando Romero, although they lost Ryan Pressly and Fernando Rodney to trades, and Addison Reed hasn't been very good. (Pressly's departure in particular is a bad look for the Twins now that he's excelling in Houston's bullpen.)

I think Minnesota will need to count on some of its internal options coming through for the club in 2019, and the front office will also have to go shopping to improve the late-inning options.

Stars being stars

The Twins currently have a "maybe" designation next to the names of their two prominent stars-in-waiting. There's no maybe when it comes to Cleveland's superstar players.

Francisco Lindor and Jose Ramirez are two of the best players in baseball this year, and they've launched the Indians to the top of a division that is otherwise lacking for superstars. The two players in the Twins' organization with the best chance to be superstars — whatever you think of them right now — are Miguel Sano and Byron Buxton.

If you were the forgiving type, you'd chalk up 2018 as a lost season due to injury for those two players. If you were a little more skeptical in nature, you'd count this as a full step backward for each player, and you're much less sold on the prospect of each one realizing his superstar potential.

There's no doubt in my mind that each player is capable of that still, given their age and the story behind the numbers in both cases. But if you're just looking at the numbers and the recent injury track record it's not a promising picture for the Twins. The Twins could contend without Buxton and Sano arriving as consistently great players. It's just a whole lot easier to imagine that happening if both of those guys establish themselves like the two stars in Cleveland.

For and against

At times this year you've noticed Buxton's absence in centerfield. Last year he routinely turned would-be doubles into highlight-reel catches. When doubles turn to outs the pitching staff looks much better. This year we've seen some should-be outs turn into base runners. You've also noticed a step back behind the plate from Jason Castro to Mitch Garver (although I've seen progress from Garver defensively this season in a learn-on-the-job environment).

The Twins offense was one of the best in baseball down the stretch last year, even without a healthy Miguel Sano. That's when Buxton was on fire. So was Jorge Polanco. Same for Eduardo Escobar and Brian Dozier. This year it's been a much different picture.

Last year the Indians scored 818 runs to the Twins' 815, thanks to a late charge in Minnesota. This year the gap is nearly 100 runs, in favor of Cleveland. And the Twins have allowed 135 more runs to cross the plate than the Indians have this season. Let's oversimplify things to say that Cleveland's bullpen has triggered a step back in the run prevention department despite a great starting rotation; the Twins have taken a big step backward when it comes to scoring runs and they might allow more runs this year, too.

You could look at these numbers and think that the gap between the Twins and Indians is actually greater than the current standings show. For the purpose of this column let's just call it 15 games and see how the rest of September plays out. In any case, Minnesota will have its work cut out this winter.

Free agency impact

That brings us to an important point. Both teams have some notable players set to hit the market in November. I'd expect this winter will be a lot more free-spending than the slow-to-move market that we saw last year.

For the Twins, Joe Mauer, Ervin Santana (option), Logan Morrison (option), Logan Forsythe and Chris Gimenez will be free agents. For the

Indians, it's Allen and Miller, along with Michael Brantley, Josh Donaldson, Lonnie Chisenhall, Josh Tomlin, Rajai Davis, Melky Cabrera and Oliver Perez.

The optimistic Twins fan looks at this picture and says there's a lot of money coming off the books for Minnesota and the Indians will be hurt by some key departures. But a word of caution.

All the Indians did last winter was sign Yonder Alonso to a modest 2-year deal to play first base. They lost Carlos Santana, Bryan Shaw and Joe Smith. The Twins had a pretty bad go of free agency, even though we all agreed they did well as bargain-shopping opportunists last winter/spring.

Knowing what you know now, how many of these deals would you do again?

Logan Morrison, 1 year and \$5.5 million. Handed out in spring training and includes an option for 2019.

Addison Reed, 2 years and \$16.5 million.

Lance Lynn, 1 year and \$12 million. Bad April but the Twins got two interesting prospects when they traded him to the Yankees.

Michael Pineda, 2 years and \$10 million. Too soon to say but could be good for the Twins next year.

Zach Duke, 1 year and \$2.15 million.

Anibal Sanchez, spring invite. The Twins signed Sanchez and then cut him loose in camp so he could go have a great year for the Braves. Can't even blame the Twins for that. Honestly, Did anybody see that one coming?

Here's a hot take. The Twins will have to do much better this time around in free agency if they want to make good on their plans to topple the Indians in 2019.

Moya opens. Stewart stars in Twins' 5-1 win
Associated Press | Fox Sports North | September 17, 2018

DETROIT — Ron Gardenhire encountered a familiar face during the pregame lineup exchange.

It was his son — representing the opposing team.

Toby Gardenhire is spending some time with the Twins as a coach, an opportunity made even more special Monday by the fact that Minnesota was facing Detroit. The elder Gardenhire manages the Tigers.

Toby's team prevailed on this night. The Twins scored four runs in the fourth inning and won 6-1.

"It was a nice gesture for the Twins to bring him up for a few days in Detroit, and he got to meet the umpires and get the ground rules," Ron Gardenhire said. "Hopefully, one day he'll be up here as a coach or as a manager with those guys and I can see him get thrown out of a game."

Toby Gardenhire manages the Twins' Class A affiliate in Cedar Rapids. He came out for the lineup exchange before the game, and the Gardenhires posed for a photo with the umpires.

"Once-in-a-lifetime type thing," Toby Gardenhire said. "It's not something you see every day, where you get a chance to do something like that with your dad in a big league ballpark, so it's pretty cool."

Kohl Stewart pitched six solid innings for Minnesota, and Eddie Rosario homered before leaving with an injury.

Gabriel Moya pitched the opening inning for Minnesota before Stewart (2-1) took over and worked through the seventh. He allowed an unearned run and three hits with three walks and five strikeouts.

"Kind of how you would draw it up if you're hoping for success with the 'opener' format," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "Moya gets through the first. Kohl was good. He got a lot of balls on the ground."

Rosario hit a solo shot in the first, his 24th home run of the year. He left in the fourth after aggravating a right quad injury on the play that gave Detroit its only run.

Jorge Polanco added a solo homer of his own in the ninth.

Jordan Zimmermann (7-8) allowed five runs in 3 2/3 innings. He yielded a double and five singles in the fourth.

Nicholas Castellanos had three hits and a walk for the Tigers.

Polanco hit a drive to right in the ninth that was barely foul. The play was reviewed and the call was upheld — then Polanco promptly connected for a homer that was more toward right-center.

PICK A SIDE

The Gardenhires had some additional family at the game, and Ron said beforehand he wasn't sure how much support he'd have.

"Maybe my 7-month-old grandbaby will root for me," Ron Gardenhire said. "I don't know about the wife or anybody else. I have my doubts."

Toby Gardenhire had a different view after the game.

"They seemed like they were all rooting for the Tigers," he said. "My girlfriend was up there, and she was the only Twins fan."

ROSARIO HURT

Rosario fell while fielding Jim Adduci's single to left in the bottom of the fourth, and he stayed on the ground. He attempted to flip the ball to center fielder Jake Cave, but that effort was a bit off target, and it took a moment for Cave to retrieve the ball and throw it back toward the infield.

A run scored on the play, and Adduci ended up on third. Rosario was charged with an error. He remained down for a bit but was eventually able to walk toward the dugout under his own power.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Tigers: RHP Michael Fulmer is seeking a second opinion after an MRI showed possible damage to the right-hander's meniscus. He left his start Saturday at Cleveland after tweaking his right knee.

UP NEXT

Jake Odorizzi (6-10) starts for the Twins on Tuesday night against Detroit's Daniel Norris (0-4).

Norris seeks first win as Tigers host Twins

The Sports Xchange | Fox Sports North | September 18, 2018

Jake Odorizzi flirted with a no-hitter in his last start. The Minnesota Twins right-hander will be looking to follow that up with another sharp performance in Detroit on Tuesday night.

Odorizzi kept the powerful New York Yankees' lineup off-balance last Wednesday. Greg Bird ended the no-hit bid with a run-scoring double with one out in the eighth.

"It's been an up and down season," he said in a TV interview afterward. "It's good to have one of these outings mixed in there."

Odorizzi (6-10, 4.41 ERA) will be pitching the second game of a three-game series against the Tigers.

If Odorizzi hadn't given up a hit in the eighth, manager Paul Molitor would have been forced to make a difficult decision. Odorizzi came out after Bird's hit, which was his 120th pitch of the evening.

"What's the difference between 120 and 140 (pitches)? Not much," Odorizzi said to MLB.com afterward. "You're going to be sore the next day anyway. There's not too many chances you get to do something that special. You'll never know how many it would have taken, but I appreciate what Moli was willing to do for me in letting me go out there."

Odorizzi's outing was still his longest of the season. He's faced the Tigers twice this season and came away with no-decisions after pitching five innings in both starts. He's 2-1 with a 3.21 ERA in six career starts against them.

Left-hander Daniel Norris, Detroit's scheduled starter on Tuesday, continues his quest for his first victory of the season. Norris (0-4, 6.14 ERA) has three losses and a no-decision in four appearances since returning from groin surgery that had sidelined him since late April.

Norris gave up five runs on eight hits to Houston in 4 2/3 innings during his last start on Wednesday.

All but one of those runs came in the fifth inning.

“I don’t know, I feel like I ran out of gas,” Norris said afterward. “You can feel it in your legs. But I have to be patient; that’s part of it. The fact that I am able to get tired in a big-league game right now, that’s a positive.”

Norris hasn’t pitched more than five innings this season.

“I like his stuff,” Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire said of Norris. “He just has to get more stretched out. He hasn’t pitched enough.”

In four career starts against the Twins, he’s 1-1 with a 4.29 ERA.

Twins third baseman Miguel Sano could return to the lineup on Tuesday. He’s been out since Sept. 4, when he suffered a left leg injury while colliding with Houston shortstop Carlos Correa.

“I know it’s hard for him, as it is for hopefully everybody, to feel the disconnect of not playing and wanting to be out there and contributing,” Molitor told MLB.com. “He’s been talking about trying to get ready here for a while, and we’re just trying to be as smart as we can.”

Minnesota won the first game of the series on Monday, 6-1. Left fielder Eddie Rosario homered in the first inning but later suffered a right quad injury and departed in the fourth. His status for the remainder of the series is questionable.

A surprise call-up turns Twins-Tigers series into Gardenhire family reunion

Jordan Horrobin | The Athletic | September 18, 2018

DETROIT — When Eddie Rosario smacked a first-inning home run on Monday night, Sara Hanson cheered. She was in Detroit to support her boyfriend, Toby Gardenhire, who had just been called up to join the Twins’ coaching staff.

But sitting in a second-level suite at Comerica Park, surrounded by other Gardenhires, Hanson’s excitement was not well received.

“We threatened to throw her over the balcony,” Carol Gardenhire, Toby’s mom, joked.

Carol also happens to be the wife of Tigers manager Ron Gardenhire. Thanks to the unexpected call-up for Toby, a minor league manager in Minnesota’s farm system, this week’s Twins-Tigers series turned into a sort of Gardenhire family reunion.

On Monday, a group of seven witnessed the Twins’ 6-1 win from suite 205. Joining Carol and Sara were Toby’s younger sisters, Tiffany and Tara; Tiffany’s husband, Michael Floyd; and Tiffany and Michael’s young children, Ronny Jr. and Ember.

The question of which team the family was rooting for was answered quite easily by their attire. With the exception of Sara, everyone wore Tigers gear. (Ronny Jr., named after his grandpa, wore a Detroit home jersey with No. 15 and “Gardenhire” on the back.)

Perhaps that’s because, for now, Toby isn’t actually part of Minnesota’s staff. A couple weeks ago, he finished his first season as manager for the Twins’ Class-A affiliate in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where he led the Kernels to a 77-62 record. Joining the big league club for a series was something he never expected.

When the Kernels’ season ended, the Twins called to tell Toby they were sending him to Detroit for the three-game set. Now, he’s seeing the majors as a coach for the first time. It’s a learning experience that doubles as a special family moment.

That doesn’t mean Toby is looking for any kind of unique treatment. While the rest of his family is staying at his parents’ house, Toby opted to lodge with the team (“I said, ‘I’m not staying with the enemy,’” he quipped).

Then again, his mother wants him to have a proper taste of the big league experience anyway, which in this case includes staying at the swanky Townsend Hotel in Birmingham, Mich.

“Oh my god, I was like, ‘You have to stay in that hotel,’” Carol said. “That hotel is awesome.”

Baseball has been part of Toby’s life since early childhood, when he roved clubhouses during his father’s time as a player and coach at various levels. Toby then played college ball at Illinois, after which he signed with the Twins as a 41st-rounder in 2005.

At that time, there was hope that Ron and Toby would one day share the same field as manager and player. In 2011, during Ron’s 10th year at the helm for the Twins, Toby was a utility player for the team’s Triple-A affiliate in Rochester.

But Toby never broke through to the majors. So the following year, he embarked on his career as a coach.

“For him, it’s back to the same dream,” Carol said. “Just to make it to the big leagues somehow, some way.”

Toby spent the next five seasons as the head coach for University of Wisconsin-Stout, a Division III program. Now, he’s back with the Twins’ organization and off to a promising start in the coaching ranks.

Meanwhile, Ron’s 13-year managerial tenure in Minnesota ended in 2014. He spent last season as a bench coach with the Diamondbacks before heading to Detroit this year.

“When he left Minnesota, I didn’t know if he’d get another chance to manage,” Toby said. “I think this opportunity (with the Tigers) was pretty perfect. Because he’s been through this situation a few times, where they have young players and they’re trying to build back up. So I think he’s got a pretty good thing going right now and I think he’s having a lot of fun.”

Baseball season is long and relentless, but Ron and Toby make sure to stay in touch — which typically just means talking about baseball. Toby also often watches Twins and Tigers games simultaneously, with one on the TV and the other on a laptop.

The father and son tandem shared a nice moment at home plate before Monday’s game when they went out to exchange lineup cards. On a night that would eventually result in a forgettable loss for Ron’s group, the pregame meeting created a memory the whole family is sure to hold onto.

“It was nice,” Ron said. “That organization, I appreciate the fact that they set it up like they did. That’s pretty cool.”