



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips

Saturday, June 5, 2010

- Morneau's bat carries Twins past A's (Christensen) pg. 1
- Mauer not worried about power stats (Christensen) pg. 2
- Hudson likely will sit against the A's (Christensen) pg. 3
- Twins-Oakland game recap (Christensen) pg. 3
- Give Justin Morneau credit for the W as Twins beat A's (Smith) pg. 4
- Teams have been running wild on Twins, but don't blame Mauer (Smith) pg. 5
- Morneau's third run is game-winner in 11th (Espinoza) pg. 6
- Cahill looks to continue hot streak vs. Twins (Kruth) pg.7
- Hardy returns, Hudson remains out (Espinoza) pg. 8
- Draft Preview: Twins may go pitching route (Thesier) pg. 9
- Morneau keeps slugging on the road as Twins snap skid (Pelissero) pg. 10
- Young's single drives Twins to victory in extras (AP) pg. 11
- Maggio: Central casting (Maggio) pg. 12
- Toledo Mud Hens hold off Rochester Red Wings (Oklobzija) pg. 15

Morneau's bat carries Twins past A's

Though 'in dire need' of rest, he delivered with a couple of big extra-base hits, scoring the decisive run after an 11th-inning double.

By Joe Christensen / Star Tribune – 6/5/10

OAKLAND, CALIF. - Twins manager Ron Gardenhire wanted to give Justin Morneau a break this weekend.

"He's in dire need," Gardenhire said before Friday's game at the Oakland Coliseum. "He's beat up, he's playing, but I think physically he's feeling it."

Then Morneau had the kind of game that reminds the Twins why he's indispensable. Every time the Twins scored, Morneau was in the mix.

His two-run homer off Dallas Braden gave the Twins a first-inning lead. He walked and scored in the sixth inning, when they stretched the lead to three runs. And when Baker gave up two homers to tie the game, Morneau was there again in the 11th.

Morneau doubled off Oakland's All-Star closer Andrew Bailey and scored on Delmon Young's single down the first-base line, giving the Twins a 5-4 victory.

"It's usually when you have your best games, when you feel your worst," said Morneau, who went 2-for-4 to raise his major league-leading average to .372. He also leads the majors in on-base percentage (.483) and slugging percentage (.691).

"He was talking about giving me a day off [Saturday]," Morneau said. "I think I might have talked myself into not taking it."

With an off day Monday, Morneau might convince Gardenhire to keep letting him play, especially with Michael Cuddyer on the bereavement list, limiting the Twins' options at first base.

Morneau has started 53 of the team's 55 games.

"I don't know if he can continue the pace that he's at because it's pretty unbelievable," Baker said. "We definitely need him for the long haul. As tough as he is, if he's telling Gardy he needs a day off, we better give it to him."

Trying to protect a 4-1 lead, Baker gave up a two-run homer by Kevin Kouzmanoff in the seventh and a game-tying shot by Rajai Davis in the eighth. The home runs both came on hanging breaking pitches, which spoiled an otherwise effective night for Baker, who gave up four runs on six hits in 7 1/3 innings.

In the end, Baker's line wasn't much better than Dallas Braden's. The Oakland lefthander gave up four runs on six hits in 6 1/3 innings, despite retiring 15 of 16 batters at one point. Braden is winless in five starts since his May 9 perfect game.

Besides the game-winning hit, Young also added an RBI double in the sixth inning, right after Jason Kubel's RBI single had stretched the lead to 3-1. Mauer had started that two-out rally with a single off Braden, and Morneau followed with a walk.

Morneau now has 13 home runs and 40 RBI. Asked how big Morneau was for the Twins on Friday, Gardenhire said, "About 6-foot-4. Mournie's been big all year long. I think that's why everybody's pushing to vote for Morneau in the All-Star Game, just because of nights like this, and he's had a ton of them."

Mauer not worried about power stats

After an MVP season and a move into a spacious new home park, the catcher isn't lamenting missed home runs. He only wants to win.

By Joe Christensen / Star Tribune – 6/5/10

OAKLAND, CALIF. - For the rest of Joe Mauer's career, comparisons to 2009 could prove difficult.

That's what happens when you lead your league in batting average, on-base percentage and slugging percentage, while hitting a career high 28 home runs.

After playing 46 games last year, Mauer was batting .407 with 14 home runs and 42 RBI.

Entering Friday's game against Oakland, Mauer had played 46 games and was batting .318 with two home runs and 24 RBI.

But those who have followed his at-bats estimate that he's hit about five balls that would have been home runs at the Metrodome but didn't clear the wall at Target Field.

To hear Mauer tell it, there's only one stat at Target Field that matters to him -- the Twins' won-loss record, and they are 18-9 at home.

"I know people are going to say, 'He's not hitting home runs,' and things like that, but I really could care less if we keep winning games," he said.

This week, the Target Field Effect seemed to follow Mauer on the road. He just missed hitting two home runs that died in Safeco Field's spacious outfield. He batted .200 (3-for-15) in the four-game series against the Mariners, with a slew of hard-hit outs.

"It's frustrating," Mauer said. "I always use to say I find the deepest part of the park, but it's backfired on me these first couple months. You've just gotta stick with your game plan and keep hitting balls hard."

Manager Ron Gardenhire doesn't sound the least bit concerned.

"He's swinging good," Gardenhire said. "Mauer always swings good. He's not one I worry about too awful much. The only thing I worry about is him getting beat up catching with foul tips and all those things."

After catching eight days in a row, Mauer got a chance to DH on Friday. Gardenhire said he might even rest Mauer on Sunday, which would give him two days off, including Monday's open date.

Mauer missed eight games because of a bruised left heel last month, but Gardenhire said it's no longer an issue.

"We don't talk about that much," Gardenhire said. "Nike has given him some shoes that help him."

Mauer did have 15 doubles entering Friday, compared to 11 doubles in 46 games last year.

"It's a little frustrating because Target Field and Safeco -- I know they're big parks -- but a lot of the balls I've hit, they are outs, they're not doubles," he said. "That's what frustrating, but like I said, what can you do?"

Nothing. Just keep swinging. The Twins wouldn't want him to change a thing.

Hudson likely will sit against the A's

The team might have to consider placing second baseman Orlando Hudson on the 15-day disabled list if he's not ready to return by Tuesday, Ron Gardenhire said on Friday.

By Joe Christensen / Star Tribune – 6/5/10

OAKLAND, CALIF. - Twins second baseman Orlando Hudson likely will miss this weekend's series against Oakland, manager Ron Gardenhire said Friday, adding that the team might have to consider placing Hudson on the 15-day disabled list if he's not ready to return by Tuesday.

The Twins are off Monday before beginning a three-game series against the Royals at Target Field.

Hudson hasn't played since injuring his wrist in a collision with center fielder Denard Span on Sunday. Hudson has been taking ground balls during batting practice, but Gardenhire said Hudson tried swinging a bat Thursday and it didn't go well.

Hardy issue lingers

J.J. Hardy returned to shortstop after missing Thursday's game, but Gardenhire was concerned he might have to pull Hardy if his left wrist proved too painful during batting practice.

The injury kept Hardy on the DL from May 5-25 and flared up again this week in Seattle.

"At times I feel like I can play through it, and at times, I feel like it affects my swing," Hardy said.

Already without Hudson, the Twins would have been pretty thin without Hardy.

"I didn't anticipate that one," Gardenhire said. "When we called up [Danny Valencia on Wednesday], I thought Hardy was fine. I called up a third baseman, and I could have had [Trevor] Plouffe up here to play shortstop every day."

Etc.

- The Twins will hold a tryout camp at the Metrodome on June 21-22 and another in Fort Myers, Fla., on June 12.
- Alexi Casilla had arthroscopic surgery on his right elbow. Gardenhire said it was a successful procedure that removed a bone spur and two bone chips.
- Pat Neshek (finger inflammation) gave up three runs on three hits and two walks in his second rehab appearance for Class A Fort Myers.
- Clay Condrey (strained elbow) threw 25 pitches without any reported discomfort in a bullpen session.
- Asked about all the perfect or near-perfect games being thrown in baseball these days, Gardenhire quipped, "I think they are putting magical moon dust in the balls that are making them miss bats."

Twins-Oakland game recap

By Joe Christensen / Star Tribune – 6/5/10

GAME RECAP

IMPACT PLAYER

Delmon Young, Twins

The left fielder drove in two runs, including the go-ahead RBI single off Andrew Bailey after Justin Morneau doubled in the 11th.

BY THE NUMBERS

4 Strikeouts for former Twins reliever Craig Breslow in 12/3 innings of relief.

13 Homers for Morneau; Jason Kubel is next on the Twins with six.

1.67 ERA for winning pitcher Matt Guerrier after his two scoreless, hitless innings of relief.

ON DECK

The Twins' series in Oakland continues with Francisco Liriano pitching. Trevor Cahill counters for the Athletics.

Give Justin Morneau credit for the W as Twins beat A's

By Kelsie Smith / Pioneer Press – 6/5/10

OAKLAND, Calif. — Minutes after the Twins left the field Friday night, 5-4 winners in the series opener against the Oakland A's, Justin Morneau, his blond hair sweaty and disheveled, his stride more like a shuffle, made his way from the visitors clubhouse to the weight room.

Never mind that he'd just played 11 innings on a night when his body was so achy and run-down that he quickly and uncharacteristically accepted manager Ron Gardenhire's pregame offer to spend tonight in the dugout instead of in the lineup.

Of course, his two-run homer in the first, and his leadoff double in the 11th that resulted in him scoring the winning run on a Delmon Young single moments later, changes everything.

"I think I might have talked myself into not taking a day off," Morneau said. "It's usually when you have your best games, when you feel your worst. It's kind of funny how that works."

Earlier in the night, the Twins, trying to snap a three-game losing streak, faced the once-perfect Dallas Braden.

Braden surely doesn't think about another turn at history, a second stretch of 27 straight outs, but the left-hander's odds of throwing a second perfect game in less than a month is a possibility that now, with two official (and three actual) perfect games thrown in baseball already this season, seems exponentially less rare.

Even Braden's opposing lineup, one dinged and dented with injuries and general aches and pains, one mired in a three-game stretch of offensive futility, seemed anemic enough for such a night.

Joe Mauer ended ideas of repeat perfection early in the evening, his two-out single in the first Braden's first blemish of the game. And with Mauer on first, Morneau took one mighty swing that ended the Twins' streak of scoring just one run in three straight games.

Morneau's 13th home run of the season put the Twins up 2-0 in a game they won thanks, in large part, to the first baseman. His dominance this season didn't garner much attention during player of the month voting in May, an accolade awarded to Boston's David Ortiz, but Morneau has been this team's player of the month, player of the year so far and, on Friday, its player of the game.

"Right now," Friday's starter Scott Baker said, "he's one of the best, if not the best, hitters in the game."

After Morneau's home run, Braden retired 15 of 16 batters before Mauer singled again with two outs in the sixth. Morneau followed that with a walk, and finally, the Twins' ice-cold offense began to melt. Jason Kubel singled Mauer home, and Young drove Morneau home with the Twins' third two-out hit of the inning.

Braden left with Oakland trailing by three runs, marking his fifth straight start since that perfect game on May 9 without a win.

The way Baker started the game, the way he clicked through the A's lineup, eliminated threats and held Oakland to one run through six innings, a three-run lead seemed enough. But the advantage shrunk to one run when Kevin Kouzmanoff, the third baseman who drew the Twins' interest in the trade market this offseason, smashed a Baker breaking ball off the second deck façade in left field, driving home Jack Cust.

Baker, his pitch count an efficient 87, returned for the eighth but did not finish it. One out into the inning, the right-hander offered up a breaking ball to Rajai Davis, and the A's leadoff hitter happily sent the pitch skimming over the fence in left field to tie the score.

Sure, the Twins have faced stout pitching on this road trip, falling to the likes of Cliff Lee, Felix Hernandez and the upstart Jason Vargas in Seattle, but five games into the seven-game trip, another troublesome element has been in play — or rather, not in play.

Through those five games the Twins' No. 1 and 2 hitters, a combination devoid of the injured Orlando Hudson, have combined to go 2 for 40 with just two walks, nine strikeouts and zero runs scored.

Even Mauer was slumping, in a Mauer sort of way. His 2 for 5 Friday night ended a streak of 11 straight games with one hit or fewer. That stretch of games without at least two hits was, remarkably, the second-longest such streak in his career. The last time he failed to record a multihit game for so many consecutive games was Aug. 25 through Sept. 7 of 2006.

"Right now it's just a grind," Gardenhire said. "It's a tough road trip, we've played a lot of games in a row, we faced some very good pitching in Seattle, and we faced a very good pitcher here tonight. We knew it was going to be tough, so this is a big win. It's a big comeback."

Teams have been running wild on Twins, but don't blame Mauer

Pavano, pitchers keep putting their catcher in a tough spot

By Kelsie Smith / Pioneer Press – 6/5/10

OAKLAND, Calif. — Look up Joe Mauer's defensive results this season, and one thing will stand out. The catcher, with his cannon arm and accurate throws, had thrown out, through Thursday, just 9 of 32 runners who attempted to steal when he was behind the plate.

But the story doesn't end there. It doesn't really begin there, either. Mauer has, at times, been handcuffed by his pitchers when it comes to nabbing pilfering opponents.

Or, as manager Ron Gardenhire said, "We've got a catcher that can throw — if you give him a chance."

Carl Pavano admitted that he didn't give Mauer that chance Thursday night, saying it was "embarrassing" that five Mariners swiped second or third against him in just the first three innings of Minnesota's loss. In all, opposing runners have stolen 15 bases in 17 attempts with Pavano on the mound. That's the third-most stolen bases for any starting pitcher in the major leagues.

"You have to use your slide step," Gardenhire said. "You just have to mix it up. You have to no-look somebody one time; you have to double look them sometimes. If you just simply change your looks and do a fake inside move every once in a while, it stops people. It's not always just about speeding up and being really quick to home, but if you constantly rock back and pick your leg up, they're going to go."

Pavano said he was laboring with his mechanics and chose to focus on pitching through them rather than stopping Seattle's running game, one implemented after the Mariners watched tape of Pavano's habits on the mound.

That's something the Twins do as well, and Gardenhire can often be found sitting at his desk, hunched over his laptop with a stopwatch in hand, tracking the time that night's opposing starter takes from the start of his delivery until his pitch reaches the catcher.

Generally, the manager said, if a pitcher is between 1.1 and 1.2 seconds to home, it will be quite difficult to steal against him. In that case, runners likely will try to steal only on a breaking-ball count. If a pitcher is between 1.3 and 1.4 seconds to home, Gardenhire said deciding whether to steal might be more about the catcher's arm strength.

"A guy can be a 1.3 or a 1.35 (seconds), and if you've got a catcher that throws like Joe Mauer, I'd be hesitant to run," he said. "A lot of things go into it."

On Thursday, Pavano's time to home ranged from 1.5 to 1.6 seconds, Gardenhire said.

"I think he understands he has to do a better job," Gardenhire said. "It's not so much just slide stepping all the time; it's mixing it up, varying your looks, and he didn't do that."

Injury report: Orlando Hudson's left wrist was still sore enough that Gardenhire said he'd be shocked if the second baseman plays during this series against the A's.

J.J. Hardy's wrist was still sore enough that, despite being written in the starting lineup batting second, the shortstop needed to hit during batting practice before he could determine if his swing would allow him to play.

Then there are Mauer and Justin Morneau, both feeling the overall soreness that comes from crouching and catching and swinging and digging throws and pitches out of the dirt many days in a row.

Mauer got a day at DH on Friday, and Gardenhire said the catcher will almost certainly get a full day off Sunday (and get two days off as a result, thanks to Monday's off day). Morneau, the manager said, will likely be out of the lineup today with Brendan Harris playing first with regular first-base backup Michael Cuddyer away from the team following the death of his father-in-law.

On top of all that, Gardenhire hopes to give Denard Span a day off this weekend as well.

Hardy, who was out of the lineup Thursday to rest his wrist, decided it could handle swinging after testing it during batting practice, but in the clubhouse before BP the shortstop admitted he's concerned about the lingering pain concentrated on the outside of his left wrist, pain that is especially sharp when he swings.

"I hope it's not going to be here for the rest of the season," Hardy said. "I don't know how long bone bruises usually last, but this has been pretty annoying for me."

Briefly: Alexi Casilla underwent successful arthroscopic surgery on his right elbow on Friday. Gardenhire said doctors removed bone chips and a bone spur from the infielder's arm.

Morneau's third run is game-winner in 11th **Young drives first baseman in with single off Bailey in extras**

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com – 6/5/10

OAKLAND -- Justin Morneau may need a day off soon, but it'll be awfully hard to pull him out of the lineup at this rate.

Morneau kept his stellar 2010 campaign alive on Friday, as he paced the Twins to a 5-4 extra-inning win over the A's to snap Minnesota's losing streak at three.

"Right now, he's one of the best -- if not the best hitter in the league," Twins starter Scott Baker said. "It seems like every night he's coming up big for us, offensively."

Morneau finished 2-for-4 with a two-run homer and a double. He also scored three runs, including the game-winner in the top of the 11th. With the effort, Morneau raised his average to .372, tops in the American League.

Before Friday's game, Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said he and Morneau agreed a day off this weekend would be beneficial for the aching slugger. But after the contest, Morneau didn't show any signs of slowing down.

Drenched in sweat after his postgame workout, Morneau said he doesn't know if he needs any more time off than Monday's designated off-day.

"There's no real ideal time to take a day off," Morneau said with a smile. "Hopefully, it's when [Gardenhire] forces me to. I think if he gives me the option, I'm not going to really want to do it."

The sweet-swinging lefty kicked off the night's scoring with a two-run shot off Oakland starter Dallas Braden in the top of the first. He led off the 11th with a double over the head of A's left fielder Gabe Gross before scoring on Delmon Young's single down the right-field line two batters later.

"Morney's been big all year," Gardenhire said. "He's been doing this all year long."

Morneau's heroics may have saved the Twins from defeat, but they weren't enough to give Baker the win. The 28-year-old righty cruised through the first six innings, but hit trouble in the seventh and eighth innings.

Minnesota's offense spotted Baker a 4-1 lead through six, but Baker gave it right back with a pair of home runs. The first, a two-run shot from A's third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff, came on a ball that missed its location.

Twins catcher Drew Butera set up on the outside part of the zone, but the ball tailed over the heart of the plate and Kouzmanoff sent it to the second deck in left field, scoring Jack Cust to cut the Twins' lead to 4-3.

A's outfielder Rajai Davis knotted the game up at 4 in the seventh, when he snuck one over the left-field fence just inside the foul pole to chase Baker from the mound.

"I was, in my opinion, pretty efficient," Baker said. "Obviously, I'd like to have those pitches back, but in the end, we won the game, and that's the most important thing."

Baker needed only 45 pitches to get through his initial five frames, before tossing another 45 in his last 2 1/3 innings of work. It was the first time in five career starts against the A's that Baker didn't walk away with the win.

"He was effective with his pitches," Butera said. "He threw a lot of strikes, mixed it up well and they were swinging early."

Following Baker, Minnesota's bullpen combined to throw 3 2/3 innings of scoreless ball. Jose Mijares finished out the eighth before Matt Guerrier shut out the A's in the ninth and 10th frames.

Closer Jon Rauch surrendered a two-out single to A's catcher Kurt Suzuki in the 11th, but struck out Cust with a high fastball to earn his 14th save of the year. Guerrier was credited with his first win of the season.

"They've done a great job all year," Butera said. "I tip my hat to Baker and also the bullpen. They did a good job of keeping us in the game, and we got the big hit when we needed it."

Baker shut out the Oakland lineup until the bottom of the fourth, when Suzuki hit an infield single to score Daric Barton, making it 2-1.

Minnesota extended its lead to 4-1 in the sixth, though, after four consecutive batters reach base against Braden. Jason Kubel singled in designated hitter Joe Mauer before Young hit a double to left field, scoring Morneau to make it 4-1.

Had the Twins lost, it would have marked their first four-game losing streak of the season.

"You want to avoid those four- and five-game losing streaks if you want to win your division," Morneau said.

Cahill looks to continue hot streak vs. Twins

By Cash Kruth / MLB.com – 6/5/10

Friday night, the Twins beat the A's at their own game.

Oakland, a Major League-best 10-2 in one-run games entering Friday, came up short in a 5-4 loss to Minnesota in extra innings.

Friday's five-run game was an offensive explosion for the Twins, at least as of late. Minnesota was held to only one run in its previous three games, the first time the Twins were held to one run or fewer in three consecutive games since Aug. 5-7, 2007.

"Right now, it's just a grind," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "We're on a tough road trip. We've played a lot of games in a row and faced some very good pitching in Seattle, and we faced a very good pitcher [Friday], and we knew it was going to be tough. This is a big win. This is a big comeback after losing three in a row in Seattle."

On Saturday, the A's will send their hottest pitcher to the mound in hopes of evening the three-game series at 1-1.

Right-hander Trevor Cahill, winner of his past three games, will get the start Saturday in Oakland. After going 1-2 in his first four starts of the season, Cahill has rattled off three wins, giving up only one run in each.

The Twins will counter with arguably their most talented pitcher, Francisco Liriano. In his last outing against Seattle, Liriano earned his first win since May 2 after starting out with a blazing April in which he was named American League Pitcher of the Month.

Minnesota fans may be hopeful the early-season version of Liriano is returning, but take caution: Liriano is 1-2 with a 5.08 ERA in eight career appearances against the A's.

Twins: Hardy back, but not Hudson

Shortstop J.J. Hardy went 0-for-5 on Friday after missing Thursday's game with a lingering bone bruise in his left wrist. ... Hardy's double-play partner, second baseman Orlando Hudson, remains doubtful for the rest of the series and could potentially be placed on the 15-day disabled list, Gardenhire said.

A's: Kouzmanoff on fire

Kevin Kouzmanoff hit a home run for the third consecutive game Friday. It is the first time in his career he has done that. ... Catcher Kurt

Suzuki had his fourth consecutive multiple-hit game while going 2-for-5 Friday. He is 8-for-19 during that span. ... Leadoff man Rajai Davis hit his second home run of the season. He is hitting .319 (22-for-69) in his past 19 games.

Worth noting

Minnesota's Danny Valencia stole his first career base a day after making his Major League debut Thursday. He finished 1-for-5 with two strikeouts. ... Oakland's Daric Barton extended his hitting streak to 11 games on a double in the fourth inning.

Hardy returns, Hudson remains out

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com – 6/5/10

OAKLAND -- The Twins' ailing infield received a bit of a boost Friday with the return of J.J. Hardy. The 27-year-old shortstop missed Thursday's game with a lingering bone bruise in his left wrist.

Hardy was questionable before Friday's batting practice, but was able to complete the session and take grounders before the game. It's the same wrist that Hardy injured on May 4, sending him to the 15-day disabled list.

"A couple days ago, it started getting more sore than it was, and I felt like it was affecting my swing a little bit," Hardy said. "I guess we'll just wait and see. There's no timetable -- I hope it's not for the rest of the season. I don't know how long bone bruises usually last, but this has been pretty annoying for me."

Hardy said he has ongoing pain on the outside of his left wrist, which affects him while batting, but not in the field.

Second baseman Orlando Hudson, meanwhile, was still held out of Friday's lineup and replaced by Nick Punto, while rookie Danny Valencia remained at third base.

Hudson didn't take batting practice with his teammates before Friday's game and was ruled doubtful for Minnesota's three-game set with Oakland. Manager Ron Gardenhire said Hudson could be moved to the 15-day disabled list if he doesn't improve dramatically by Tuesday.

"We can't continue having everybody day-to-day," Gardenhire said.

Hudson hasn't played since injuring his left wrist during a collision with outfielder Denard Span on Sunday against Texas.

Gardenhire said the versatility of Punto, Matt Tolbert and Brendan Harris has become very valuable. Punto made his second start of the year at second base Friday and also filled in for Hardy at shortstop on Thursday after playing most of the year at third.

"That's really important for Nicky that you can put him out there and you don't lose much defensively at all," Gardenhire said.

Minnesota's skipper also noted the services of Tolbert and Harris, who have played at all four infield positions during their big league careers.

"You have to have those guys that can go play different positions," Gardenhire said. "We're fortunate that we have some guys who can do that."

Mauer, Morneau hurting for Twins

OAKLAND -- The Twins' middle infield isn't the only thing hurting these days. A couple of Minnesota's biggest bats, Joe Mauer and Justin Morneau, are also feeling aches and pains.

On Friday, manager Ron Gardenhire used Mauer as the designated hitter, while saying Morneau will get a full day off either Saturday or Sunday. Except for a pair of games in late April, Morneau has played in every contest this season.

"[Morneau] is in dire need [of a day off]," Gardenhire said. "We talked about it, and he said that would probably be the right thing to do."

Gardenhire also said he plans on sitting Mauer on Sunday before Monday's off-day, so he can get more rest. Outfielder Denard Span is also in need of some time off, but won't get much given the amount of injuries and absences that have recently piled up.

Gardenhire said the versatility of Michael Cuddyer, who will be unavailable all series after being placed on the bereavement list following the passing of his father-in-law, will be sorely missed this weekend. Cuddyer could have spelled Morneau at first base, and he even played second base on Monday.

"I know that both of these guys are beat up pretty good," Gardenhire said.

The two Twins looked pretty healthy in the first inning of Friday's game against the A's, though. Mauer hit a two-out single before scoring on Morneau's 13th homer of the season.

Casilla's elbow surgery goes well

OAKLAND -- Infielder Alexi Casilla underwent successful arthroscopic surgery on his right elbow on Friday, according to manager Rod Gardenhire.

The Minnesota skipper said the operation revealed two bone chips and a spur in Casilla's right elbow, which was examined by team orthopedist Dr. Dan Buss earlier in the week.

"Lexi's surgery went good," Gardenhire said. "They got everything cleared up. Now, it will take a little while to see how long it will take him to get back."

Casilla's timetable to return has been set at four to eight weeks.

Two pitchers are also on their respective recoveries, righties Pat Neshek and Clay Condrey.

Gardenhire said Condrey threw a 25-pitch bullpen session and will continue his rehab on his injured right elbow.

"He's got a lot of pitching left," Gardenhire said. "He's got to have another Spring Training type of thing."

Gardenhire said Condrey, who hasn't played this season due to a strained elbow, didn't appear to have any injuries at the onset of Spring Training in March.

Neshek, who is rehabbing a middle finger injury, allowed three earned runs on three hits and two walks in one inning for Class A Fort Myers on Friday.

Worth noting

Joe Mauer went 2-for-5 Friday, snapping his 11-game streak without a multi-hit game. It was tied for the second-longest such span in his career. ... Justin Morneau dropped a foul ball in the ninth inning to commit his first error since Sept. 4, 2009. ... Denard Span went 0-for-5 on Friday and is now hitless in his last 16 at-bats, dropping his average to .271.

Draft Preview: Twins may go pitching route

Minnesota eyeing hurlers who throw lefty or have velocity

By Kelly Thesier / MLB.com – 6/4/10

One look at the Twins' current 25-man roster and it's easy to see the impact that the Draft has had on the ballclub. Many of its stars, including Joe Mauer, Justin Morneau, Michael Cuddyer and Denard Span were all scouted and brought into the organization through the Draft.

And with this year's First-Year Player Draft looming, the club will once again try to find an impact player from the amateur ranks with the No. 21 pick overall.

MLB.com will offer live coverage and analysis of the entire First-Year Player Draft from Monday through Wednesday on MLB.com/Live. The first round and Compensation Round A will be broadcast live on MLB.com and MLB Network on Monday, beginning with the Draft preview show at 5 p.m. CT.

MLB.com Draft expert Jonathan Mayo will join Greg Amsinger, Harold Reynolds, John Hart, Peter Gammons and Baseball America executive editor Jim Callis on Monday's broadcast.

Coverage for rounds 2-50 will shift exclusively to MLB.com/Live. Rounds 2-30 will be streamed on Tuesday, beginning at 11 a.m., and rounds 31-50 will be streamed on Wednesday, starting at 11 a.m. Host Pete McCarthy will be joined by Mayo and former general manager Jim Duquette.

Here's a glance at what the Twins have in store as the Draft approaches:

In about 50 words

The Twins have only one pick on Day 1 of the Draft. This year's Draft is considered to have some high-profile talent near the top of the first round, but it's unclear as to the strength once you drop past those early picks. Unlike previous years, Minnesota doesn't have any extra picks in the first few rounds so there won't be as many opportunities for the club to try to get some steals.

The scoop

"You have to try to take the guys that you have the most confidence in, no matter where you are picking in the Draft or what the strengths or weaknesses of the Draft are. There are no teams that have too many guys at one position. I'm not sure we'd want to spend a whole lot of money on a catcher in the first round. We kind of did that already with Joe, and we've got a couple guys below him. So there are certain things that each of us will do just because of our situations. But you've got to try to bring in the organization the guys in which you have most conviction. So we won't stray too far from that." -- *Twins vice president of players personnel Mike Radcliff*

First-round buzz

Radcliff said that there is no real consensus on the strength of this year's Draft. No one certain group seems to stand out, whether it's position players or pitchers, college kids or high school players. That's left the Twins to try and figure out the best player who will be remaining when they pick at the No. 21 position. Minnesota has been all over the board in the past -- selecting three high school outfielders and a college pitcher with its first pick over the past four Drafts. Various projections have the club taking a college pitcher such as right-hander Alex Wimmers from Ohio State University or righty Brandon Workman from the University of Texas. There has also been a few high school athletes mentioned who could interest the Twins, such as Reggie Golden, a raw but tooled outfielder from Alabama, or Josh Sale, a power-hitting outfielder from Seattle.

Shopping list

The Twins' farm system has seen its pitching staff depleted by injuries and some departures so far this season, and selecting plenty of arms in the Draft has been a trend for the club in the past. As Radcliff said, there can never be enough pitching for any organization. But adding depth throughout the organization is a goal. In the past, the team has tried to address other areas such as the middle infield as well as adding power bats. For Minnesota, the Draft is always about trying to add quality players at a number of positions.

Trend watch

The Twins aren't a team that can be pinned down in terms of tendencies. Minnesota has definitely lived by its motto of taking the best player available when it's made its selections in the Draft. That being said, the club has a history of drafting well when it comes to pitching talent. And the Twins could be looking once again to find starting pitchers, arms with velocity and some left-handers to bring into the organization.

Recent Draft History

Rising fast

Last year's first-round pick, Kyle Gibson, has certainly been turning a lot of heads in his first professional season. After sitting out the end of the 2009 season while letting a stress fracture in his forearm heal, the right-hander has already earned one promotion this season after starting the year 4-1 with a 1.87 ERA in seven starts at Class A Fort Myers. Gibson is now at Double-A New Britain -- a move made in part due to injuries within the system -- and he has been tagged as a pitcher who could move quickly through the system. Just don't expect to see him in the Majors this year as Gibson's innings count will be monitored.

Cinderella story

Right-handed reliever Anthony Slama was a 39th-round pick of the Twins in the 2006 First-Year Player Draft. And now, Slama is right on the doorstep of the Majors. Slama has been putting up solid numbers at Triple-A Rochester this season, posting a 2.03 ERA while recording 11 saves and striking out 36 in 31 innings. The Twins want Slama to work a bit on his control -- having issued 15 walks -- but with some deception to his delivery, the reliever certainly could find himself in Minnesota at some point in the future.

In The Show

None of the Twins' picks from the past three Drafts have made it yet to Minnesota.

Morneau keeps slugging on the road as Twins snap skid

By Tom Pelissero / 1500ESPN.com – 6/5/10

The Minnesota Twins have been decidedly mediocre on the road this season.

Not Justin Morneau.

His big night on Friday at Oakland -- a two-run homer in the first inning, a walk and run in the sixth and a leadoff double in the 11th that turned into the deciding run in the Twins' 5-4 victory -- only continued Morneau's power run away from Target Field.

In 27 home games this season, Morneau is hitting .378 and slugging .567, with two home runs and 16 RBIs.

In 26 road games, Morneau now is hitting .366 and slugging an incredible .792 with 11 homers and 24 RBIs.

Morneau's walk-to-strikeout ratio is better at Target Field (27-17, compared to 15-23 on the road), and thus his on-base percentage (.517 to .440 on the road) is higher as well. But the Twins have played .500 ball away from home in part on the strength of Morneau's power in other teams' ballparks.

When Morneau homers on the road, the Twins are 7-3. (He homered twice May 17 at Toronto.) When he doesn't, the Twins are 7-11.

Of course, there were other factors in Friday's win, which snapped a three-game slide. In the 11th inning alone, Athletics left fielder Gabe Gross misplayed Morneau's drive into a double, Delmon Young provided the winning RBI -- his second of the game -- and Jon Rauch closed the door for his 14th save.

Left-hander Francisco Liriano (5-3, 3.29 ERA) will face Athletics righty Trevor Cahill (4-2, 3.02) on Saturday at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum.

Young's single drives Twins to victory in extras

By Associated Press – 6/5/10

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) -- Justin Morneau asked Ron Gardenhire for a day off before the game. That might have to wait for a while.

Morneau hit a home run and drove in two runs, and Delmon Young singled in the top of the 11th inning to give the Minnesota Twins a 5-4 victory over the Oakland Athletics on Friday night.

Morneau doubled against Andrew Bailey (0-2) to lead off the 11th. After Jason Kubel struck out, Young's grounder down the first base line barely eluded Daric Barton.

"We'll see if it happens," Morneau said of taking a day. "I feel pretty good ... but at the same time it's tough to take a day off any time. I'm not really going to want to do it. I have one of the best hitters in the league in front of me (Joe Mauer) and he takes a lot of pitches."

Matt Guerrier (1-1) pitched two scoreless innings for the win. Jon Rauch pitched the 11th for his 14th save in 16 chances.

Twins starter Scott Baker went 7 1/3 innings, allowing four runs on six hits. He walked one and struck out three.

Young also drove in a run in the sixth. Kubel added an RBI single for the Twins, who ended their season-high three-game losing streak.

"Moreany has been big all year long," Gardenhire said. "That's why people are pushing him for the All-Star Game. It was another great night for him."

Kevin Kouzmanoff hit a home run and drove in two for the A's, Rajai Davis also hit a home run and Kurt Suzuki, who had two hits, added an RBI.

Dallas Braden, winless in five starts since his perfect game on May 9, lasted 6 1/3 innings, giving up four runs on six hits. He walked one and struck out two.

"The pitch I want back is the double to Young," Braden said. "I know how to pitch that guy. I made an OK pitch."

The A's had won seven of their previous nine home games and entered Friday with the best home ERA (2.79) in the AL.

Baker remained unbeaten in five starts against the A's.

"We finally got to him a little bit there," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He throws strikes. He doesn't walk anybody."

Morneau, who has hit safely in seven straight, hit his 13th home run of the season, a two-run shot with two outs in the first that traveled well up into the right field bleachers.

"I just wish Mauer took Morneau to Cabo with him and left him there, on a fishing boat," Braden said. "What are you going to do? Those guys are fairly good hitters."

After Suzuki's infield single scored a run for the A's in the fourth, the Twins added a pair of runs in the sixth to make it 4-1. Kubel singled home a run and Young doubled home another.

Kouzmanoff, who hit a home run for the third consecutive game, a career best, made it 4-3 with his two-run shot off the facing of the second deck in left field.

Davis' second home run of the season just cleared the fence near the left-field line in the eighth to tie the game and end Baker's night.

Davis owns a .324 batting average (22 for 68) over his last 19 games. He's a lifetime .328 hitter against the Twins.

NOTES: Twins INF Danny Valencia, who made his major league debut Thursday, recorded his first career stolen base, swiping second in the second. It was the first successful steal against Braden since Nick Punto did it for the Twins on Aug. 20, 2008. ... A's 1B Daric Barton doubled in the fourth to extend his hitting streak to 11 games. ... Young has hit safely in seven of his last eight games. ... A's INF Adam Rosales made his third start at shortstop. ... A's LHP Craig Breslow struck out a career-high four batters in 1 2/3 innings. ... Morneau matched Chuck Knoblauch for eighth in Twins' history with his 210th double. ... Mauer is 50-for-150 lifetime against the A's.

Maggio: Central casting

By Anthony Maggio / FSNorth.com – 6/4/10

The Twins hit the one-third mark of the season on Thursday – 54 games into a season that so far has gone about as well as the Twins could have hoped. With 108 games to play, now's as good a time as any to assess Minnesota's place in American League Central Division.

Minnesota Twins

Record after 54 games: 31-23

On pace for: 93 wins

Home record: 18-9

Road record: 13-14

Last 20 games: 9-11

Looking back: It's tough to ask much more from a team, record-wise. Just four teams in baseball boast higher winning percentages and Minnesota entered June a robust 11 games over .500. The Twins were 25-27 after the first two months a year ago when they won the division. The biggest question marks coming into the season were the starting rotation's ability to improve, and who would replace All-Star closer Joe Nathan. The latter still generates plenty of chatter among fans and media alike, but Jon Rauch has successfully saved 13 of 15 games and the Twins recovered to win both games that Rauch blew. He's been missed in a setup role as Jesse Crain has struggled, and a strained elbow kept Jose Mijares from being effective until recently. Still, Minnesota's relievers sport the second-lowest ERA in the American League.

The starting staff, meanwhile, has been decent, but still sports a middle-of-the-pack ERA among starting staffs in baseball. The Twins' offseason middle infield acquisitions have been more than worth their cost – not only have J.J. Hardy and Orlando Hudson helped Minnesota set a record for fewest errors ever through 50 games, but they have filled holes in the lineup that have made the Twins deeper offensively. Led by an MVP-caliber start from Justin Morneau and the typical production from Joe Mauer, Minnesota is sixth in the American League in runs scored.

Looking forward: Rauch has given up four runs in his last five innings pitched – a pace that can't continue for much longer before rumblings grow louder for the Twins to look outside the organization for a new closer. Still, he'll need to actually blow some significant saves in addition to the numbers before Minnesota would start to scramble.

The aforementioned middle infielders have both run into injury troubles recently, and if dings and dents start to add up it could lead to a noticeable impact on the offense. The Twins easily lead baseball in grounding into double plays, a trend that could

also stunt an offense already frustrated by an inability to hit home runs in its home park. The starting rotation has yet to run into a significant injury hurdle, something it almost certainly will have to deal with down the road. In general, the starting staff has been good enough, but any injury issues combined with a slip in overall performance would be a major source of consternation.

Detroit Tigers

Record: 27-25

On pace for: 84 wins

Games back: 2.5

Home record: 17-10

Road record: 11-15

Last 20 games: 9-11

Looking back: Two rookies found their way into the Tigers' everyday lineup out of spring training, and two rookies have played a big role in keeping Detroit on Minnesota's heels – but those two lists don't exactly match. Austin Jackson has been nothing short of spectacular in center field and in the leadoff spot, proving to be a more than capable replacement for Curtis Granderson. The Scott Sizemore experiment at second base crashed and burned, but the now healthy Carlos Guillen has taken over as rookie Brennan Boesch has forced his way into the everyday lineup as a corner outfielder with his offensive prowess. Throw in a comeback season from Magglio Ordonez and Miguel Cabrera's usual baseball bashing and its surprising that Detroit is in the middle of the AL pack in runs scored. It's been enough, though, thanks to a bullpen that sports the best ERA in baseball.

Looking forward: Cutting ties with Dontrelle Willis is a good start on the road to redemption for a starting staff with an ERA better than only three American League clubs. The Tigers have been living on the edge, as evidenced by their run differential of just +9 (Minnesota, for comparison, is +46). But Max Scherzer returned from a short trip to the minors with 14 strikeouts in 5 2/3 innings against Oakland on Sunday, and Armando Galarraga threw a perfect game (no need for fancy semantics, in my opinion) on Wednesday. If Scherzer starts to live up to his potential and Galarraga can revert to his 2008 form, the Tigers will have a much better chance of keeping this a race in August and September. Rick Porcello snapping out of his sophomore slump would help, too.

Offensively, Detroit's big guns have to keep shouldering the load for the black hole known as the bottom of its order. The Tigers are getting nothing from their catcher or shortstop, and Brandon Inge's on-base percentage at third base is struggling to stay at .300. With no improvement there and an injury to one of the Tigers' key hitters, things could go downhill in a hurry.

Chicago White Sox

Record: 23-30

On pace for: 70 wins

Games back: 7.5

Home record: 12-15

Road record: 11-15

Last 20 games: 9-11

Looking back: Little has gone right for the White Sox this season. Pitching – from both starters and relievers – was supposed to be the strength of this club. Instead, only the Pittsburgh Pirates have a worse ERA from their starters, and the bullpen can't even boast top-10 status in the major leagues. If not for Paul Konerko's power binge and Alex Rios' bounce-back campaign, Chicago would be in even worse shape. It's tough to pick a biggest disappointment on this team, because Gordon Beckham, Carlos Quentin, Juan Pierre, Gavin Floyd and Jake Peavy all could make a valid argument.

Looking forward: Their division deficit isn't insurmountable, but with so many players struggling the White Sox could be dismantled for parts if they fall much further back at the All-Star break. Considering Chicago is currently pairing its dismal

starting ERA with a batting average that is cushioned from the league's basement by only Pittsburgh and the Houston Astros, a quick turnaround seems unlikely. In fact, the White Sox should feel fortunate to not be trailing this division by even more.

General manager Kenny Williams has never been shy about making splashy moves, so at the moment it seems blowing up the roster is a far more likely scenario than Chicago getting back in the mix. Still, all it takes is a few hot starting pitchers – and guys like Peavy, Floyd, Mark Buehrle and lone bright spot John Danks have the ability to run off a string of strong starts – for the White Sox to chip a few games off Minnesota's lead, building confidence and momentum in the process.

Kansas City Royals

Record: 22-33

On pace for: 65 wins

Games back: 9.5

Home record: 10-17

Road record: 12-16

Last 20 games: 10-10

Looking back: It's been exactly 20 games since Ned Yost took over as manager in Kansas City, which could be considered an indictment on Trey Hillman's managing prowess looking at the team's .500 record in that stretch. The Royals have turned things around quickly and at this point seem as much of a threat as the White Sox to actually compete in this division. Zack Greinke hasn't been quite as dominant as he was in 2009, but he's still been very good regardless of what his win-loss record says. Although run support has been missing for Greinke, Kansas City overall has swung the sticks quite well – only the Yankees have a better team batting average in all of baseball. Billy Butler remains an overlooked budding star, and the steady play of unexciting but productive players like David DeJesus, Alberto Callaspo, Scott Podsednik, Jason Kendall and Mike Aviles has helped the Royals overcome a bullpen with an ERA better than only the Los Angeles Angels and Cleveland Indians in the American League.

Looking forward: The reason the White Sox ultimately have a better shot of contending than the Royals do among the division's mid-tier teams is their pitchers at least have a track record of extended success. Kansas City's starters don't have high expectations, so the fact that their ERA is only better than Chicago and Pittsburgh doesn't come as a huge shock. How will the Royals deal with these pitching struggles? With more offense, of course! Kila Ka'aihue and Alex Gordon are mashing at Triple-A Omaha, and sooner than later will be called upon – Gordon at a new position in left field – to help Kansas City try to balance out its -41 run differential while likely not allowing any fewer runs than usual.

Cleveland Indians

Record: 19-33

On pace for: 59 wins

Games back: 11

Home record: 8-14

Road record: 11-19

Last 20 games: 6-14

Looking back: Just when the Indians figured things couldn't get any worse, Grady Sizemore was put on the shelf – possibly for the season – with a knee injury. Sizemore was scheduled to go under the knife today, with microfracture surgery still a possibility. Asdrubal Cabrera was already on the disabled list with a fractured arm, and besides Shin-Shoo Choo most of Cleveland's healthy players appear to be swinging with fractured arms. The Indians rank 26th in runs scored in the majors. Things don't look any better on the pitching front, as Cleveland's bullpen ERA is bested in futility by only Milwaukee and Arizona.

Looking forward: Kerry Wood recently returned from injury to bolster the relief corps, which should help until he's traded away by a team desperate for bullpen help. The Indians rank 22nd in ERA among starters, but much of that is due to Justin

Masterson's inconsistency. If he can harness even some of his potential, the Indians should be able to ride him, Fausto Carmona and Mitch Talbot to a few more wins. Offensively, though, Cleveland has nothing but Choo going for it. Matt LaPorta has plenty of untapped power potential, but until he figures it out the Indians must rely on Russell Branyan and Austin Kearns to protect Choo. Carlos Santana could be called up to replace the struggling Lou Marson at catcher, but there still wouldn't be enough established hitters in this lineup to get the Indians anywhere near competing for this division.

Toledo Mud Hens hold off Rochester Red Wings

By Kevin Oklobzija / democratandChronicle.com – 6/5/10

Nearly 10,000 fans packed into Frontier Field on Friday night, but not everyone came to cheer for the Rochester Red Wings.

At least one fan, Bill Ketchner, made the drive from Wellsville in Allegany County to watch the Toledo Mud Hens' starting pitcher.

His grandson, Ryan Ketchner, put on a show, too.

Despite an average fastball, the left-hander changed speeds effectively for six scoreless innings for the victory as the Mud Hens held off the Red Wings 5-4.

"I was a little disappointed with the way we swung the bat early," said acting Wings manager Floyd Rayford. Manager Tom Nieto returned home to Florida to attend his son's high school graduation.

"We had him at 84 (mph) to 87 most of the night; he wasn't overpowering, but we didn't hit him," Rayford said.

Ketchner, 28, was born in Wellsville but didn't live there long. His family moved to Florida when he was 1.

Until Sunday, when Toledo visited Buffalo, Ketchner (2-2) had never pitched in western New York. He has now made two starts in six days.

That's one too many as far as the Red Wings are concerned.

Ketchner allowed only four hits, walked one and struck out three. A 10th-round draft pick of the Seattle Mariners in 2000, he is pitching for his fifth organization but has never appeared in a major league game.

"He's the kind of guy who keeps guys off balance great and hits his spots," said Mud Hens left fielder Ryan Strieby, who went 4-for-4 and drove in two runs.

The Wings were baffled by Ketchner.

"It's starting to be a little trend, we're not coming out and hitting the ball the way we should," Rayford said.

"I like their (the Mud Hens) philosophy. They come out and jump on the fastball. (Trevor) Plouffe, he missed one right down the middle (striking out on the fastball in the first inning). He should have hit that ball across the street."

Wings starter Ryan Mullins (3-4) nearly matched Ketchner. He allowed five hits and one run in four innings before leaving due to a pitch-count limitation. Mullins hadn't pitched since May 19 due to elbow tendinitis.

Reliever Deolis Guerra inherited a 1-0 deficit to start the fifth but wasn't effective. He couldn't escape a bases-loaded jam, yielding a two-out, two-run single to Strieby, then allowed single runs in the sixth and seventh.

Down 5-0, the Wings scored three times in the seventh off Brendan Wise.

In the ninth they put runners on second and third with one out, but Mud Hens closer Jay Sborz survived for his 12th save in 12 chances.

He allowed a run on Dustin Martin's grounder to short and struck out Toby Gardenhire to end the game.