



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips

Wednesday, August 22, 2012

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A's 4, Twins 1: Loss includes triple play, none left on base

By: John Shipley, Pioneer Press – 8/21/12

RECAP: The Twins grounded into a triple play for the first time since 2007 and didn't leave a runner on base for the first time since 1998 as Oakland won in front of 13,116 on Tuesday, Aug. 21, at Oakland Coliseum.

With the score tied 1-1, Justin Morneau and Ryan Doumit opened the Twins' fifth with singles. Trevor Plouffe grounded to third baseman Josh Donaldson to start a 5-4-3 triple play, the first the Twins had hit into since Mike Redmond grounded into one Aug. 27, 2007, at Cleveland.

The last time the Twins didn't leave a runner on base was May 17, 1998, when New York's David Wells threw a perfect game against them at Yankee Stadium. According to Elias Sports Bureau, the last time the Twins had at least one hit and didn't leave anyone on base was April 12, 1996.

MEANING: The Twins have lost 10 of their past 12 games.

ETC.: A's left-hander Brad Anderson (1-0), making his first start since June 2011, gave up one earned run on four hits and no walks and struck out six.

Minnesota Twins' Ron Gardenhire willing to consider six-man rotation

By: John Shipley, Pioneer Press – 8/21/12

OAKLAND, Calif. -- If the Minnesota Twins bring another starter up when rosters expand on Sept. 1, manager Ron Gardenhire said he'd be happy to finish the season with a six-man rotation.

"If I have six people that can pitch, that would be wonderful, but right now we have five," he said. "If that's the case, I wouldn't be afraid to do that at all, if we want to take a look at six guys."

The rotation currently consists of left-hander Brian Duensing and four pitchers who pitched for the Class AAA Rochester Red Wings this season: Hendriks, left-hander Scott Diamond and righties Samuel Deduno and Cole De Vries. The only likely additional call-up would be Esmerling Vasquez, a right-hander who is 6-1 with a 2.17 earned-run average in his past 10 starts.

Vasquez, 28, has 48 strikeouts in 49 2/3 innings pitched and seems poised for an audition.

Minnesota Twins: Denard Span's claustrophobia halts his MRI

By: John Shipley, Pioneer Press – 8/21/12

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Denard Span's claustrophobia got the better of him on Tuesday, Aug. 21, cutting short an MRI exam on his clavicle, so the Twins center fielder is just going to continue his rehab without the test.

He started by taking live batting practice for the first time since before he was injured while trying to make a sliding catch in a 7-3 loss to Tampa Bay on Aug. 12. Span missed his eighth straight game when the Twins played the A's at Oakland Coliseum on Tuesday night.

He had an MRI taken of his neck and shoulder on Monday and was ready for one on his clavicle on Tuesday, but he couldn't stay in the machine for 35 minutes. X-rays taken the day of the injury were negative, so Span said he hopes to proceed without a second MRI.

The exams are something he and many people have trouble with.

"I think the most important test was on my neck, and I got through that one," he said. "I'm just going to continue to rehab and push myself. We know it's not broken. Hopefully I just continue to get better and hope that I can play."

The Twins have four outfielders on the active roster after recalling outfielder Matt Carson from Class AAA Rochester, but they've been without a player on the bench for more than a week. Assistant general manager Rob Antony said the team will have to make a decision soon on whether Span should be placed on the disabled list, adding, "Like we said all along, would like to avoid it if we can."

That was manager Ron Gardenhire's take, as well.

"That's the reason we went to an extra player and dropped a pitcher, to see where this took us and to see how long it was going to be with Denard," he said. "Our goal is not to put him on the DL, and we're still not (going to) right now."

Minnesota Twins' Carl Pavano shut down for season after new diagnosis

By: John Shipley, Pioneer Press – 8/21/12

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Carl Pavano's season, and maybe his career with the Twins, is over. And he's frustrated.

An MRI and examination by specialist Dr. David Altchek of his sore right shoulder, bothering him since spring training, revealed a bruise on his humerus bone that requires rest to heal.

"It's too bad it took three months diagnose that," Pavano said from New York. "I could have been resting."

Pavano hasn't pitched for the Twins since June 1 and scrapped a rehab start with Class A Fort Myers to see Altchek on Tuesday, Aug. 21. Twins doctors diagnosed Pavano with a strain in his shoulder capsule, but he said Altchek said the primary culprit is the bruise, which is causing inflammation and pain.

"The good news is it doesn't require surgery," Pavano said. "I've had this in the past and gotten through it, and obviously I've pitched a lot since then. But as far as I'm concerned this whole season has been a failure on many levels, for myself, for the team. It's just kind of lousy that it took this long.

"I was pitching through pain and discomfort for so long and it was driving me crazy, and this was all it took? It's irritating. It's no one's fault. I'll take the blame, but I don't understand why."

Pavano, 36, had trouble finding full velocity in his pitches throughout spring training, and despite pain and weakness in his shoulder, he and the team seemed to believe that if he kept pitching he would have a breakthrough. But he didn't. After averaging 89 mph in 2011, he was down to 86 mph this season, according to fangraphs.com. After two MRI exams, he was shut down and then sent to Fort Myers to rehab.

Twins assistant general manager Rob Antony said he was "a little surprised" by the new diagnosis, adding, "The thing to do is to rest it, so he's probably done for the year, it sounds like."

Asked if the Twins were as disappointed as Pavano, Antony said, "Injuries are a part of the game."

"Carl kept trying to pitch even when he was throwing 86 (mph), he was trying to pitch through it," he said. "It got to the point where we had to shut it down and try and get him better, and then you turn it over to the other people."

The Twins had a similar situation with right-hander Scott Baker, who tried pitching through an elbow injury this spring before getting a second opinion from Altchek in April. Baker wound up having Tommy John surgery.

Asked if the team needs to go back and retrace its steps on how it handled Pavano's case, Antony said, "I don't know if that's a question that I'm supposed to answer, or I can answer, to be honest with you. That's sort of out of my area.

"All I can report on and tell you," he added, "is what the medical people told me, and that was that he had a bone bruise. That's straight from the doctor. He thought the best thing to do would be to rest it to get rid of it and get over that."

Pavano said he did, in fact, have shoulder problems he was able to work out with Twins assistant trainer Tony Leo, but the bone bruise where the humerus meets the shoulder is what has kept his velocity down. He made 11 starts for the Twins this season, going 2-5 with a 6.00 earned-run average. In 2010 and 11, he led the staff in innings with 221 and 222, respectively.

"Right now I want to get my mind right and put this behind me and move on. I don't know what the future holds," he said. "We did some really good things in my time here, and if I were healthy I'd be another piece to help us be more consistent. I'm disappointed."

Pavano is in the last year of a two-year, \$16.5 million extension paying him \$8.5 million and will be a free agent at season's end. He has been in the major leagues for 14 seasons, was an all-star in 2004 and won a World Series with the Florida Marlins in 2003, so he could retire. But two seasons removed from going 17-11 with a 3.75 earned-run average for Minnesota in 2010, he feels he has more baseball left.

"I know as soon as my arm heals I'll regain that hunger to be successful in baseball," he said. "We'll see. I love Minnesota, my family loves Minnesota, and I love the organization. Who knows? I know they'll need pitching next season."

Minnesota Twins recall Liam Hendriks from Class AAA Rochester

By: John Shipley, Pioneer Press – 8/21/12

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Liam Hendriks is happy to be back in the majors, and this time, the right-hander hopes, it will stick. So do the Minnesota Twins, who are waiting for his success in the minors to translate to the big leagues.

"He's done very well in Triple-A," manager Ron Gardenhire said. "Whether he can make the jump up here and separate remains to be seen."

Hendriks was recalled from Class AAA Rochester on Tuesday, Aug. 21, to take the place of right-hander Nick Blackburn, who was outrighted off the 40-man roster on Monday. Hendriks is scheduled to start the series final of a three-game series with the A's on Wednesday at Oakland Coliseum. A strong finish would go a long way toward securing Hendriks, 23, a spot in the 2013 rotation.

"Without a doubt it's big, but I'm trying not to add any more pressure or anything like that," he said. "I'm just going to go out there and attack the hitters and make them put the ball in play and let our defense do their thing."

This is Hendriks' fourth major league stint since being called up from Class AA New Britain last September. He seems to have conquered the minors, going 9-3 with a 2.20 earned-run average in 18 starts with Rochester this season. Between Rochester and New Britain the past two seasons, he's 21-9 with a 2.61 ERA.

But in 12 major league starts, he's 0-7 with a 6.71 ERA.

"After I got sent back down I said, 'I'm just going to stop screwing around with my mechanics and get back to what I was doing in spring training: step back, get set and throw,' " Hendriks said. "It was helping me out. My velo(city) is a little up, and my slider is a little tighter. The changeup seems like I can feel it when I'm doing it wrong instead of guessing."

He said Red Wings pitching coach Bobby Cuellar "figured me out a little bit. I was able to throw the ball well and throw strikes."

Charley Walters: Minnesota Twins' Pedro Florimon plays with 'intensity'

By: Charley Walters, Pioneer Press – 8/21/12

Until this month, shortstop Pedro Florimon's major league career consisted of four games with the Baltimore Orioles last year, during which he batted .125.

Now with the Twins for four games, Florimon is hitting .500 with a double and triple. In a 7-2 victory at Oakland on Monday night, Aug. 20, Florimon was 3 for 3 with three runs scored.

"He plays with a lot of intensity," Gene Glynn, manager of the Twins' Triple-A Rochester team, said Tuesday morning, Aug. 21.

In 83 games for Glynn this season, Florimon hit .251 with 16 doubles, two triples and three home runs.

"He can really go from first to home," Glynn said. "He's got long legs and a great stride. Once he gets going, he can really cover some ground."

He can field, too, Glynn said.

"You're going to like watching him," he said. "He does stuff you can't teach."

The Twins signed Florimon, 25, who is from the Dominican Republic, off waivers in December.

"He's a really good guy who plays the position (shortstop) like he belongs," Glynn said.

Meanwhile, Glynn said shortstop Brian Dozier, recently demoted by the Twins to Rochester, has played well.

"He hit four bullets last night against Pawtucket and got one hit," Glynn said.

Glynn pointed out that one of his players, outfielder Wilkin Ramirez, has had an extraordinary three games.

"He was 7 for 7 in two games," Glynn said. "Then in the next game, he hit a ball that got lost in the sun, and they gave somebody an error -- otherwise, that would have been eight hits in a row. Then the next time he comes up, he hits a grand slam.

"That would have been nine hits in a row."

Guards Tyus Jones of Apple Valley and Rashad Vaughn of Robbinsdale Cooper leave Wednesday for the Elite 24 outdoor basketball tournament at Venice Beach, Calif., that will be televised on ESPNU on Saturday. The tournament features the top 24-rated prep basketball players in the country.

The Twins are 19 games under .500 and solidly in last place. There has been one redeeming part to the season, though: Cory Provus.

The first-year Twins radio play-by-play voice has been informative, descriptive and professional throughout the team's first 120 games. He's been delightful, despite the Twins' woes, to listen to.

"In an ideal world, you'd love the team to win more," Provus said the other day. "But I don't let what happens on the field impact or affect the way that I prepare for a game. I think that even though the record is what it is, I think our fans and our sponsors and the audience throughout the network are deserving of a dramatic call in a game-winning moment of the ninth inning.

"If you're 16 games under (.500) or you're 16 over, your fans deserve that same passion."

Provus has delivered.

"I don't let the record dictate how I prepare for a game; I try to separate the two," he said. "The only thing I can prepare for is how I prepare for the game and my energy level."

Provus, 34, spent three seasons in Chicago calling Cubs games with Ron Santo. He spent the next three years calling Milwaukee Brewers games with Bob Uecker.

He said coming to the Twins has been what he had hoped it would be.

"And more," he said. "I love coming to Target Field. I see all these national columns about how the attendance is down, and this ballpark and that city, and look where we're at here, for a team that's scuffling, still drawing 30,000-plus a night.

"I mean, I love coming here. I think our booth is great -- we have so much interaction from fans in our broadcast booth. I'm having a blast."

Provus plans to miss just one game this season, Aug. 31, when he'll be in Milwaukee for the unveiling of a statue of Uecker, a hall of fame broadcaster, at Miller Park.

"I talk to Bob all the time," Provus said.

Provus, who succeeded retired John Gordon in the booth, is in the first year of a three-year contract with the Twins, with a club-option fourth year.

"I don't want to go anywhere," said Provus, who was raised just north of Chicago. "We live in St. Louis Park, where there's so much to do. To be able to say I'm a lead broadcaster for a major league team, I'm very lucky. I don't take any of this for granted."

Charley Walters can be reached at cwalters@pioneerpress.com.

DON'T PRINT THAT

The best high school football player in Minnesota this season, other than Notre Dame-bound senior wideout James Onwualu of Cretin-Derham Hall, probably is Minneapolis Washburn junior all-purpose back Jeff Jones. The 6-foot, 190-pound Jones already has offers from Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan State and Wisconsin.

The Gophers men's basketball team is getting a recruiting visit from 6-7, 215-pound power forward Nigel Hayes on Sept. 7. Besides Minnesota, Hayes, who is from Toledo, Ohio, has offers from Ohio State and Wisconsin.

Thursday, Aug. 23, when Paul Molitor, Tony Oliva and Frank Quilici will join Nita Killebrew to dedicate the renovated \$300,000 Harmon Killebrew Field at Pearl Park in south Minneapolis, happens to be the 58th anniversary of Killebrew's major league debut with the Washington Senators.

OVERHEARD

Twins VP for player personnel Mike Radcliff on rookie shortstop Pedro Florimon, who is hitting .500 after four games: "He has tools. He could be a late bloomer. He's always been able to do things; he just never hit a bunch. So we'll see if he's able to do that."

A's lefthander comes of DL to hammer the Twins

By: La Velle E. Neal III, Star Tribune – 8/21/12

OAKLAND, CALIF. - This recap of how Twins baserunners fared Tuesday will be brief.

Baserunner No. 1: Ben Revere. He singled to start the game. He stole second, went to third on a ground out and scored on a wild pitch by A's lefthander Brett Anderson.

Baserunner No. 2: Josh Willingham. He singled with two outs in the first inning -- and was picked off first to end in the inning.

Baserunners Nos. 3 and 4: Justin Morneau and Ryan Doumit. They opened the fifth inning with singles to center field. And those baserunners were erased on something called ... a triple play.

That was it for the Twins on the bases Tuesday. Anderson was excellent for seven innings before handing off to the bullpen. Oakland came up with enough offense to win 4-1, and the Twins didn't strand a single runner for the first time since the Yankees' David Wells threw a perfect game at them May 17, 1998 in Yankee Stadium.

Anderson, 24, had a lot to do with shutting down the Twins' offense, holding them to one run over seven innings on four hits, no walks and six strikeouts. It was hard to believe it was his first outing since June 5, 2011. He's missed more than a year because of Tommy John elbow surgery but pitched Tuesday as if he never spent a day on the disabled list.

"Anderson was pretty good," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "That's one of the better performances we have seen in a while. He had a really sharp breaking ball. His fastball was taking off and he was adding to it. He kept us off-balance pretty much the whole night. Made it tough on us."

His curveball was so good it deserved a nickname. Let's call it "Mr. Snappy."

Twins hitters swung at and missed Mr. Snappy all night. When combined with a good fastball that he could locate, Anderson faced just one batter over the minimum through seven innings.

The game was tied 1-1 in the fifth when Morneau and Doumit singled to center, putting runners on first and second and bringing Trevor Plouffe to the plate.

Anderson spun Mr. Snappy. Plouffe swung and hit a bouncer down the third base line. Josh Donaldson grabbed the ball near the bag and stepped on the base for the first out. What made his part of the play look easy was that the A's were expecting a bunt and positioned themselves accordingly.

Adam Rosales took the throw at second and made a terrific turn -- jumping in the air to avoid the sliding Doumit -- before firing to first to complete the triple play.

"We hit into a triple play," Gardenhire said. "Those are the breaks."

It was the eighth time the Twins hit into a triple play in their history, the first time since Aug. 27, 2007, when Mike Redmond started one at Cleveland. Michael Cuddyer and Jason Kubel were on base at the time, if you were wondering.

It was the eighth triple play in Oakland history and 21st in A's history.

Oakland broke the tie in the sixth when Derek Norris singled home Seth Smith. The A's added two more in the seventh on a RBI single by Josh Reddick and RBI double by Chris Carter to finish the scoring.

The Twins have lost six of their past seven games and are 1-4 on their current 10-game road trip.

Hendriks gets a chance

The Twins have considered Liam Hendriks to be one of their better pitching prospects. They've spoken highly of his competitiveness, quality of breaking pitches and willingness to mix his pitches.

Hendriks, however, has not translated minor league success to the majors.

In 12 career starts going back to late last season, Hendriks is 0-7 with a 6.71 ERA. He's 0-5 this season with a 7.04 ERA and has given up 10 home runs in 38 1/3 innings.

He's getting another chance to show that he can cut it in the majors. Hendriks, 23, was called up Tuesday to replace Nick Blackburn in the rotation and will start Wednesday against the Athletics.

In 16 starts at Class AAA Rochester, Hendriks is 9-3 with a 2.20 ERA. He'll get several starts to prove to the organization that he should be included in conversations about the 2013 rotation. "This is an opportunity for him. He's got 5-6 weeks to try to show he can be a guy to be penciled in in our rotation," said Rob Antony, Twins assistant general manager.

Etc.

- Revere stole second base in the first inning on Tuesday, giving him 29 steals this season. With one more stolen base, Revere will become the fourth player in Twins history to post back-to-back seasons with at least 30 stolen bases. Chuck Knoblauch (three in a row), Rod Carew (four) and Cesar Tovar (three) are members of that club. Revere stole 34 bases last season.
- Gardenhire was asked about Roger Clemens signing with the Sugar Land (Texas) Skeeters of the independent Atlantic League team to pitch at age 50. "I don't want to tamper, but we do have a spot open," Gardenhire joked. That team, by the way, is managed by former Twins third baseman Gary Gaetti.

New diagnosis brings end to Pavano's season

By: La Velle E. Neal III, Star Tribune – 8/21/12

OAKLAND, CALIF. - Twins righthander Carl Pavano got a new diagnosis for his right shoulder Tuesday and a whole new frustration along with it.

New York specialist Dr. David Altchek said Pavano has a bruise on the humerus bone, an injury that likely would have recovered in a few weeks had he rested it. Instead, Pavano worked three months on rehabilitating what was believed to be a strained shoulder capsule.

Now it's too late for rest, so Pavano's season is over. Since he's a free agent after the season, his career with the Twins could be over, too.

"It is what it is," Pavano said during a telephone interview. "You have an injury. You do the work to come back and it didn't happen. You've got to move on and get ready for another day. That's where I'm at."

The diagnosis came after Pavano had another MRI exam in New York. Pavano had similar exams with the Twins this season, but the bruise went undetected in those.

Despite being asked a few times if he was upset with the way his injury was handled by the club, Pavano would not point fingers. He said that something similar happened in 2005 when he was with the Yankees. He battled tendinitis in his shoulder that year, and a bruise on the same bone popped up late in the season.

"We put in the work to get it right," he said of the Twins training staff. "Me and the staff, and this was the outcome. Because it didn't go your way doesn't mean you can change everything."

Pavano pitched until June 1, going 2-5 with a 6.00 ERA and watching his fastball average 86.8 miles an hour, according to www.fangraphs.com. He didn't travel with the team between a couple of starts in May so he could undergo deep tissue massages and other therapy. He was willing to pitch through the discomfort if he also improved, but that improvement was minimal and he landed on the disabled list on June 4 with a diagnosis of right rotator cuff weakness.

He took his rehab to Fort Myers in late July and started pitching this month for Class A Fort Myers, giving up one run in five innings over two starts.

Altchek saw every MRI the Twins did on Pavano during the season and concurred with their diagnosis. He even remarked in May that he noticed Pavano's shoulder gaining strength.

Twins Assistant General Manager Rob Antony admitted to being surprised by the new diagnosis on Tuesday.

"All along our doctors and Altchek have conferred on everything," Antony said. "To me, I'm not sure how many more medical opinions you can get on this guy, or more tests done or whatever, than we did."

Pavano is making \$8.5 million this season in the second year of a two-year, \$16.5 million deal. After going 17-11 for the club in 2010 he dipped to 9-13 last season and has spent most of this season in the trainer's room.

A lot of good things happened to him here, but his career with the Twins is not ending well.

"You put in the work to make it strong and get it going, but it hasn't worked out," he said. "You work to accomplish something and I look back at my season, numberswise and teamwise, and I really wasn't there much at all. That is not good."

One player trying to get back on the field this season is outfielder Denard Span, who has now missed eight games with a sore clavicle and neck suffered while trying to make a falling catch against the Rays on Aug. 12.

Span had an MRI of his neck on Monday and was supposed to have one of his clavicle on Tuesday -- but he couldn't go through with it.

Span revealed that he's claustrophobic and sometimes isn't comfortable in the close quarters of the MRI machine.

"I don't know what else to say," Span said. "It's embarrassing that I couldn't get it done today, but bottom line, I stayed there for an hour trying to get it done. Just couldn't do it, man. I tried my best. When they strapped me in there and told me I couldn't move for 35 minutes, I just couldn't do it."

Span did take batting practice before Tuesday's game and is feeling better. The Twins are trying to be patient but might have to consider placing him on the disabled list if he needs several more days to recover.

Span said if he needs to have another MRI he'll find a way to do it. He's not the first player to be claustrophobic -- just one of the few to admit it.

"I didn't have enough Valium," he said.

Neal: Claustrophobic Span can't go through with MRI

By: La Velle E. Neal III, Star Tribune – 8/21/12

Twins outfielder Denard Span was supposed to undergo a Magnetic Resonance Imaging exam on his clavicle today, but he couldn't go through with it.

Why? Well, anyone who has had an MRI knows that many of those machines have chambers that are very confined. Span revealed today that he's claustrophobic and just couldn't go through with the exam - and that was after taking a few milligrams of Valium and being strapped to a table.

"I didn't have enough Valium," he said.

I have covered players who are claustrophobic and wanted to keep that a secret. Span is the first one to admit it on the record. He knows he might take some flack for it.

"I'm not happy about it, either," he said.

Span said he does feel better and actually wants to take a few swings and see how he feels. If he has to get back in and try to get another MRI, he will. He's relieved that he was able to make it through a MRI of his neck yesterday.

Winless Hendriks gets another chance

By: Staff, Star Tribune – 8/21/12

The Twins have considered Liam Hendriks to be one of their better pitching prospects. They've spoken highly of his competitiveness, quality of breaking pitches and willingness to mix his pitches.

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In 16 starts at Class AAA Rochester, Hendriks is 9-3 with a 2.20 ERA. He'll get several starts to prove to the organization that he should be included in conversations about the 2013 rotation. "This is an opportunity for him. He's got 5-6 weeks to try to show he can be a guy to be penciled in in our rotation," said Rob Antony, Twins assistant general manager.

Athletics turn triple play against Twins

By: Staff, Associated Press – 8/21/12

OAKLAND, Calif. - The Oakland Athletics turned the third triple play in the major leagues this season during the fifth inning of Tuesday night's game against the Minnesota Twins.

Justin Morneau and Ryan Doumit singled against A's starter Brett Anderson before Trevor Plouffe hit a sharp grounder to Oakland third baseman Josh Donaldson. Donaldson stepped on the bag, then made a quick relay to second baseman Adam Rosales, who threw to first baseman Chris Carter to complete the 5-4-3 triple play.

Rosales was making just his fifth start of the season after Oakland demoted Jemile Weeks to the minors before the game.

It's the 21st triple play in franchise history and the first by the A's since Randy Velarde's unassisted triple play against the New York Yankees on May 29, 2000.

Hendriks looks to prove he belongs in big leagues

By: Jordan Garretson, MLB.com – 8/22/12

Liam Hendriks is hoping the third time is the charm, and so are the Minnesota Twins.

Freshly recalled from Triple-A Rochester for his third stint with the Twins this season, Hendriks will take over for the struggling Nick Blackburn to start on Wednesday in the team's series finale against Oakland.

The right-hander experienced plenty of success with Rochester this season. Hendriks recorded a 2.20 ERA in 16 starts for the Red Wings, striking out 82 and walking just 28. But he hasn't been able to reproduce that success at the Major League level, going 0-5 with a 7.04 ERA in eight starts for the Twins.

"He's obviously had his struggles up here, but he's done very well in Triple-A," manager Ron Gardenhire said. "Whether he can make the jump up here and separate remains to be seen. We'll get another opportunity to look at him. He's done what he's supposed to in Triple-A and they've actually told me he's the best pitcher in that league. And that's saying an awful lot. There's a lot of young arms in that league."

A's starter Tommy Milone has dealt with his own struggles recently. The left-hander is 0-3 with a 7.50 ERA over his last four starts, in which opponents are hitting .316 against him.

The three-game losing streak is the longest of the 25-year-old's two-year career. But facing Minnesota could help solve his slump after he allowed two runs over six innings in a 9-3 win against the Twins on July 14.

Manager Bob Melvin did like what he saw from Milone in his most recent start, in which he allowed four runs on seven hits over five innings against Cleveland on Aug. 17.

"I thought he was sharper," Melvin said. "I thought he was better."

Twins: Span can't get through MRI

- Claustrophobia kept Denard Span from getting through an MRI exam on his right clavicle on Tuesday. But the center fielder took batting practice on Tuesday for the first time since injuring his shoulder making a diving catch on Aug. 12, and he will likely rehab without having an MRI performed on his clavicle.

"Our goal is not to put him on the DL, and we're still not right now," Gardenhire said. "We'll see how it turns out; we'll see how it goes."

- After stealing a base in Tuesday's game, Ben Revere is one swipe away from becoming the fourth player in Twins history to steal 30 or more bases in two straight seasons. He stole 34 in 2011. Chuck Knoblauch was the last player to accomplish the feat, doing so in four consecutive seasons from 1994-97.

A's: Drew hittless in debut

- Stephen Drew went 0-for-4 in his debut with the A's on Tuesday, starting at shortstop and hitting second. He came in batting .193 on the season, playing in just 40 games prior to Tuesday because of an ankle injury. But a career .266 hitter, Drew believes he is much better than his current numbers indicate.

"I do, I really do, but that's just baseball," Drew said. "I know it's a numbers' game, but at the same time, it's one of those things where you hit lineouts really hard and don't get the results you want. You wish it would fall for you."

"My thing is, I'm going to try to put good at-bats together. That's all you can do."

- Former starting shortstop Cliff Pennington moves to second base in light of the Drew acquisition, platooning at the position with Adam Rosales. Pennington has played only 16 career games at second, with all of them coming in 2008, but he will likely start there in the series finale on Wednesday.

"He would probably tell you that he's still a shortstop and I would want him to think that way, but right now his opportunity is at second base," Melvin said. "Talking to him today, he understands that and he's going to work as hard as he can to be a very good second baseman."

Worth noting

- Oakland's win on Tuesday evened the season series at 4-4.
- Josh Willingham is hitting .433 with five home runs and 14 RBIs in eight games against his former team this season.

De Vries looks good, but offense falls short vs. A's

By: Rhett Bollinger, MLB.com – 8/21/12

OAKLAND -- It's one thing to leave only a few runners on base with the offense doing its job to bring home baserunners. And it's another thing not to leave any runners on base at all because of a lack of offense.

But it's exactly what happened to the Twins on Tuesday night against the A's, as they didn't leave anybody on base, but were handed a 4-1 loss at The Coliseum despite a bounce-back effort from rookie Cole De Vries.

Minnesota didn't leave a runner on base for just the eighth time in franchise history, and the Twins have lost seven of those games, including the last time it occurred when David Wells threw a perfect game against them on May 17, 1998.

It came as a result of a strong effort from left-hander Brett Anderson and a rare triple play turned by the A's in the fifth inning on a grounder hit to third by Trevor Plouffe.

"It was unfortunate to hit into a triple play, but that's the breaks," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "It goes that way. But really we didn't have many chances to score runs and that was because of their pitching."

Anderson, making his first start since undergoing Tommy John surgery on his left elbow in July of last year, held the Twins to just one run over seven strong innings. The lefty also struck out six and didn't walk a batter.

"Anderson was pretty good," Gardenhire said. "That was one of the best performances we've seen in a while. He had a good breaking ball and a good changeup. His fastball he was taking off and adding to it, so he pretty much kept us off-balance all night."

He outpitched De Vries, who had allowed 11 runs over his last 5 1/3 innings in his last two starts, but fared better against Oakland. The right-hander gave up two runs on six hits over 5 2/3 innings. He also struck out three and walked three, but fell to 2-5 with a 4.89 ERA in 14 big league appearances.

"I think overall it was a pretty good outing," De Vries said. "I was a little disappointed with myself in the first couple innings because I was trying to be too fine. That allowed me to get into too many deep counts and throw too many pitches. I should've gone way deeper into the game tonight, but it's one of those things where I should've made an adjustment and I did."

He gave up a run in the second inning on an RBI double from Josh Donaldson before serving up a go-ahead RBI single to Derek Norris with two outs in the sixth. The run-scoring single knocked De Vries out of the game in favor of reliever Anthony Swarzak.

Swarzak was able to get out of the inning, but struggled in the seventh and gave up two runs. Josh Reddick brought home the first run with an RBI single before scoring on a double from Chris Carter.

It was enough for Anderson with the Twins scoring their one run in the first inning on a wild pitch from Anderson after Ben Revere singled, stole second and reached third on a groundout from Joe Mauer.

Anderson was helped by the rare triple play to end the fifth inning. Plouffe came up with runners on first and second with nobody out, but hit a grounder to Donaldson at third base and he was able to touch the bag before completing a 5-4-3 triple play. It was just the eighth time a Twins hitter has ever hit into a triple play.

"That was extremely exciting," Anderson said. "In that situation, you're trying to get a ground ball, maybe a double play. I didn't know how close it was going to be at first and fortunately we were able to get him out. It was a pretty special moment. I've never seen a triple play in person, let alone be on the mound for it, so it's pretty awesome and it kind of propelled me for the last two innings."

Twins recall right-hander Hendriks from Triple-A

By: Rhett Bollinger, MLB.com – 8/21/12

OAKLAND -- The Twins recalled Liam Hendriks from Triple-A Rochester on Tuesday, and the right-hander is scheduled to start Wednesday against the A's.

Hendriks will be starting in place of right-hander Nick Blackburn, who was outrighted to Rochester on Monday after struggling to a 7.39 ERA in 19 starts this season.

"I'm happy to be back up here, so hopefully we can move forward and stay up here," Hendriks said. "After I got sent back down, I told myself to just stop screwing around with my mechanics and get back to what I was doing in Spring Training. Step back, get set and throw. It was helping me out."

Hendriks was impressive in Rochester, posting a 2.20 ERA in 16 starts. He also struck out 82 and walked 28 in 106 1/3 innings. His last start came Friday, when he allowed four runs on seven hits over seven innings.

Hendriks, though, has had trouble translating his Minor League success to the Majors, as evidenced by his career 6.71 ERA in 12 big league starts. He's 0-5 with a 7.04 ERA in eight outings with the Twins this season.

"He's obviously had his struggles up here, but he's done very well in Triple-A," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "Whether he can make the jump up here and separate remains to be seen. We'll get another opportunity to look at him. He's done what he's supposed to in Triple-A and they've actually told me he's the best pitcher in that league. And that's saying an awful lot. There's a lot of young arms in that league."

Pavano to miss rest of season with bone bruise

By: Rhet Bollinger, MLB.com – 8/21/12

OAKLAND -- Right-hander Carl Pavano will be shut down for the rest of the season after an MRI exam showed a bruise on his right humerus bone, Twins assistant general manager Rob Antony said Tuesday.

Pavano, who was scheduled to make a rehab start with Class A Fort Myers on Tuesday, instead met with Dr. David Altchek in New York. Pavano, on the 60-day disabled list retroactive to June 2, with right rotator cuff weakness, was advised that only rest will cure his bone bruise, and he'll miss the rest of the season.

"I was a little surprised," Antony said of the diagnosis. "He was going to pitch today and then see the doc, but when they could get him in sooner he went and after Altchek looked at him, that's the thing. All along, I know our doctors and Dr. Altchek have conferred on everything. To me I'm not sure how many more medical opinions you could get, to have more tests done, or whatever, than we did."

Pavano has struggled with his velocity this season, as his fastball averaged just 86.8 mph after averaging 89 mph last year, according to Fangraphs.com. He last made a rehab start with Fort Myers on Thursday, but his velocity had not improved with his fastball, averaging about 85 mph.

Pavano, who is set to be a free agent after the season, finishes the year 2-5 with a 6.00 ERA in 11 starts. He made his last start on June 1 before originally being diagnosed by Twins doctors with a strain in his shoulder capsule.

"Injuries are a part of the game," Antony said. "Carl kept trying to pitch even when he was throwing 86 mph, he was trying to pitch through it. It got to the point where we had to shut it down and try and get him better, and then you turn it over to the other people."

Span unable to get through MRI, still sits with injury

By: Rhet Bollinger, MLB.com – 8/21/12

OAKLAND -- Twins center fielder Denard Span was scheduled to get an MRI exam on his right clavicle on Tuesday, but couldn't get through the exam because he was claustrophobic.

Span, who originally hurt his shoulder trying to make a diving catch on Aug. 12, said he was given medication to try to stay still for 35 minutes, but couldn't do it. He had a less-intrusive MRI exam taken on his neck on Monday, and that came back clean.

"I went and tried to get an MRI today and it didn't work out," said Span, who was held out of the lineup for an eighth straight game. "So today I didn't accomplish much. I felt better yesterday, so that was a good sign."

Span felt good enough to take batting practice on the field for the first time since the injury, and is expected to rehab without having the MRI on his right clavicle. He originally took X-rays on Aug. 12 that determined he didn't break anything.

So the Twins remain hopeful he'll stay off the disabled list, and cited their callup of fourth outfielder Matt Carson on Friday as a reason why they can wait.

"That's the reason we went to an extra player and dropped a pitcher, to see where this took us and to see how long it was going to be with Denard," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "Our goal is not to put him on the DL, and we're still not right now. We'll see how it turns out; we'll see how it goes."

Zulgad's Roundup: Twins GM not concerned about being able to spend

By: Judd Zulgad, 1500ESPN.com – 8/21/12

Minnesota Twins general manager Terry Ryan said that even if Nick Blackburn and Tsuyoshi Nishioka don't play for the big-league team next season, the combined \$8.5 million they are owed in 2013 won't cause issues when it comes to what happens with the payroll.

"Not at all," Ryan said during an appearance on Tom Pelissero's show Monday night on 1500 ESPN. "We'll make it work. I'm not worried about payroll. You've heard me say that a lot. I am not worried about that, whether it's \$8 million, \$10 million."

"We've got some other players making money on this ballclub and obviously we're in last place so it's not working right now. We're going to have to find some people, whether they are making \$500,000 or \$5 million."

"It's a piece of our payroll, there's no doubt about that, and I'd like to think we can resurrect these two guys so it's not a hindrance on our ability to move forward. I know that it is something I have to pay attention to, but it's not going to hinder us."

The Twins, who enter Tuesday night's game in Oakland with an American League-worst 51-70 record, sent Blackburn to Triple-A Rochester on Monday and outrighted him off their 40-man roster. Nishioka already was in Rochester but he also was taken off the 40-man roster.

Ryan, in his second stint as the Twins' general manager, clearly will have to make some significant changes this offseason as he attempts to turn around a franchise that lost 99 games in 2011 and continues to struggle in 2012.

It's hard to believe Nishioka will be back in the organization next season.

That means the former Japan league all-star will have cost the Twins not only \$9.25 million for his three-year contract, but also the \$5.3 million posting fee that had to be paid to obtain his negotiating rights. Nishioka's contract runs through 2013 at \$3 million per season.

While starting pitching is the Twins' most pressing concern, and it's expected that when the club spends money this offseason much of it will go to this area, Ryan makes it clear he isn't sold on the team's offense either.

"I'm not of the opinion that our offense is good enough myself," he said. "I've heard people say we've got a (good enough) lineup. We've got a lineup that is a respectable lineup. But still we go in these stretches where we score one or two runs for five or six games in a row and that's not going to get it done in any league."

"So we've got to find a way. More often than not, it's in crucial situations when we load the bases and we don't get a run in or we get one run in with bases loaded and no outs. You've got to do better than that. You've got to put up crooked numbers and you can't let pitchers off the hook. So we've got pitching issues, but we've got offensive issues."

Blackburn's future in doubt

Blackburn also might be finished with the Twins.

The righthander is due \$5.5 million next season in the final year of the four-year deal he signed in March 2010. The 30-year-old went 4-9 with a 7.39 earned-run average in 19 starts this season, giving him three consecutive losing years.

Since going 22-22 with a 4.04 in his first two seasons (2008-2009), Blackburn is 21-31 with a 5.56 ERA. He did have a quality stretch in May and June of 2011, going 5-1 with a 2.29 ERA but has struggled for much of the time since.

This will be Blackburn's third trip to Rochester this season. He went on a rehabilitation assignment in late May after returning from a quadriceps injury and then was demoted in July after continuing to struggle.

Blackburn hadn't won since June 22 and expressed his lack of confidence in what had gone wrong after losing at Seattle on Friday. He gave up 11 hits and five earned runs in that 5-3 loss.

Ryan agreed that Blackburn seems to have lost his confidence, but then acknowledged there are other issues as well.

"I'm guessing that's exactly what's happened because his stuff is about the same," Ryan said. "Granted he's not locating like he should or can and there are some thoughts about him and his sinker. I don't see it sinking. That's another problem. He's approaching it like he's got a power sinker. I don't think that would be the case anymore.

"Back three years ago or so he did have a power-type sinker and also a hard cutter and he kept the ball off the center of the plate for the most part. He's fallen into a tough situation, but we can't wait any longer. It's been a long time since he has succeeded, and now it's our turn to make a move here and see if we can get him right.

"It's obvious that he's struggling. Whether it's confidence, whether it's ability, no matter what it is. We need to get it straight so we can count on him instead of hoping. I think he was at the point where he's ready to go back to Triple-A to see if he can get this right."

The moves with Blackburn and Nishioka mean the Twins now have 38 players on their 40-man roster. With rosters set to be expanded to 40 players on Sept. 1, it's likely Blackburn and Nishioka will be replaced with two players whom the Twins want to take a look at in the final month of the season.

Ryan did not dismiss the notion that the spots on the 40 man could be filled before Sept. 1.

"I'm certainly thinking about it," he said. "It's not like I cleared those for nothing. If I need one I want to have it and not be hindered by not having a spot. We could possibly fill one of those spots here in the near future if we need it."

As for Nishioka and Blackburn?

"Both of them are still in the organization, so we'll see if they can earn themselves back on that roster," Ryan said.

A second look

Ryan spent time last week in Rochester watching Nishioka and clearly that helped him make the decision to remove the infielder from the 40 man.

That came after Nishioka was recalled by the Twins and had a miserable three-game series in Cleveland from Aug. 6-8, going 0-for-12 with a sacrifice fly and committing numerous miscues at second base. He officially was charged with two errors after having one taken away upon a review.

"He is a much better player than he showed in Cleveland," Ryan said. "But, nonetheless, I still thought it was a wise thing to do to take him off and clear up a spot."

Ryan also seemed a bit perplexed that Nishioka looked better when he played shortstop at Rochester than he did at second base.

"He looks much more comfortable at shortstop, which is ironic when you've got a second baseman/shortstop," Ryan said. "He looks better at shortstop. That was another factor. I don't know what it is about second base (that is tough for him). It might be having your back to the runner bearing down on you (when you're) completing the double play.

"But he had a lot of trouble over at second base here in the short amount of time we had him up here. I saw a little bit of that down in Rochester and then they moved him across and he looked better.

"But it's obvious it's a different game, it's a quicker game here (than it is in Japan). It's more power oriented here. He does have a little life in his bat. I'll give him that. I'm a little concerned about other parts of his game and being where he's supposed to be and so forth. But he does take a competitive at-bat."

Fusco remains starter

Brandon Fusco, a sixth-round pick by the Vikings in 2011 out of Slippery Rock, will start Friday night's third preseason game against San Diego at right guard.

There appears a very strong chance that Fusco also will hold that job on Sept. 9 when the Vikings open the regular season against Jacksonville.

While Fusco has played well with the first team, he also hasn't gotten much competition. Geoff Schwartz was expected to compete after signing as a free agent in March but he underwent sports hernia surgery early in camp and remains sidelined.

DeMarcus Love has been slowed by a pectoral injury, meaning Chris DeGeare has had to fill in at other spots on the line as well.

That means that for the sake of building continuity on the offensive line, the best plan is to leave Fusco as the starting right guard.

"Part of what we are trying to do is that you want that unity on the offensive line," coach Leslie Frazier said. "That is part of a successful line if they can play together, practice together and be around each other."

Asked about Fusco's situation, Frazier said: "You don't want it to be (starter by) default. You want to keep putting him in situations to see how he handled things and then make a determination, 'Is this the best thing for the team?' He has done a good job so far, but he has a limited amount of experience so we want to keep giving him more and see how he responds."

Fusco said in his mind he hasn't won the starting job and knows he has to keep working.

"There's guys on this team who could step up and play (right guard) right now," Fusco said. "Joe (Berger), Chris (DeGeare). There's a bunch of guys on this roster who could easily come up and start at this right guard spot. Right now, it's my job to lose out here, and it's how I compete each and every day and just keep getting better."

Frustrated Carl Pavano will not pitch again for Twins this season

By: Phil Mackey, 1500ESPN.com – 8/21/12

Minnesota Twins right-hander Carl Pavano flipped the switch from injury-plagued punching bag in New York to durable horse in 2009, beginning a stretch where he averaged well over 200 innings per season through 2011.

This year, Pavano dealt with shoulder discomfort and low velocity readings from the middle of spring training and eventually landed on the disabled list, but there was hope he could return to the Twins rotation before the end of the season.

That won't happen.

Pavano's latest scheduled rehab start for Single-A Fort Myers was pushed back so he could visit Dr. David Altchek in New York. Pavano told the Pioneer Press' John Shipley an MRI and further examination by Altchek showed a bruise on his right-hander's humerus bone -- an ailment that requires rest.

"It's too bad it took three months to diagnose that," Pavano told the newspaper. "I could have been resting."

Pavano added, "The good news is, it doesn't require surgery. I've had this in the past and gotten through it, and obviously I've pitched a lot since then. But as far as I'm concerned, this whole season has been a failure on many levels, for myself, for the team. It's just kind of lousy that it took this long.

"I was pitching through pain and discomfort for so long, and it was driving me crazy, and this was all it took? It's irritating. It's no one's fault. I'll take the blame, but I don't understand why."

Pavano led the Twins with 443 innings pitched between 2010 and 2011, posting an ERA just over 4.00 in the process.

But he was only able to tally 63 innings this year before landing on the disabled list in early June. Pavano's fastball velocity sat mostly between 85 and 88 mph when he was healthy enough to pitch.

Pavano, 36, is in the last year of a two-year, \$16.5 million contract.

Twins recall Liam Hendriks, who will start on Wednesday against A's

By: Tom Pelisero, 1500ESPN.com – 8/21/12

Tuesday they've recalled the right-hander from Triple-A Rochester.

Hendriks, 23, was expected to join the team in Oakland on Tuesday and start Wednesday's game against the Athletics. He replaces Nick Blackburn, who was outrighted to Rochester on Monday.

An Australia native, Hendriks is 9-3 with a 2.20 earned-run average, 28 walks and 82 strikeouts in 106 1/3 innings over 16 starts with the Red Wings. In 12 big-league starts over two seasons, Hendriks is 0-7 with a 6.71 ERA.

With help from triple play, A's lefty Brett Anderson shuts down Twins

By: Staff, Associated Press – 8/21/12

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Oakland left-hander Brett Anderson pitched seven innings in his first start since undergoing elbow surgery nearly 15 months ago and the Athletics turned a triple play behind him in a 4-1 win over the Minnesota Twins on Tuesday night.

The skinny

Newly acquired shortstop Stephen Drew went hitless in his Oakland debut but it hardly mattered. Coco Crisp, Seth Smith and Josh Donaldson had two hits apiece for the A's, who remain one-half game behind Baltimore in the race for the second wild-card spot in the American League.

Anderson struck out seven and faced one batter over the minimum in his return after being sidelined since June 5, 2011. He was activated off the disabled list Monday following a six-start rehab stint in the minors.

Ben Revere singled and scored the lone run for Minnesota.

Anderson's outing capped a busy day for the A's.

One day after getting Drew from Arizona for a minor leaguer, Oakland optioned slumping second baseman Jemile Weeks to the minors, activated designated hitter Seth Smith off the disabled list and put reliever Jordan Norberto on the DL.

Drew didn't get a hit in four at-bats, extending his slump to 0 for 19. It's the second-longest drought of the veteran infielder's career.

That didn't slow down the A's, who won for the fifth time in six games to even their season series with the Twins.

Minnesota scored a run in the first on former Athletic Josh Willingham's RBI single Revere reached on an infield single, stole second and took third on a wild pitch.

Anderson picked off Willingham straying off first base to get out of the inning then retired nine straight before Justin Morneau and Ryan Doumit opened the fifth with consecutive hits, setting the stage for the third triple play in the majors this season.

Trevor Plouffe hit a sharp grounder to Oakland third baseman Donaldson, who stepped on the bag and made a quick relay to second baseman Adam Rosales. Rosales, making just his fifth start of the season after Weeks was sent to the minors, threw to first baseman Chris Carter to complete the 5-4-3 triple play.

It was the 21st triple play in franchise history and the first by the A's since Randy Velarde's unassisted triple play against the New York Yankees on May 29, 2000.

Donaldson continued his hot streak since being called up from the minors last week. He had an RBI double in the second to drive in Smith, then singled in the sixth when Oakland knocked Minnesota starter Cole De Vries (2-5) out of the game.

De Vries retired the first two batters in the inning before Smith, Donaldson and Derek Norris followed with consecutive hits. Norris' single to the gap in left-center drove in Smith to give the A's a 2-1 lead.

Anderson did the rest to win for the first time since May 26, 2011.

He didn't walk a batter and retired his final seven hitters before departing after the seventh.

Sean Doolittle pitched the eighth and Grant Balfour worked the ninth for his 12th save.

De Vries struck out three in 5 2-3 innings but lost to the A's for the second time this season and remained winless since June 30.

Numbers game

0: Baserunners stranded by the Twins

8: The number of times in team history the Twins haven't stranded a baserunner offensively

Health report

OF Denard Span was scheduled for an MRI on his clavicle, but claustrophobia prevented him from going through with it. Span took batting practice and is still considered day-to-day.

On deck

Wednesday: @ A's, 2:35 p.m. RHP Liam Hendriks (0-5, 7.04) vs. LHP Tommy Milone (9-9, 4.03)

Thursday: @ Rangers, 7:05 p.m. LHP Scott Diamond (10-5, 2.95) vs. RHP Yu Darvish (12-9, 4.51)

Friday: @ Rangers, 7:05 p.m. RHP Samuel Deduno (4-1, 3.33) vs. LHP Matt Harrison (14-7, 3.19)

Hendriks, Twins look to take series in Oakland

By: Staff, Associated Press – 8/21/12

For a team undergoing plenty of change, the Oakland Athletics don't seem too bothered.

A different result from Tommy Milone wouldn't hurt matters, either.

The left-hander seeks his first victory in more than a month while looking to help Oakland win for the sixth time in seven games as it hosts the Minnesota Twins in the finale of a three-game set Wednesday.

The Athletics have been busy the past couple days, acquiring infielder Stephen Drew from Arizona on Monday before sending the struggling Jemile Weeks to Triple-A Sacramento on Tuesday.

Oakland also activated Brett Anderson and Seth Smith from the disabled list, and both contributed in Tuesday's 4-1 win over Minnesota. Anderson pitched seven strong innings to earn the victory in his first start in nearly 15 months, and Smith went 2 for 2 with a pair of walks and two runs scored.

Drew, mired in a 0-for-19 slump, went hitless in his debut for the A's (66-56), who have won five of six and are one-half game behind Baltimore for the AL's second wild-card spot.

Oakland also turned its first triple play since 2000 in the fifth inning.

"I've never seen a triple play in person, let alone be on the mound for it, so it's pretty awesome," Anderson said. "It kind of propelled me for the last two innings."

The A's hope to get another solid pitching performance with Milone (9-9, 4.03 ERA), though he hasn't had much success of late. His last victory came July 14 when he gave up two runs in six innings to beat Minnesota 9-3 despite allowing a career-worst 10 hits.

Milone is 0-3 with a 7.50 ERA in his last four outings after allowing a fourth-inning grand slam over five innings of the Athletics' 6-4 win over Cleveland on Friday.

"Overall, it went all right," Milone told the team's official website. "I felt good out there, ... but I think just that one pitch was really the only mistake I made all game."

Milone started 5-1 with a 0.91 ERA while allowing six earned runs through his first eight home outings, but he's 0-2 with a 7.94 ERA while surrendering 15 over his last three.

He'll face another struggling starter in Liam Hendriks, who begins his third stint with the Twins this season.

Hendriks (0-5, 7.04) was recalled from Triple-A Rochester to replace Nick Blackburn, who was sent to Rochester on Monday after going 4-9 with a 7.39 ERA in 19 starts.

It remains to be seen if the Twins are better off with Hendriks, who has never faced Oakland and is still searching for his first major league win. He's 9-3 with a 2.20 ERA in 16 starts in the minors in 2012, but he's allowed at least four runs in six of his eight big league outings this season.

The right-hander gave up four runs in four innings of Minnesota's 6-4 win over Detroit on July 2 in his last start for the Twins (51-71), who have lost 10 of 12 while scoring two or fewer runs in six of those contests.

"Anderson really didn't give us much of a chance," manager Ron Gardenhire said after Tuesday's loss.

The A's and Twins have split eight meetings.

Twins limited by Athletics pitching in loss

By: Staff, Associated Press – 8/21/12

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) -- Trevor Plouffe has struggled since returning from the disabled list and hitting into a triple play only served to highlight his recent problems.

Oakland left-hander Brett Anderson pitched seven innings in his first start since undergoing elbow surgery nearly 15 months ago and the Athletics beat the Minnesota Twins 4-1 on Tuesday night.

Plouffe has two hits in 29 at-bats (.069) since serving his stint on the disabled list with a bruised right thumb. He went hitless in eight at-bats during a rehab assignment.

Just when it seemed like the Twins were knocking on the door against Anderson in the fifth with Justin Morneau and Ryan Doumit both singing to open the inning, Plouffe grounded sharply to third baseman Josh Donaldson, who started the around-the-horn triple play.

"We saw a pretty good pitching performance from both sides," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "Anderson didn't give us much of a chance. We hit into a triple play and that's the breaks. That goes with the territory."

Minnesota scored a run in the first on former Athletic Josh Willingham's RBI single after Ben Revere reached on an infield single, stole second and took third on a wild pitch.

Anderson picked off Willingham straying off first base to get out of the inning then retired nine straight before Morneau and Doumit opened the fifth with hits, setting the stage for the third triple play in the majors this season.

Cole De Vries (2-5) overcome a slow start to pitch effectively, retiring 10 of 11 hitters during one stretch. It still didn't prevent the Twins from losing for the 10th time in 12 games.

"I was a little disappointed with myself in the first two innings," De Vries said. "I allowed myself to be too fine and I ended up going deep into counts and throwing too many pitches."

De Vries retired the first two batters in the inning before Smith, Donaldson and Derek Norris followed with consecutive hits. Norris' single to the gap in left-center drove in Smith to give the A's a 2-1 lead.

"I was able to command the lower part of the zone," De Vries said. "Everything kind of melded together there."

Anderson did the rest to win for the first time since May 26, 2011.

He didn't walk a batter and retired his final seven hitters before departing after the seventh.

De Vries struck out three in 5 2-3 innings but lost to the A's for the second time this season and remained winless since June 30.

NOTES: Injured Twins OF Denard Span was scheduled to have an MRI on his right clavicle but was unable to go through with the test because he felt claustrophobic. Gardenhire is hoping to avoid putting Span on the DL. ... The Twins announced RHP Carl Pavano will miss the remainder of the season after being diagnosed with a bruise on his right humerus bone. ... A's LHP Tommy Milone (9-9) opposes Twins RHP Liam Hendriks (0-5) Wednesday in a matchup of slumping pitchers. Milone is winless over his previous four starts while Hendriks has yet to win in the big leagues. Hendriks was called up from Triple-A Rochester before Tuesday's game.

A's Brett Anderson wins in long-awaited return

By: Tyler Mason, FSNorth.com – 8/21/12

Brett Anderson didn't look like a pitcher who hadn't seen a major league mound in over a year.

The Oakland Athletics left-hander stymied the Minnesota Twins on Tuesday in his first start of the 2012 season and his first major league start since June 5, 2011 — a span of 444 days. Anderson missed most of last year and the majority of this season after having Tommy John surgery on his left elbow.

Tuesday marked Anderson's first start with Oakland after his surgery, and he dazzled. He allowed just one run on four hits through seven innings as he helped the A's top the Twins 4-1. Anderson also struck out six Minnesota batters and did not issue a walk.

"Anderson was pretty good. That was one of the better performances we've seen in a while," said Twins manager Ron Gardenhire. "He had a really sharp breaking ball. He had a great little changeup. ... He kept us off balance pretty much the whole night and made it really tough on us."

Prior to Tuesday, Anderson had made six rehab starts with two of Oakland's minor league affiliates, High-A Stockton and Triple-A Sacramento. He was 1-1 with a 4.62 ERA in 25 1/3 combined innings, including 18 strikeouts and five walks.

"I was actually down with him in Sacramento when he was making his rehab. He was progressing every time out," said Oakland third baseman Josh Donaldson. "He was looking sharper and sharper. And tonight, wow. Just tip your cap to that guy. He was working the strike zone a lot and getting some soft contact. That's what we look for."

Anderson was also helped out by a triple play in the fifth inning. Twins third baseman Trevor Plouffe hit a tapper to third, where Donaldson grabbed the ball and stepped on the third base bag. He then fired to second baseman Adam Rosales for out No. 2 and Rosales' throw to first base beat Plouffe for the third out.

"That's the breaks," Gardenhire said. "It goes that way."

The triple play helped Anderson escape a two-on, no out jam in the fifth. Including the triple play, Anderson retired the last seven batters he faced. He struck out two in the sixth before an inning-ending double play, and again retired the side in the seventh — his final inning of the night. Anderson also retired 10 Twins in a row from the end of the first to the end of the fourth innings.

The lone run the Twins managed against Anderson on Tuesday came in the first inning. Ben Revere led off the game with a single and later stole second base. He eventually came around to score on a wild pitch by Anderson. From there, though, Minnesota couldn't manage anything offensively against Oakland's starter.

For Anderson, Tuesday's victory was his first since May 26 of last year when he beat the Angels. Like it is with any player who undergoes Tommy John surgery, the road back was a long one. But Tuesday's game was an example that pitchers can bounce back from the major surgery.

Minnesota has had several pitchers in recent memory undergo Tommy John surgery, including right-hander Scott Baker and 2009 first-round pick Kyle Gibson. Unfortunately for the Twins, they were on the wrong side of another pitcher who has come all the way back from it.

"I think before he hurt himself, he was pretty effective too. He was a really, really good pitcher, one of the better ones they had on their team," Gardenhire said of Anderson. "To see all the work you have to put in to go through something like that ... and all the effort that you have to put in and the courage — because it's not easy. He's done all the work."



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