



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips

Saturday, August 9, 2014

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Twins come back from six runs down but fall short

Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com – 8/9/14

OAKLAND -- It looked as though it would be another one of Kyle Gibson's strong outings Friday night against the A's.

The right-hander cruised through the first four innings, using his sinker to get plenty of ground balls, while matching A's left-hander Scott Kazmir in what appeared to be a pitchers' duel.

But Gibson ran into trouble in a four-run fifth inning and a two-run sixth, and the Twins couldn't complete a late comeback against Kazmir in a 6-5 loss to Oakland at O.co Coliseum.

"We got behind early and we had the one bad inning out there," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "We made a nice run but we came up short."

Gibson gave up just two hits through four scoreless innings but it all unraveled in the fifth. All told, Gibson surrendered six runs (five earned) on five hits and five walks to fall to 10-9 with a 4.13 ERA on the year.

It was another case of Gibson either being on his game or struggling, as he has a 1.05 ERA in his 10 wins and an 11.84 ERA in his nine losses. But this one stung for Gibson, as he had walked just five batters over his last six starts before matching that total in the loss.

"It's embarrassing to go out there and pitch five innings and walk that many guys," Gibson said. "It's unacceptable."

Gibson seemed to lose his control in the fifth; walking leadoff batter Stephen Vogt on four pitches before Sam Fuld reached on a bunt single that featured a throwing error from first baseman Chris Parmelee to put runners at second and third. Eric Sogard followed with a five-pitch walk to load the bases.

Coco Crisp made Gibson pay with a three-run triple to right-center field before scoring on a passed ball from catcher Kurt Suzuki to give the A's a 4-0 lead.

"It was frustrating to have the fifth inning go the way it did," Gibson said. "I was just missing down with everything and wasn't catching the zone with my sinker."

Gibson struggled with his control again in the sixth, as he walked Josh Reddick on just four pitches before giving up a single to Vogt. Reliever Anthony Swarzak replaced Gibson but surrendered a two-run double to Sogard with both runs getting charged to Gibson.

Gardenhire said he kept Gibson in the game as a chance for the inexperienced right-hander to bounce back from his rough inning and learn from his mistakes. But it ultimately didn't work out and ended up costing them with their late rally falling just short.

"That's my bad for putting him back out there," Gardenhire said. "The reason why I did it was because he needed to go back out there after one bad inning, but that didn't turn out too well either."

Kazmir opened the game with four perfect innings, but labored through a five-run seventh inning that snapped a 19-inning scoreless streak for the Twins.

Trevor Plouffe got Minnesota on the board with an RBI single before Oswaldo Arcia added an RBI single of his own. Parmelee brought home two more runs with a two-out double down the left-field line and reached third on an error from Moss.

Eduardo Nunez made it a one-run game with an RBI double off reliever Ryan Cook, but Cook was able to strand Nunez by striking out Jordan Schafer to end the inning.

"They put some really good at-bats together consistently throughout that inning," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "So when the inning's over you know you're in for a battle."

Reliever Luke Gregerson tossed a 1-2-3 eighth for the A's before handing it over to closer Sean Doolittle, who turned in a scoreless ninth to get his 18th save and preserve the win for Oakland.

But the Twins made it interesting in the final frame, as pinch-hitter Josh Willingham just missed out on a potential go-ahead homer off Doolittle but it hooked just foul. Doolittle ended the game just one pitch later on a called third strike on a fastball.

"We turned it around on them and had some chances at the end, which was really exciting," Gardenhire said. "Willingham just hooked one. The guys kept competing. But unfortunately we got behind and we had the inning where we made a mistake and that always starts something."

No. 8 prospect May coming up to debut for Twins

Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com – 8/8/14

OAKLAND -- The wait is over.

Highly regarded prospect Trevor May will make his Major League debut for the Twins on Saturday against the A's. The right-hander will be recalled from Triple-A Rochester to make his first big league start. The Twins optioned first baseman Chris Colabello to Triple-A after Friday's 6-5 loss to make room for May on the roster.

"It's definitely exciting," May said. "To have this happen is a little bit surreal. But I had the flight here to get that out of the way. Now that I'm in the clubhouse it feels like another day at the field, but I'm excited to be here. It's just one of those cool things that happens in your life and happens only once."

May, ranked the club's No. 8 prospect by MLB Pipeline.com, posted a 2.93 ERA in 17 starts with Rochester. He struck out 91, walked 37 and allowed four homers in 95 1/3 innings. May's 2.93 ERA ranked fourth in the International League.

May had a chance to make his debut earlier this season, but he missed nearly a month with a right calf strain sustained in late June. The injury also kept him from participating in the Futures Game at Target Field on July 13. But he returned to action July 19, and reached the 90-pitch threshold in his last outing on Monday.

"He's been doing fine," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "We've been patient up here waiting for him to get here. He's been throwing good. He's excited and we're excited to see what he does."

May, along with fellow top prospect Alex Meyer, helped anchor the rotation at Rochester. And he cut down on his walk rate, which had plagued him in the past.

May has always had a power arm -- he's struck out 10.5 batters per nine innings throughout his seven seasons in the Minors -- but he has dealt with control issues. But he's cut his walk rate in three straight seasons, going from 4.7 walks per nine innings in 2012 to 4.0 last year and 3.5 this season.

May, 24, was acquired by the Twins before the 2013 season in the trade that sent Ben Revere to the Phillies. May, who will wear No. 65, was already on the 40-man roster.

May, a native of Kelso, Wash., said he'll have about a dozen family and friends in attendance at the game. He also said he's been hearing from fans on Twitter all season about when he would be called up and was excited to have it finally happen.

"I'm a pretty big Twitter guy so I see a lot of the stuff and I'm tagged in a lot of it," May said. "So I think it's fun. I think it's what Twitter is for. It's for the fans to get excited and feed off each other's excitement. It gets me excited, as if I need to be more excited. So I'm glad to have the support of the fans."

May eager to impress in big league debut vs. Oakland

Aaron Leibowitz / MLB.com – 8/9/14

Right-hander Trevor May, the Twins' No. 8 prospect as ranked by MLB.com, will make his big league debut against the A's on Saturday at the Coliseum.

In 17 starts for Triple-A Rochester, the 24-year-old posted a 2.93 ERA -- fourth-best in the International League -- while striking out 91 and walking 37 in 95 1/3 innings. He's averaged 10.5 strikeouts per nine innings over seven Minor League seasons.

May joined the Twins in Oakland on Friday and watched Game 2 of a four-game series from the dugout.

"To have this happen is a little bit surreal," May said. "But I had the flight here to get that out of the way. Now that I'm in the clubhouse it feels like another day at the field, but I'm excited to be here. It's just one of those cool things that happens in your life and happens only once."

May will have plenty of supporters from his hometown of Kelso, Wash., on hand for his debut, when he faces baseball's best team.

"It's definitely cool to be able to share it with my family," said May. "[The A's] are a real good team and they've shown that this year. If you're going to come up and get going, you might as well do it against the guys who are doing their jobs really well and see what you got."

May will have the unenviable tasks of facing the A's lineup and squaring off against Jeff Samardzija. Since coming over from the Cubs on July 4, Samardzija is 2-1 with a 3.09 ERA in six starts. The A's have won five of those contests.

On Monday against the Rays, the righty induced 13 ground-ball outs in seven innings. The A's ultimately won in a walk-off.

"Seems to be my M.O. since I've been here," Samardzija said. "Go out and throw some innings and then watch these guys put on a show at the end of the game. I love this team, man. I love how they play, they don't quit. Every at-bat means the world to each guy, and you see that in their emotions, how they react to each at-bat."

In his lone start against the Twins in 2012, Samardzija gave up eight runs in 3 2/3 innings.

Twins: Third-base coach Vavra to undergo hip surgery

Twins third-base coach Joe Vavra didn't go on the club's current road trip through Oakland and Houston, as he's set to undergo surgery to repair a torn labrum in his left hip.

Vavra was diagnosed with the injury during the All-Star break in mid-July and hasn't coached third since then. Since the injury he had been serving as a bench coach.

"He's going to definitely going to have a full hip replacement surgery," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "By the time we get off this trip, he'll be getting his surgery. And then they said maybe a week or so. But after that, he can return to the bench. But I don't think he'll be at third this year."

Paul Molitor has moved from the bench to coach first base, while Scott Ullger has shifted from first to third in Vavra's absence.

A's: Lowrie returns with finger improved

Jed Lowrie was back in the A's lineup playing shortstop against the Twins on Friday, his first start since bruising his right index finger Monday.

Lowrie pinch-hit Thursday, but manager Bob Melvin wanted to wait another day before putting him in the field. Lowrie felt better than expected throwing Thursday.

"I probably could have played him yesterday," Melvin said Friday. "It was still a little bit uncomfortable on the throwing end. Whenever somebody tells you they feel pretty good to go, you want to give them an extra day, especially somebody as important to us as he is."

The switch-hitter kept his finger wrapped Friday.

"It's still there, but you're not waiting for it to get to 100 percent before you get back out there," Lowrie said. "You're looking for a window where you can compete and help the team win and let it get better with treatment."

Worth noting

- The A's have been held scoreless in the first inning in 17 consecutive games, matching the second-longest streak in Oakland history.
- Entering Saturday, the Twins had lost 11 straight games to the A's dating back to Sept. 11, 2013.

Third-base coach Vavra undergoing hip surgery

Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com – 8/9/14

OAKLAND -- Twins third-base coach Joe Vavra didn't go on the club's current road trip through Oakland and Houston, as he's set to undergo surgery to repair a torn labrum in his left hip.

Vavra was diagnosed with the injury during the All-Star break in mid-July and hasn't coached third since then. Since the injury he had been serving as a bench coach with Paul Molitor moving from the bench to first-base coach and Scott Ullger moving from first to third.

"He's going to definitely going to have a full hip replacement surgery," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "By the time we get off this trip, he'll be getting his surgery. And then they said maybe a week or so. But after that, he can return to the bench. But I don't think he'll be at third this year."

Gardenhire added that Molitor has done just fine in his new role at first-base coach, as he's able to help the baserunners pick up on things he sees from the opposing pitcher. Molitor had 504 stolen bases in his Hall of Fame career.

"He's good over there," Gardenhire said. "He has all the information for them. He sees things, and we've said this along, but Moli sees things other people can't. He reads pitchers a little bit easier."

Twins rally at Oakland but come up one run short

Phil Miller / Star Tribune – 8/9/14

OAKLAND, CALIF. – Kyle Gibson crumbled in the fifth inning Friday night, giving up four runs mostly by walking three batters. So Twins manager Ron Gardenhire and pitching coach Rick Anderson debated whether to send him out for the sixth.

They did. They regret it.

Gibson put the first two batters on, they both scored, and the Twins ended up losing to Oakland by one run, 6-5 — their 11th loss in a row to to the American League West-leading Athletics.

"It ended up costing us the game," Gibson said of his two-batter sixth: a four-pitch walk to Josh Reddick and a single to Stephen Vogt, both of whom later scored when Eric Sogard doubled off Anthony Swarzak. "To put the team in a bad spot, to put Gardy in a bad spot, it's pretty frustrating."

The whole night was frustrating for the Twins, who didn't get a hit off A's starter Scott Kazmir until the fifth inning, and who sent the minimum 18 batters to the plate through six. Then they rallied for five runs — but couldn't get one more.

Gardenhire said they had good intentions in extending Gibson's night. But it didn't work out.

"We think this guy is going to be one of the really good ones, so we sent him back out, hoping he could just have a good inning and throw that [bad one] out," Gardenhire said after the Twins lost to Kazmir for the fifth time in 16 months. "He needs to go out and regroup and have an inning, but the first two guys got on again. So that's my bad for putting him back out there. "

And Gibson's for losing track of the plate — he walked a season-high five batters, matching his total for all of July.

"It's embarrassing to go out there and pitch five innings and walk that many guys," he said after raising his ERA to 4.13. "Four runs on two hits, it's unacceptable."

The big hit belonged to Coco Crisp, who belted a 2-2 fastball to the right-field wall with the bases loaded, a three-run triple that put the A's ahead for good.

It was a disappointing finish for a game that looked like a rout for most of the night. But just when the Twins appeared comfortable with their three-batters-an-inning pace, they rose up and turned a rout into cliffhanger, a Coliseum celebration into a thrill ride. The Twins abruptly ended a 19-inning scoreless streak with a five-run uprising against Kazmir.

Trevor Plouffe singled home the Twins' first run, and Oswaldo Arcia the second. And with two outs and Kazmir appearing to have restored order, Chris Parmelee broke a personal 3-for-40 skid with runners in scoring position by slicing a sharp line drive down the left-field line. Parmelee's double scored two runs, and when left fielder Brandon Moss had trouble corralling the ball and then threw wildly to the infield, Parmelee took third base.

He scored moments later, too, when Eduardo Nunez greeted reliever Ryan Cook by smacking a double — a hit to the right-field wall that Nunez tried to stretch to three bases, then fell face-first halfway between second and third. He jumped up, retreated and beat the ball by a split second.

The inning ended there as Cook struck out Jordan Schafer on three pitches, but it was an impressive uprising against a starting pitcher who has owned the Twins for two years now.

A's reliever Sean Doolittle gave up a leadoff single in the ninth inning to Kennys Vargas, but he struck out Arcia, got Kurt Suzuki to fly out and struck out pinch hitter Josh Willingham — one pitch after a long drive to left went foul — to earn his 18th save.

Another big Twins homer drifts foul

Phil Miller / Star Tribune – 8/9/14

MISSED IT BY THIS MUCH: Second night in a row that the game has ended with Josh Willingham looking at a third strike, but this one was anticlimactic because of what preceded it. On the previous pitch, the Twins' slugger (and a former A's outfielder) pummeled a 95-mph fastball from Sean Doolittle into the left-field corner, a wallop that easily reached the seats, but clearly hooked foul. With Eduardo Escobar standing on first base, the blow would have put the Twins in front. (Second night in a row that a critical home run strayed by a few feet; Brian Dozier's three-run near-home-run would have tied the game last night.) Instead, Doolittle froze Willingham with another fastball moments later, establishing a new Oakland A's record: 28 2/3 consecutive scoreless innings by the bullpen.

WISH HIM WELL: It was a shame to see Chris Colabello go, but he had to know his days were numbered when the Twins decided to take a look at Kennys Vargas last week. Vargas was the cleanup hitter on Friday, hit a couple of hard line drives for hits, and looked increasingly like a player who will definitely be on next season's roster, likely as the designated hitter once Joe Mauer returns and Willingham departs. Colabello believes his statistics don't match the contact he's making at the plate these days, that he's had some bad luck, but it was clear he's not in the team's longterm plans. Still, what does it say about the Twins that he leaves after playing just 59 games -- and ranks fourth on the team in RBIs with 39, behind only Trevor Plouffe, Brian Dozier and Kurt Suzuki?

A FEARSOME FOURSOME: The five members of the Athletics' starting rotation posed together on the O.co Coliseum mound Friday afternoon, a photo shoot before batting practice that, thankfully, the Twins didn't witness. These A's pitchers are scary enough one at a time. (OK, not the subpar Jason Hammel, but the other four are all All-Stars.) One night after Jon Lester throttled the Twins on three lonely singles, Scott Kazmir resumed his occasional torture of the same lineup. Kazmir retired the first 12 hitters he faced in order, and faced the minimum 18 hitters through six innings. Yes, he gave up even fewer hits through six (1) than Lester did (2) on Thursday. Next up? The Twins face Jeff Samardzija, who made the All-Star team as a Cub and has a 3.09 ERA so far with the A's. I

don't know, maybe not letting the Coliseum fans dream about a no-hitter would be a good goal tomorrow. Fortunately for the Twins, they don't face Sonny Gray during this series.

May's patience is rewarded; righthander will make Twins debut Saturday

Phil Miller / Star Tribune – 8/9/14

OAKLAND, CALIF. – Trevor May knew some Twins fans were growing impatient over his promotion, was aware that many had taken to social media to promote his cause.

"I'm a pretty big Twitter guy," the righthander, one of the Twins' top five pitching prospects, said shortly after joining his new team. "... It just gets me excited. As if I needed to be more excited."

Yeah, he doesn't expect to need much to get the adrenaline flowing Saturday, when he throws his first pitch as a big-leaguer. In fact, he is trying to prepare for the nerves and emotions as best he can, because May believes that better focus on the mound is one of the keys to his improvement this year.

May, one of the Twins' top five pitching prospects, was chosen to start Saturday's game at Oakland after posting a 2.93 ERA in 17 starts at Class AAA Rochester this season.

"That's a big part of what I worked on this offseason — staying with my approach, taking it one pitch at a time and kind of being in the moment," the 25-year-old said. "That's what good pitchers do. They're able to zone in on what they're doing, and that includes [handling] all the distractions of the debut."

Still, his parents, girlfriend and best friends are en route from his hometown of Kelso, Wash., to share in a day that already feels "surreal," May said. "It's just one of those cool things that happens in your life. It only happens once, so I'm enjoying it."

He has definitely earned it this season, even being selected to the Futures Game before a calf injury sidelined him for three weeks. He's come back strong since his leg healed, posting a 2.41 ERA in four starts since then.

"He's got a pretty heavy fastball, and he's controlled his curveball and changeup pretty well," said Eric Fryer, who caught May at Rochester through a four-start stretch in May when he didn't give up an earned run. "His slider is more of a strike pitch than a strikeout pitch. It's kind of get-them-off; I like his curve and changeup better as a strikeout pitch. But he's got a pretty heavy tilt on his breaking ball."

May represented the Twins in the Arizona Fall League last October, posting a 3.21 ERA in nine outings, mostly in relief. His rise hasn't always been a smooth one; he spent two years in Class AA with the Phillies and Twins, posting ERAs above 4.50 each time. But May, who was acquired along with since-departed Vance Worley for Ben Revere, has been excellent from the start this season.

Wasn't he getting impatient about moving up? "Not at all," May said. "If anything, it just gave me more time to really hone my game. ... I think it was only beneficial, and I'm definitely happy with where I am now."

May had to watch Friday's game from the Twins clubhouse, because he wasn't due to be put on the 25-man roster until after the game, so he wasn't allowed in the dugout.

Colabello sent down

Chris Colabello, who has not been able to reproduce the consistent production he provided in April, was returned to Rochester after Friday's game to make room for May. Colabello, who piled up 27 RBI in the season's first month, batted just .222 with nine RBI in 19 games since being recalled on July 4.

The frustrating part, Colabello said, is he feels his at-bats are almost as good as early in the season, but with lesser results.

"I don't necessarily think it hasn't clicked this time. I've hit the ball hard lately," the first baseman said. "I feel like I've had a good process throughout, but the numbers don't show it."

His roster spot was basically lost, however, when the Twins decided last week to give rookie Kennys Vargas a major league opportunity.

Etc.

- Joe Vavra, who will undergo hip replacement surgery on his left hip in the next week or two, will not return to the coach's box at third base this season, manager Ron Gardenhire said, because of his limited mobility.
- Brandon Poulson, the San Francisco Academy of Art pitcher who signed with the Twins last month, made his debut for Elizabethton on Friday — two days after he was featured in a segment on "NBC Nightly News" with Brian Williams.
- First baseman Joe Mauer went 3-for-5 for Class A Cedar Rapids on Friday and played nine innings for the first time on his rehab assignment.

Friday's recap: Twins-Oakland

Star Tribune staff – 8/9/14

GAME RECAP

IMPACT PLAYER

Coco Crisp, Oakland

The veteran broke a scoreless tie in style, hitting a three-run double in the fifth inning off Kyle Gibson.

BY THE NUMBERS

6 Walks drawn by the Athletics, matching their hit total against Kyle Gibson and four Twins relievers.

12 Consecutive batters retired by Oakland's Scott Kazmir to start the game, one day after fellow All-Star lefthander Jon Lester retired the Twins' first 15 batters.

ON DECK

Righthander Trevor May will make his major league debut for the Twins on Saturday night, while Oakland starts its third All-Star in a row in this series in Jeff Samardzija.

Twins pitcher Trevor May keeps his cool heading into debut start

Mike Berardino / Pioneer Press – 8/9/14

OAKLAND, Calif. -- On the eve of his long-awaited major league debut, Trevor May saw only positives.

Having to fly cross-country from Indianapolis to join the Twins for Saturday's start?

Not a problem.

Being asked to face the Oakland A's, the team with baseball's best record since June 18?

Only fitting.

"I was glad I could come here and join the team here," May, a 24-year-old right-hander, said Friday after arriving in the Twins' clubhouse. "It's as close as I can be to my hometown without actually being in Seattle. I'm excited. I don't think it could be any better."

The native of Kelso, Wash., figures to have about a dozen friends and family members at O.Co Coliseum when he takes the mound. That includes relatives making the trip up from San Diego and others that live in the Bay Area.

"It's a nice party that we can all go out and eat dinner after," May said. "Should be fun."

As for facing the A's, who took a majors-best 38-20 mark into Friday's game, May said he might as well start with the best and "see what you got."

May earned the promotion by going 8-6 with a 2.93 earned-run average in 17 starts for Triple-A Rochester. Rated the Twins' No. 8 prospect by Baseball America before the season, May was named to the All-Star Futures Game in July but had to bow out due to a right calf injury that kept him out of action for four weeks.

He suffered the injury on the last pitch he threw in a five-inning stint on June 21, one start after going a career-high 120 pitches for Rochester.

"It was just kind of a freak thing," said May, listed at 6-foot-5 and 215 pounds. "Didn't feel it on the pitch. I landed, and when the ball went by me, I thought it hit me in the leg. We treated it like a cramp."

When May returned to the ballpark the next day, his right calf was "twice the size" of his left.

Since returning to the Rochester rotation on July 19, May has gradually rebuilt his pitch count from 47 to 99 over his past three starts. He also had to deal with a rainout at Durham, N.C.

With May already on the 40-man roster, the Twins optioned Chris Colabello to Rochester after Friday's game to clear space on the 25-man roster.

In his final Triple-A start, May worked six-plus innings Monday at Louisville. He allowed four earned runs and tied season highs with four walks and eight hits allowed, but the Twins have determined it's finally time to get a look at May in the majors.

Asked if he was surprised it took him more than four months at Triple-A to earn this shot, May said "not at all" and pointed out the physical and mental benefits of the Twins taking their time with him.

"If anything it just gave me more time to really hone that part of my game," he said. "I feel like it's in a place now where it's become habit for me. It's become part of who I am and how I approach each time I take the ball. I think it was only beneficial."

Among all pitchers with at least 90 International League innings this season, May ranks fourth in ERA. Fellow right-hander Alex Meyer, the Twins' top pitching prospect, ranks fifth at 3.05 and could make his big-league debut later this season.

Originally a fourth-round draft pick of the Philadelphia Phillies in 2008, May was traded to the Twins along with right-hander Vance Worley after the 2012 season in a deal that sent outfielder Ben Revere to the Phillies. While Revere has slumped and Worley was sold to the Pittsburgh Pirates this spring, May has steadily sharpened his game while the Twins remained patient.

May repeated the Double-A Eastern League last season, then worked 14 innings, mostly in relief, at the elite-level Arizona Fall League.

Armed with a mid-90s fastball, a sharp breaking ball and an above-average changeup, May has cut his nine-inning rate to a career-best 3.49 walks this season while still striking out 8.59 batters. He has worked at least six innings in nine of his 17 starts.

May, who turns 25 on Sept. 23, has worked 95 1/3 innings for the Red Wings this season. He has averaged 151 regular-season innings the previous three seasons, so he should be able to stay in the Twins' rotation through the rest of the season (10 projected starts), provided he is effective and healthy.

A's 6, Twins 5: Comeback comes up short

Mike Berardino / Pioneer Press – 8/9/14

OAKLAND, Calif. -- As has become their habit this season, the Twins came roaring back after falling into a formidable early hole.

Unfortunately, as has also been their habit this season, they once again fell just shy of completing a monster comeback, falling 6-5 to the Oakland A's on Friday night at the O.Co Coliseum.

"We had some chances there at the end, which was really exciting," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "The guys kept competing. We made a good run there at the end but (came) up short."

The loss was the Twins' eighth straight in Oakland and left them 1-11 against the A's the past two seasons.

After the game, the Twins optioned first baseman Chris Colabello back to Triple-A Rochester to make room for rookie starter Trevor May.

Colabello was hitting just .229 this season, even after a club record-setting April for runs batted in.

One night after Jon Lester took a perfect game into the sixth inning, fellow A's left-hander Scott Kazmir (13-4) retired the first 12 Twins. Rookie Kennys Vargas broke up the bid with a smash single off the glove of shortstop Jed Lowrie, but Kazmir still led 6-0 when the Twins finally got to him in the seventh.

Trevor Plouffe's single ended a 19-inning scoreless drought for the Twins, who also got run-scoring hits in the frame from Oswaldo Arcia and Eduardo Nunez, plus a two-run double by Chris Parmelee.

Nunez's double came off reliever Ryan Cook, who then struck out Jordan Schafer on three pitches to end the uprising.

Veteran Josh Willingham was available off the Twins' bench and had homered and walked off Cook in three career plate appearances, but Schafer stayed in.

Before that five-run seventh, Kazmir had a 1.67 earned run average in his previous 43 innings against the Twins, a span of seven starts. He still managed to improve to 5-0 against them since suffering his last loss on April 29, 2009.

Going back to a four-game sweep here last September, the Twins had been outscored 48-14 in their past six road games against the A's through Friday's sixth inning.

Twins starter Kyle Gibson (10-9) matched zeroes with Kazmir through the first four innings before running around in a four-run fifth. Chris Parmelee's throwing error on an attempted sacrifice by ex-Twins outfielder Sam Fuld opened the door.

Coco Crisp's bases-clearing triple snapped the scoreless duel, and a passed ball on Kurt Suzuki let in the other run.

Gibson put the first two batters on in the sixth, completing a span of nine batters in which he issued four walks, including three on four pitches. Both runners scored in the sixth.

"The way the game turned out, that ended up costing us the game," Gibson said. "To be given a chance by the manager to end on a good note and go out with a good taste in your mouth and then put the team in a bad spot is pretty frustrating."

For the night, Gibson walked five, a career worst. All but one of his six runs allowed were earned.

"I mean, it's embarrassing to go out there and walk that many guys," Gibson said. "That's unacceptable."

Vargas also singled to open the ninth off Sean Doolittle, but the A's closer rallied to notch his 18th save. Willingham, hitting for Parmelee, just missed a go-ahead two-run homer when his shot hooked foul; he struck out looking on the next pitch to end the game.

A's relievers broke a 16-year-old franchise record, extending their scoreless streak to 28 2/3 innings.

Twinsights: Eric Fryer points to April start as “breakthrough” for Trevor May

Mike Berardino / Pioneer Press – 8/8/14

OAKLAND, Calif. — When Trevor May makes his debut Saturday, he won't just become the 11th different starting pitcher the Twins have used this season.

May will become the fourth different member of the Triple-A Rochester rotation called up to make at least one start for the Twins. He will join fellow right-hander Yohan Pino and lefties Kris Johnson and Logan Darnell.

That group had one career big-league start before the season began.

Twins backup catcher Eric Fryer caught them all during his time with the Red Wings this year. In May's case, he points to an April 20 start at Syracuse as the one that really got the 24-year-old rolling.

"That was his first win at Triple-A," Fryer said. "It seemed like that was a breakthrough kind of game where everything was working. He was sharp. In my mind, that was what changed his course."

May had experienced mixed results in his first two Triple-A starts, but he tossed six shutout innings that Sunday afternoon at Syracuse. May allowed one hit and one walk while striking out four with Fryer behind the plate.

That launched him into a month of May that saw the talented young pitcher post a 1.47 earned run average in six starts while going 4-2.

"He was pretty fantastic," said Fryer, called up mid-June to replace Josmil Pinto. "I remember a lot of good changeups, good breaking balls the whole time, and obviously his fastball is pretty heavy and gets on guys. Hopefully, (Saturday) the same thing happens for him."

Along with Rochester pitching coach Marty Mason and pitching coordinator Eric Rasmussen, Fryer helped May see the benefit in working ahead in the count and "not trying to be so fine" with his first-pitch offerings. Those talks began near the end of spring training, when May's efficiency clearly needed improvement.

"It wasn't only the walks," Fryer said. "It was the pitch counts getting so high."

May earned his first big-league shot after shaving his nine-inning walk rate to a career-low 3.49.

May's vaunted changeup should remain a weapon for him in the majors, Fryer said. It's also the pitch May goes to when his command suffers with other parts of his repertoire.

“Even if his fastball was erratic or his breaking ball wasn’t good early in the game, his changeup got him back on track,” Fryer said. “He has a lot of confidence in all his pitches. He has a lot of confidence in what he wants to accomplish. You have to like that, especially as a catcher.”

Twinsights: Hard throwing Brandon Poulson makes his pro debut

Mike Berardino / Pioneer Press – 8/8/14

OAKLAND, Calif. – Rookie-level Elizabethton right-hander Brandon Poulson, signed as an undrafted free agent after an undistinguished career at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, made his pro debut with a scoreless inning on Friday night.

Poulson, who reportedly received a \$250,000 signing bonus after his fastball jumped to 100 mph, was featured this week on NBC Nightly News. The 24-year-old former construction worker walked one.

Briefly

Joe Mauer went 3 for 5 with a run-scoring single while playing all nine innings at first base Friday night. It was the third game of his rehab assignment at Class A Cedar Rapids. Out since July 1, Mauer could rejoin the Twins on Monday in Houston.

–Twins coach Joe Vavra is absent from the road trip as he prepares for upcoming hip-replacement surgery. Vavra should return to a dugout role before the season ends, Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said, but Scott Ullger (third) and Paul Molitor (first) will remain as base coaches.

–Right-hander Mark Hamburger (MoundsViewHigh School) took a no-hitter into the seventh for Triple-A Rochester on Friday at Indianapolis. Three straight singles chased Hamburger, who still picked up his third win for the Red Wings.

–Left-hander Logan Darnell, demoted after two starts for the Twins, worked in relief in his return to Rochester on Friday.

–Gardenhire said he hoped to get rookie Danny Santana a start at shortstop by the end of the road trip. Santana, whose natural position is shortstop, has taken over as the starting center fielder this season. His last game at shortstop was June 25, when he suffered a bone bruise in his left knee.

Postgame Twinsights: Is this it for Chris Colabello and the Twins?

Mike Berardino / Pioneer Press – 8/9/14

OAKLAND, Calif. — Writing off Chris Colabello after all he’s been through in his remarkable journey would be a mistake.

However, after he was sent back to Triple-A Rochester for the second time this season following Friday night’s loss, it was fair to wonder how much longer the power-hitting first baseman will be in the Twins organization.

A 40-man roster spot could be needed soon for prized right-hander Alex Meyer, and after hitting .222/.288/.389 in his latest 19-game audition in the majors, Colabello figures to be among the prime candidates to be designated for assignment.

Rookie slugger Kennys Vargas, 24, had two more hits Friday night, giving him a .355 on-base percentage through his first seven games. (He does have, however, just one walk against 10 strikeouts).

Joe Mauer could return from his rehab assignment as soon as Monday, and for now Chris Parmelee is going to be pretty much the regular first baseman, with the ability to bounce back to a corner outfield spot.

Where does that leave Colabello? Without a spot in the majors and set to turn 31 in October.

In 401 big-league plate appearances over the past two seasons, the independent-league survivor has produced a slash line of .214/.284/.364 with 13 home runs, 56 RBI and a park- and league-adjusted combined on-base/slugging percentage of 80 (20 percent below league average).

Colabello went 2 for 8 as a pinch hitter this year but struggled to maintain his swing between long stints on the bench.

"It's just role-playing," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said a few hours before the demotion. "He went through the period where he really scuffled. Sent him back down, and he's had a better swing, better approach. We're using him off the bench, and he's trying to adjust to those roles. It's just an experience for him. He hasn't done a lot of that."

Gardenhire was asked how hard it is for a player like Colabello to adjust to playing a couple times a week when he's used to being in the lineup daily.

"If you're in the big leagues, you shouldn't really give a (darn), to tell you the truth," Gardenhire said. "That's putting it plain and simple. If you're playing in the minor leagues, it's a little difficult. If you're in the big leagues and you're here, you keep your mouth shut and you just play. When you get a chance, you go out and do the best you can."

"Is it easy? No, it's not easy because you're facing a lot of really, really good pitchers."

The last one Colabello faced in this turn with the Twins was Oakland left-hander Jon Lester, who threw a three-hit shutout on Thursday.

Colabello singled and walked in his final two trips.

Kazmir faces the minimum through 6 innings as A's beat Twins

Associated Press— 8/9/14

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Scott Kazmir faced the minimum through six innings before running into trouble, Coco Crisp hit a bases-loaded triple, and the Oakland Athletics beat the Minnesota Twins 6-5 on Friday night for their 11th straight win in the series.

Oakland owns its longest unbeaten run against the Twins, whose last victory came at Target Field on Sept. 10, 2013. The A's are 5-0 this year.

Kazmir (13-4) tossed just eight balls among his first 42 pitches through four perfect innings before Kennys Vargas broke up the bid with a single off shortstop Jed Lowrie's glove. Yet the A's turned a spectacular double play on a grounder by Kurt Suzuki to third two batters later.

Kazmir was dominant deep into the game five days after being handed his first loss in six starts and allowing a season-high 10 hits in a Sunday loss to Kansas City.

He followed fellow southpaw Jon Lester's three-hit gem in a 3-0 win Thursday with his own impressive outing -- until the Twins made it interesting.

Trevor Plouffe hit an RBI single in the seventh as Minnesota ended a 19-inning scoreless streak and avoided being shut out in consecutive games for the first time this season. Oswaldo Arcia singled in a run and Chris Parmelee's two-run double chased Kazmir. Ryan Cook entered and immediately gave up Eduardo Nunez's RBI double.

Sean Doolittle retired former A's slugger Josh Willingham on a called third strike to end it for his 18th save in 21 opportunities. The A's bullpen set an Oakland record with 28 2/3 scoreless innings. The old mark of 27 2/3 was set in June 1998.

Kyle Gibson (10-9) allowed six runs -- five earned -- and five hits, struck out three and walked a season-high five in five-plus innings while facing the A's for the first time. He dropped to 4-1 in six starts against the AL West this season.

Gibson loaded the bases on two walks and a single with no outs in the fifth when Crisp tripled to the wall in right-center. Eric Sogard nearly caught Sam Fuld on the play, crossing home plate a couple of steps later. Sogard doubled in two runs the next inning.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Twins: Third base coach Joe Vavra is away from the team and will soon undergo surgery for a torn labrum in his left hip. He won't return to the third-base coach's box this season. "He can sit on the bench," manager Ron Gardenhire said. "He'll be back with us." ... After a workout day Thursday, first baseman Joe Mauer was set to play nine innings for Class-A Cedar Rapids as he works his way back from a strained right oblique muscle.

Athletics: Jed Lowrie returned to the lineup playing shortstop after being limited by a bruised right index finger. ... First baseman Kyle Blanks, out since June 23 with a strained left calf, was scheduled to join Triple-A Sacramento to begin a rehab assignment Saturday.

ON DECK

Twins: Right-hander Trevor May will be promoted from Triple-A Rochester to make his major league debut.

Athletics: Right-hander Jeff Samardzija (2-1, 3.09) makes his seventh start with the A's since a July 4 trade with the Cubs. He has allowed six homers in that time.

Trevor May will make his big league debut Saturday in Twins rotation

Derek Wetmore / 1500 ESPN – 8/8/14

Trevor May's time finally is here. The Twins made it official Friday on Twitter, they'll recall the righthander to make Saturday's start for Minnesota.

Seth Stohs of Twins Daily was first to report the move.

May is 8-6 with a 2.93 ERA and 91 strikeouts and 37 walks in 95 1/3 innings. Opponents in Triple-A have hit .215 off him this season.

The Twins optioned Chris Colabello after Friday's game to clear a spot on the 25-man roster for May.

May already is on the 40-man roster. He came over from the Phillies along with Vance Worley in the trade that sent Ben Revere to Philadelphia.

Prospect May will start for Twins on Saturday

Tyler Mason / FOX Sports North – 8/8/14

Trevor May's time has finally arrived.

After a strong season in Triple-A Rochester, the Twins pitching prospect is headed to the majors. The right-hander was officially named as Minnesota's starting pitcher for Saturday's game against Oakland. He'll officially be recalled after Friday's game and will wear No. 65 in his debut.

May, 24, was 8-6 with a 2.93 ERA in 17 starts for the Red Wings. He struck out 91 batters in 95 1/3 innings. May's debut might have come earlier in the season if not for a calf injury that shelved him for a handful of starts, including the Futures Game.

May was originally acquired from Philadelphia before the 2013 season in a trade that sent outfielder Ben Revere to the Phillies which also netted Minnesota Vance Worley, who has since been released and is now on the Pirates. May spent 2013 with Double-A New Britain and opened 2014 on Rochester's roster.

Twins fans have been clamoring for May and fellow prospect Alex Meyer to join the big-league team, but inconsistent outings meant both wound up spending more time in the minors. Meyer could very well be the next pitcher recalled as Minnesota gets a look at two arms it hopes will be mainstays for years to come.

Powerful Vargas has fun hitting, Twins enjoying early results

Tyler Mason / FOX Sports North – 8/8/14

There are three things you'll immediately notice about Twins first baseman Kennys Vargas.

The first is that he's a very large man. At 6-foot-5, 275 pounds, Vargas looks like he should be playing for the Minnesota Vikings instead of the Minnesota Twins.

You'll also notice that Vargas is always laughing or smiling, or often times both. He plays a kid's game, and he has fun every day he's doing it.

Lastly, you'll quickly pick up on the fact that Vargas enjoys hitting. It didn't take Twins manager Ron Gardenhire very long to learn that. But just in case Gardenhire didn't already know, Vargas solidified that fact by carrying his bat out to the outfield to shag fly balls during early batting practice before Minnesota's game earlier this week at Target Field.

"He's carrying a bat out there in the outfield instead of a glove. That was a first no-no," Gardenhire said. "I didn't say anything to him because I wanted him to enjoy himself, but eventually we'll get the bat out of his hand when we go to the outfield to shag. . . . That does tell you a little about what he likes to do."

Vargas has hit -- and hit well -- in six minor-league seasons since signing with the Twins as an undrafted free agent out of Puerto Rico back in 2009. Before he got called up to the majors for the first time in his career earlier this month, Vargas was batting .281 with 17 home runs and 63 RBI for Double-A New Britain.

When the call came early in the morning from Rock Cats manager Jeff Smith to tell Vargas he was going to the majors, the young first baseman couldn't contain his emotions.

"I was jumping in my bed," Vargas said.

He quickly called home to Puerto Rico to tell his family the good news.

"But nobody answer the phone. It's too early," he said. "After that, my mother was very happy."

Since he joined the Twins on July 31, bypassing Triple-A in the process, Vargas has seemingly made the transition rather easily. He turned 24 years old on Aug. 1, the same day as his major-league debut. Vargas celebrated his birthday by tallying his first big-league hit, a two-run double against the Chicago White Sox.

Three games later came Vargas' first career home run. The timing of the blast was crucial, as it gave Minnesota a 3-1 lead after the Twins had trailed for much of the game against San Diego. Vargas' homer to right field proved to be the difference in that game.

"The initial reaction on the ball he hit over the fence was it looked easy," said Twins general manager Terry Ryan. "We don't have many three-run homers around here. There's no question he's got power from both sides. . . . In today's game, it's difficult to find power. When you do find it, you better hang on."

That power is often on display during batting practice, where Vargas tends to hit tape measure shots that drop even the jaws of his teammates. When he was taking BP with the World team before the Futures Game at Target Field earlier this month, Vargas hit one home run that landed near the top corner of the batter's eye in center field. He also nearly hit a pickup truck that was parked as a promotion behind the seats in right field.

For as long as Vargas can remember, he's always had the natural power. He started playing baseball at four years old in his native Puerto Rico. By the time he was seven, he truly enjoyed hitting the ball.

Vargas laughs when he's asked if he was hitting the ball further than his peers even as a 7-year-old.

"Yeah, yeah, always," he said.

It remains to be seen how Vargas fits into the future plans of the Twins. If he does wind up sticking around in the majors for years to come, his best bet will likely be as a designated hitter, with a handful of games at first base sprinkled in. Vargas' defense is still a work in progress, but he's put plenty of time into honing his skills on the field. However, when Minnesota first baseman Joe Mauer returns from the disabled list -- possibly as soon as Monday -- Vargas' playing time may not be quite as frequent.

Still, the fact that he's up in the majors is a pleasant surprise to Vargas, and one he's not going to take for granted. He expected at least a stop at Triple-A Rochester before the Twins called him up. Best case scenario in his mind was a trip to Minnesota as a September call-up when the major league rosters expand.

But Vargas is here now, hoping to prove he belongs at this level. If Gardenhire had it his way, he'd keep the affable first baseman on the big-league club for the rest of the season. Ryan, however, said that decision is up to Vargas. Perform well, and he'll stick around.

Seven hits and seven RBI in his first six career games? That's a good start.

"He's a strong young man. The battle's not over," Gardenhire said. "He's got a long ways to go and a lot to learn and a lot of at-bats. He's going to have some good and some bad ones. But he's sure fun to see walking up there."