



Minnesota Twins Daily Clips

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Twins call up Byron Buxton after Santana injured in 3-2 loss to Oakland

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | May 31, 2016

Miguel Sano's homer streak came to an end Monday, and so did the Twins' four-game winning streak. Now the Twins will see if their other top hitting prospect can help start a new streak.

Byron Buxton was summoned from Class AAA Rochester after Monday's 3-2 low-voltage matinee loss to the Athletics, and the rookie center fielder should be in uniform, and probably the lineup, on Tuesday night. Buxton, named International League Player of the Week earlier in the day for his three-homer, six-RBI spree last week, will replace the suddenly hobbled Danny Santana.

Santana hustled from first to third base in the fifth inning when Eduardo Nunez singled, getting in position to score one of the Twins' two runs off Oakland starter Kendall Graveman when Brian Dozier followed with a sacrifice fly. But the play had an unfortunate consequence for Santana: He reinjured the left hamstring that forced him to the disabled list last month. Santana tried to stay in the game, and looped a single into left field his next time up. But manager Paul Molitor noticed him running gingerly, and removed him for a pinch-runner.

A disappointed Santana, who was 5-for-17 since the Twins' winning streak began, seemed somber in the clubhouse afterward. "You never want this to happen," he said. "Not just to me but to anybody."

Especially since, at 25 and not yet established in the majors, every absence is a chance to lose your job.

That's up to Buxton, of course, and the results weren't good in April, when he opened the season as the starting center fielder but batted .176 with 24 strikeouts in 17 games and was optioned out. Buxton has thrived at Rochester, though, especially lately: He's batting .372 this month, with seven doubles and six home runs and a .443 on-base percentage.

“We’ve seen signs of life in terms of production and confidence,” Molitor said earlier this month. “The biggest thing is, he’s putting a lot of time in, trying to find ways to shorten his swing and be more consistent in putting the ball in play.”

He’ll join a team that appeared to be awakening from its season-long offensive slumber during a weekend sweep of the Mariners, but all that power — 11 home runs in four games — disappeared in the bright California sunshine of O.co Coliseum. Minnesota managed eight hits, all of them singles, off Graveman and three relievers, and reached the 50-game benchmark with a 15-35 record, second-worst (after 1982’s 12-38 disaster) in franchise history.

Sano went 1-for-4, Joe Mauer went 0-for-3 with a walk, and neither of them homered, ending their power surge. Mauer had homered in three straight games in Seattle, while Sano’s streak was four straight, one shy of the franchise record.

Three times Ervin Santana allowed the first A’s batter of an inning to reach base. Three times that runner scored. And that was all it took to beat the Twins. Santana allowed only seven hits over seven innings, but Oakland cashed in its chances — including Coco Crisp’s home run on Santana’s second pitch of the day — better than the Twins.

“There’s not much to complain about the effort we got from [Santana],” Molitor said. “It was a good game, just not a lot offensively for us. It was a little disappointing [since we] liked the matchup heading in, especially with how well we’ve been playing.”

“It was just a couple pitches [that hurt], but that’s what happens when you leave the ball up,” Santana said. The pitch to Crisp, an 89-mph fastball, “was just a mistake, and he hit it good.”

Mauer hit one good, too, in the seventh inning with the tying and go-ahead runs on second and third. But his line smash was speared by first baseman Yonder Alonso, ending the Twins’ most serious threat.

“As little as we did offensively,” Molitor said, “we were just a couple of inches from taking the lead.”

Twins move struggling Phil Hughes to long-relief role

Phil Miller | Star Tribune | May 31, 2016

Phil Hughes has spent much of the season searching for an answer to why he’s lost the effectiveness that made him such a success with the Twins two years ago. Now the Twins want him to look in a new place: the bullpen.

Kyle Gibson will return from the disabled list on Thursday, manager Paul Molitor announced Monday, and start against the Rays that night. And in order to make room in the rotation, Hughes will transition into a long relief role he hasn’t occupied since 2009 with the Yankees.

“I’ve been our worst starter. You can’t be surprised when something like this goes down,” Hughes said of the decision, which Molitor revealed to him Monday. “I haven’t been right this year. Hopefully a stint in the bullpen will help me regain my aggressiveness.”

Has that been the problem? At 1-7, Hughes leads the AL in losses and his ERA is an ugly 5.74. “If I knew the answer, it would be a different story. I can only figure it out myself,” Hughes said. “Maybe it’s a loss of aggressiveness, a little bit of lack of confidence, and maybe that’s something I can rebound and regain.”

The move is somewhat shocking, given the Twins’ investment — roughly \$46 million more owed Hughes between now and 2019 — in the veteran starter.

“We have a five-man rotation, not six, so we had to make a decision,” Molitor said. “Phil was good. He understood. He handled it very professionally. He said he’s going to go out there and try to help us out.”

It’s probably not permanent, of course, given that the Twins already have used nine different starting pitchers this season. Molitor said as much, noting that “in the short term, we want to keep Pat [Dean] in there.” Dean will start Wednesday against the A’s.

Gibson, out since April 22 because of a strained shoulder, threw a bullpen session Monday in Fort Myers and has been cleared to return.

The suite life

The baseball game was merely an hors d’oeuvre for the action at the Oakland Coliseum Complex on Monday; a little more than two hours after

it ended, the Golden State Warriors and Oklahoma City Thunder tipped off Game 7 of the NBA's Western Conference finals just a few feet away at Oracle Arena. And the Twins wanted to be part of it.

At least 20 Twins players attended Monday's game, one of the sport's and the Bay Area's hottest tickets in memory, after some basketball fans among the players realized how conveniently the games were scheduled. Players chipped in — they declined to reveal the amount — and with the help of an agent arranged to rent a suite for the night.

They weren't the only ones with that idea. Across the arena, many of the A's were in a private suite as well. But not everyone had the same plan. Assistant General Manager Rob Antony chose not to attend the game. The Stanley Cup Final also started Monday, after all.

"I'd rather watch hockey," Antony said.

Etc.

Trevor Plouffe returned to action Monday — and not as he expected. When Danny Santana was removed because of a hamstring injury in the seventh inning, Plouffe made his first appearance as a pinch-runner since 2011. Plouffe missed four games because of a bruised knee, but Molitor said he expects Plouffe to play Tuesday. Same with Kurt Suzuki, who was briefly dazed by a foul tip in Saturday's game.

Kohl Stewart, the Twins' No. 1 draft pick and fourth overall in 2013, was promoted to Class AA Chattanooga. Stewart, a righthanded pitcher, had a 2.61 ERA in nine starts at Class A Fort Myers and was personally scouted by GM Terry Ryan last week.

Max Kepler, sidelined by a left groin injury last week, was activated from the disabled list by Class AAA Rochester.

Total system failure: How everything fell apart for the Minnesota Twins

Star Tribune | May 31, 2016

Can this season get any worse for the Twins? Theoretically, yes, although it's difficult to imagine how that could happen.

So many errors, on the field and in the front office. We're talking about Murphy's Law here -- everything from a pitching staff with the highest ERA in the American League to catcher John Ryan Murphy, acquired in a trade and sent to the minors after starting the season with an .075 batting average.

How did this total system failure -- a phrase that originated with owner Jim Pohlad and since turned into a catchphrase and hash tag by disgruntled fans -- come to be? Baseball writers La Velle E. Neal III and Phil Miller, and columnists Jim Souhan and Patrick Reusse, have combined to chronicle a dozen things that haven't gone as planned.

Complete pitching collapse

Ricky Nolasco has underperformed or been hurt since the Twins signed him

From top to the bottom the Twins pitching staff has failed to perform this season. A rotation that was built to grind through the season has failed miserably.

Phil Hughes is still searching for his 2014 form. Kyle Gibson was ineffective, then injured. Ricky Nolasco is constantly pitching in jams. Ervin Santana has been mostly reliable when healthy. Tommy Milone is in the minors. Tyler Duffey and Jose Berrios are their most talented starters, and Berrios is back in the minors.

This has led to the teams pulling away from the Twins early in games.

The bullpen is reeling from Glen Perkins' injury and struggles among other relievers.

There is nothing more demoralizing than a bullpen that can't hold leads, and the Twins have one save over the last month. These are areas where the Twins need to aim high via trades or free agency — instead of waiting for their farm system to provide solutions.

That's too unpredictable, as the Twins have learned with lineup players Byron Buxton, Eddie Rosario and Miguel Sano.

Dozier has failed

There's no argument: Brian Dozier has hurt more than he's helped

Brian Dozier has led the Twins in home runs for three straight seasons. He was an All-Star last year. He is an excellent fielder and above-average baserunner. He has a winning personality and an admirable work ethic. And he's failing.

His approach at the plate has left him vulnerable to outside pitches and he has failed to counterpunch, instead too often trying to pull outside pitches to left field. His track record suggests this is just an extended slump and that he will eventually become a dangerous hitter again, but his slump coincided with and helped cause one of the worst stretches of team baseball in franchise history.

With Buxton in the minors and Sano trying to find his swing, the Twins needed Dozier to again be their best player, and he has been far from that.

Signing Park made no sense

Byung Ho Park is contributing to a record-setting strikeout pace

Torii Hunter revealed that he was going to retire in late October. Ten days later, it was announced the Twins had won the bid to negotiate with Byung Ho Park, a 29-year-old slugger from Korea.

The Twins' explanation was the need for a righthanded bat to make up for the loss of Hunter. Fair enough, if Park were an outfielder, but when he was eventually signed, it was to be the No. 1 designated hitter and a backup first baseman.

Miguel Sano was the DH for the second half of 2015. The Twins wanted to get him in the field regularly.

That would have been doable without Park: Play Sano 40 games at third, 40 games at first, with Trevor Plouffe and Joe Mauer serving as DH when Miguel was in the field.

Instead, the Twins signed a strikeout-prone slugger from a minor league and now must watch Sano in right field. Park can hit a hanging breaking ball a long way, but he's overmatched by quality major league pitching. Signing Park made no sense last winter, and it still doesn't.

Too much reliance on prospects

Casey Fien pitched poorly and was released

Every team would like to have a strong farm system, and the Twins do have quality prospects who are trying to break through and thrive in the majors. But projections this year were based on prospects playing key roles, which is dangerous to do and, in this case, failed to work.

Major league teams build depth by bringing in quality players to take the top spots on the depth chart, not waiting for prospects to fill the holes.

While waiting for relievers Nick Burdi, J.T. Chargois and others to debut sometime this year, the bullpen has suffered from a dearth of proven setup men. Setup men last offseason cost \$5 to \$6 million a year, so the Twins' reluctance to spend big and block the path of prospects is somewhat understandable.

But most successful teams aren't afraid to dive deep into the free-agent pool, and top relievers aren't going to get any cheaper.

The Twins have enough prospects to craft a trade if they want to bring in quality talent. It also requires the willingness to spend on more than midlevel free agents. Take a big swing with a big free agent, for once.

Trades have not helped

Terry Ryan has failed at helping the Twins through his trades

Terry Ryan declared himself ready and willing last July to make a deal. "I have every intention of trying to improve the club. We've got some areas we're pinpointing," he said. "But we aren't going to do one just to make a trade. You've got to find a good match."

That last part has been the hangup that has prevented Ryan, now in the fifth season of his second stint as general manager, from acquiring players to supplement the Twins' development strategy — or even help clear gluts of players at some positions and better organize his roster. In his first tenure as GM, Ryan was able to pluck valuable players like David Ortiz, Johan Santana, Joe Nathan, Francisco Liriano, Joe Mays, Shannon Stewart and Jason Bartlett from other organizations.

Now? "It's gotten more difficult, because contracts have complicated the process," Ryan said. "It takes two sides to make a trade."

The only current starting position player acquired in a trade is shortstop Eduardo Escobar, who was projected as a utility infielder when the deal was struck. Ryan's gambles to repeat his hidden-gems success of a decade ago — deals that brought Alex Meyer, Trevor May, John Ryan Murphy and Vance Worley to Minnesota — have so far not made a big impact, with Tommy Milone, 9-7 with a 4.56 ERA since being acquired for Sam Fuld, or Kevin Jepsen, who saved 10 games in late 2015, the most notable successes in Ryan's relatively infrequent dealings.

Not since Ryan's interim peer, Bill Smith, dealt for J.J. Hardy in 2009 has a position player acquired via trade stepped right in to a starting position. Not since Smith picked up Carl Pavano a few months earlier has a starting pitcher been found who kept his job more than a few months.

Catching: Solution needed

John Ryan Murphy was sent to the minors and Kurt Suzuki's production has declined

When an interviewer lamented to Kurt Suzuki recently that he mostly is asked questions about being clobbered by foul balls, the veteran catcher said, "I wish I was doing something worth talking about."

Signing Suzuki was the Twins' stop-gap reaction more than two years ago to the decision to move Joe Mauer to first base, and the choice was validated with an All-Star selection a few months later. But the affable Hawaiian, popular with his teammates and especially the pitching staff, has declined considerably from that first impression. And the Twins' inability to identify Suzuki's successor, both immediately and longterm, is glaring.

At the plate, Suzuki's production, as measured by wins above replacement, ranked 44th among catchers who played at least 80 games in 2015, and he's been worse this year. He threw out only 15 percent of would-be base-stealers last year, worst in the majors, and the 80 stolen bases allowed led all catchers.

His backups have been worse. Eric Fryer and Chris Herrmann combined to hit .160 last year, with a .245 on-base percentage, and the Twins had no plausible solution in the high minors. That convinced the Twins to trade for John Ryan Murphy over the winter. The result? Three hits in 40 at-bats (.075) and a demotion to Class AAA Rochester.

Suzuki's contract expires this fall, but if Murphy doesn't live up to projections, the Twins will have to go fishing once more for an answer at a critical position.

Hunter's absence hurts

Torii Hunter's fire hasn't been replaced

The Twins are on their way to losing 90 games for the fifth time in six years. The only time during that stretch they posted a winning record was with Torii Hunter on the roster. That is not a coincidence.

Hunter not only instigated dance parties into what had been a ridiculously passive and unproductive clubhouse, he brought fire to the dugout. He screamed at teammates who lacked fire. He pushed teammates to study opposing pitchers and dissect the game. He got big hits. He played hard. And his fire allowed Paul Molitor to be his usual, calm self, because Molitor knew Hunter would add heat to his messages.

The only current player who had a chance to take over Hunter's leadership role was Brian Dozier, who is affable by nature and has never won anything. Dozier's season-long slump robbed him of a chance to at least try out the role of clubhouse leader.

Lineup construction

Joe Mauer has been among those who have struggled batting leadoff

The Twins correctly identified the need to boost their offense during the offseason and signed Korean slugger Byung Ho Park. Park looks like a good power hitter, but he's adding to a strikeout-laden lineup that is threatening to break the club record of 1,430 whiffs in 2013.

A better fit for this particular club would have been to find someone with a solid on-base percentage who could bat at or near the top of the order.

The Twins don't have a true leadoff hitter. They entered the weekend series in Seattle with their leadoff hitters ranked 29th in on-base percentage.

And they don't have a true No. 2 or No. 3 hitter, depending on where Joe Mauer isn't batting on that particular day. They entered the series at Seattle with 33 of their 44 home runs being solo shots.

It is the classic sail-or-fail batting order. When the Twins aren't hitting home runs they are hard to watch at the plate. It's time for a remodel.

Beat-up vets don't bounce back

It was foolish to expect 33-year-old players to bounce back

Joe Mauer, Glen Perkins and Ricky Nolasco are all 33 years old. Mauer hasn't been productive since 2013. Perkins is coming off three straight All-Star berths as a closer, but he was abysmal and injured down the stretch last season. Nolasco had been here two seasons, and was awful in 2014 and injured in 2015.

The Twins went to spring training holding onto the dream of a Mauer return to his former glory. They failed to add a reliever as insurance against the possibility that Perkins' soreness returned. They watched Nolasco look good on back fields against hitters from the low minors and decided that he should be in the rotation.

Mauer has repeated 2015: a strong April, and now a fade. He is what he is at 33 — a .270 hitter who gets some walks. Perkins is on the 60-day disabled list. Nolasco, after a few respectable starts, is brutal again — and would be released if not for \$21 million still owed.

Only the Twins would expect beat-up 33-year-olds to bounce back and become solid assets for a playoff push.

Top prospects must be stars

Instead of being stars, Byron Buxton is in the minors and Miguel Sano is erratic

Byron Buxton and Miguel Sano remain two of the most prodigiously talented youngsters in baseball. Any projected Twins success was based on the two becoming stars. They haven't, not yet, and that has left the 2016 Twins with a roster filled with average players who are underperforming.

If Buxton had broken through offensively this season, the Twins would have had an incredibly fast run-producer at the top of their lineup, and a Gold Glove-caliber fielder in center. If Sano had hit this season the way he did last summer, the top of the Twins' lineup might have been fearsome instead of pathetic. If they had taken the lead, perhaps players like Brian Dozier wouldn't have felt so pressured to produce big numbers.

Buxton and Sano are the Twins' two most important dominoes, and they've fallen the wrong way this season.

Sano fails to get the message

The Twins moved Miguel Sano to right field and it hasn't gone well

Baseball is unique among the major professional sports in that players who make up a huge percentage of the game's best talent can make themselves hard to keep tabs on in the offseason, if they so choose.

The wave of players from the Caribbean — and particularly the Dominican Republic — has allowed the game to fill the talent void as a much-lower percentage of great African-American athletes turned to baseball.

Sano is the Twins' most important player. He left for the Dominican last fall weighing 270 pounds. The Twins wanted him to lose 10 pounds,

partially for right field but mostly to play at his full potential. He weighed in at the start of spring training at 278.

The Twins have not been able to get through to Sano to accept the fact there's much work to do for him to be the star that he believes himself to be. I have no faith in the current administration to get across that message.

Learning on the job

Eddie Rosario's gaffes resulted in a demotion to the minors

Overthrowing the cutoff man. Bunting with two outs. Trying to steal third base with two outs. Swinging at the first pitch after a walk.

When a team is winning, when a player is crushing the ball, it's easy to overlook some occasional bad judgment. Not so much when the results aren't there.

"Young guys make mistakes. You expect that — running on their heels, or bobbing their heads [when they run] or messing up some footwork," former manager Tom Kelly said during spring training. "But they have so many talents that complement them while they fight inexperience."

The Twins counted on a brigade of players who haven't even turned 25 this year, and they've paid the price in fundamental errors. "There was a time when guys spent years in the minor leagues, and you were expected to master both the physical and mental parts before you could be a big-leaguer," said manager Paul Molitor, a Hall of Fame player. "But circumstances change. I spent one year in Class A and went right to the majors, with no understanding of how to win. You just count on your talent to carry you, and you absorb the mental part as best you can."

Eddie Rosario had barely played more than 100 games above Class A before he was called up to Minnesota. Danny Santana had two dozen games in Class AAA before getting there, and Miguel Sano and Byron Buxton had none.

"You'd rather not have to learn on the job, so to speak, in the major leagues, at least what I would consider the fundamentals," Molitor said. "But sometimes that's the reality."

Judging Joe Mauer's highs and lows

Michael Rand | Star Tribune | May 31, 2016

I knew better, but I couldn't help myself. And to prove it, I'm going to make the same mistake again.

A little less than two weeks ago, Joe Mauer was in a slump. A gathering-up of short-term facts and numbers confirmed it, and I wrote about it:

"Through 25 games, Mauer was hitting .337 with an absurd .459 on-base percentage as of May 1, the key factors in a robust .920 OPS at the time. He also had struck out only nine times in those 25 games, which is vintage Mauer," I wrote. "Since then, however, Mauer has gone just 7-for-50 in his last 14 games. Beyond that dismal .140 average, his strikeouts are also way up — 16 in the last 14 games."

I went on to conclude that his overall numbers, at that point, looked awfully similar to how they looked in 2014 and 2015 — years in which Mauer tumbled from being one of the best hitters in the game to being average at best.

But seeing enough peaks and valleys over the years, and observing how placing too much emphasis on a short-term trend can make one look foolish, led me at the time to also write this caveat:

"That's not to say Mauer won't rebound — it's dangerous to write things when a player is at the bottom of a slump or the peak of a hot streak, as things have a way of evening themselves out — but it's at least troubling in the short term and has contributed to the Twins' recent woes."

And so here we are.

Between the moment those words first appeared online and the end of Sunday's game at Seattle, Mauer had 36 official at-bats. During that span, he hit .361 with four home runs and a whopping 1.119 OPS.

He homered in all three games against the Mariners, part of a Twins sweep that, at least for a weekend, made people remember 1) how they thought the Twins would play all season and 2) how great a locked-in Mauer can be.

Suddenly, Mauer is on pace to hit around 20 home runs (which would easily be the second-highest total of his career behind his MVP season of 2009, when he hit 28) with a robust .826 OPS.

It's impossible to point all of this out, though, without that caveat again — which starts to feel like an endless loop at times.

It's dangerous to write things when a player is at the bottom of a slump or the peak of a hot streak, as these things have a way of evening themselves out.

Two weeks from now, if Mauer has cooled off, I could write this very same thing in the other direction. And so on.

Of course, it's even more dangerous when numbers can be twisted any way we want them to be. Such as: Mauer entered Monday hitting just .233 since May 2 (Mauer is cold!) or Mauer entered Monday with four homers and a .440 batting average in his past 25 at-bats (Mauer is red-hot!).

Both of those sets of statistics are accurate, open to whichever narrative you choose.

Twins recall top prospect Byron Buxton

John Shipley | Pioneer Press | May 30, 2016

The Twins on Monday recalled outfielder Byron Buxton, the organization's top prospect who has excelled at every level except the majors.

Buxton, 22, takes the roster spot of center fielder/infielder Danny Santana, who left Monday's loss at Oakland with a strained left hamstring and was placed on the 15-day disabled list.

Sent to Triple-A Rochester on April 25 after hitting .156 with 24 strikeouts in 17 games, Buxton hit .336 with nine doubles, two triples, six home runs and 14 runs batted in 29 games for the Red Wings.

In his major league debut, Buxton hit .209 with 44 strikeouts in 46 games last season. He made this year's club out of spring training but continued to struggle.

HUGHES TO 'PEN

Kyle Gibson is on his way back, and Phil Hughes is on his way to the Twins' bullpen.

Gibson, the right-hander who was placed on the disabled list with a shoulder strain April 26, will start Thursday as the Twins open a 10-game homestand with a 7:10 p.m. start against the Tampa Bay Rays.

Manager Paul Molitor made the announcement before Monday's matinee against the Athletics in Oakland.

Gibson, 28, was 0-3 with a 6.10 earned-run average in 20, innings before being placed on the 15-day DL. He threw a bullpen session with no complications Friday. Hughes, 1-7 with a 5.74, moves to the bullpen.

The Twins decided rookie Pat Dean, so effective in a 7-2 victory at Seattle on Friday, should stay in the rotation rather than return to Class AAA Rochester.

"We all knew that Kyle's return was pending, and we had to make a decision here over the last couple days following Dean's performance on Friday and then kind of determining that in the short term here we want to keep Pat in there," Molitor said. "And Kyle, we think, is ready to help us."

The Twins have until Thursday to make room for Gibson on the 25-man roster.

Asked if he was surprised by the move, Hughes said, "Not really. I mean, I'm our worst starter, so you can't really be surprised when something like this goes down."

Dean, 27, gave up two earned runs on four hits and no walks Friday at Safeco Field, outdueling former Cy Young winner Felix Hernandez. The left-hander struck out eight.

Hughes, 29, has been used primarily as a starter since 2010, starting 171 of 179 appearances with the Twins and New York Yankees. He will be

used primarily in long relief, Molitor said.

"We have a five-man rotation, not six, so we had to make a decision. Phil went out there," the manager said. "He was good, he understood, he handled it very professionally. He said he was going to go out there and work and try to help us. I just told him that you never know what can happen, things change ... and at least for now he's going to go out there and keep working on things and hopefully he can help us out coming out of the pen."

Dean is scheduled to pitch the finale Wednesday of a three-game series in Oakland.

ROUGH START

Hughes is on his worst run as a starter since 2013. He last lost seven of eight starts between May and June in 2013, his last season with the Yankees before signing a free-agent deal with the Twins. He went 4-14 with a 5.19 ERA that year.

He had quality starts in his first four appearances this season, but since then has averaged less than five innings and has a 7.23 ERA in six starts.

"I haven't been right this year, and hopefully a stint in the bullpen will help me kind of regain my aggressiveness," Hughes said. "That's pretty much all I can do, is try to move forward and figure out what's going on."

He learned of his demotion Monday morning in Oakland.

"Obviously, the record doesn't look good, and the struggles I've had when I haven't been good have been pretty profound," he said. "It's not coming as a huge shock to me."

Asked whether he can do that while pitching in the bullpen, Hughes said, "We'll see. We'll see how I get used, and when I get used."

BRIEFLY

Trevor Plouffe, out the past three days because of a bone bruise in his right knee, was given another day off Monday. He came in to pinch hit in the ninth inning and popped out to end the game.

Santana smooth but Twins edged by A's

Jane Lee and Do-Hyoung Park | MLB.com | May 30, 2016

A's outfielder Coco Crisp belted a leadoff home run in support of starter Kendall Graveman, who held the Twins to two runs across six innings to pull out a 3-2 series-opening victory at Oakland Coliseum on Monday afternoon.

"Guys know what Coco's all about and how he plays the game," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "It's easy for me having a guy like that, who plays all-out, who plays hard all the time. For some of the new guys coming in, this is how we play. And when he's healthy, he's usually productive, and he definitely is right now."

The A's carried a one-run deficit into the bottom half of the fifth, when Marcus Semien hit a game-tying double to bring home Yonder Alonso, who led off with a base hit. Oakland took the lead for good in the next inning, as Jed Lowrie notched a leadoff single, advanced to third on Stephen Vogt's double and scored on a sacrifice fly from Khris Davis.

Twins starter Ervin Santana was on the hook for all three runs, scattering seven hits in as many innings in the loss. Graveman, meanwhile, picked up just his second win and first since April 20, after yielding six hits and three walks with five strikeouts.

"There's not much to complain about with the effort we got from [Santana]," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "It was a good game but not a lot offensively for us. It was a little disappointing in that we liked the matchup headed in and how we'd been playing, but we didn't swing the bats well today."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Spark plug: Crisp wasn't expected to carry an everyday role this season because of his injury-prone past, but on Monday the outfielder made his 15th consecutive start, matching his longest such streak over the last three years. Crisp celebrated the occasion with a leadoff home run, the 16th of his career. The veteran has five big flies on the season.

"As long as I can go out there and give whatever I got, whatever it is, 100 percent, then I'm going to try to do that," Crisp said. "If they keep

throwing me out there, then I want to be out there. It's working out."

Santana leaves with injury: The Twins opened the seventh with back-to-back singles from Juan Centeno and Danny Santana, and opted to have Eduardo Nunez bunt the runners over. But Santana left the game with a left hamstring strain after reaching second base, getting replaced by Trevor Plouffe. The rally also fizzled, as Brian Dozier struck out and Joe Mauer lined out to first to end the inning.

"I wanted to stay in the game, but we were in a situation to win the game so we couldn't do it," said Santana, who was placed on the 15-day disabled list after the game with Byron Buxton getting called up.

What a relief: After the A's regained the lead in the sixth, they nearly lost it in the seventh. But John Axford and Sean Doolittle navigated through traffic unscored upon, with a big assist from Alonso. After Axford fanned Dozier for the second out, Doolittle was struck for a screaming line drive off the bat of Mauer that first baseman Alonso snagged on an excellent diving play to his right. Doolittle returned to pitch a perfect eighth, and Ryan Madson picked up his 12th save with a scoreless ninth.

"He totally picked me up, and that ended up being the difference in the game," Doolittle said. "It was nice to catch a break. I said 'thank you' to him like 100 times. That was huge. I don't think you can overstate how big that was."

"In close games like that there are going to be certain plays that are more impactful than others and some that don't show up in the box score, and that was definitely one of them," Melvin said."

Centeno gets Twins on the board: Eduardo Escobar helped keep the second inning alive with a two-out single to move Miguel Sano from first to third after he led off the inning with a single. Centeno ripped a hard grounder down the first-base line and it hit off the bag and went into right field for an RBI single.

REPLAY REVIEW

The A's unsuccessfully challenged a play in the fifth, when Semien hit a game-tying RBI double but was thrown out at third trying to stretch it to a triple. After a review, the play on the field stood as called, as Semien was out at third for the first out of the inning.

WHAT'S NEXT

Twins: Right-hander Tyler Duffey had three quality starts in his first four appearances of the season but has gotten roughed up in his last two outings, in which he has allowed 11 earned runs in 12 1/3 innings. He will look to get back on track in his first career start against the Athletics at 9:05 p.m. CT.

Athletics: Left-hander Eric Surkamp will be recalled from Triple-A Nashville on Tuesday for a 7:05 p.m. PT start against the Twins at the Coliseum. It will mark Surkamp's third stint with the A's this season. He was 0-3 with a 6.55 ERA in a combined five starts over his first two tours.

Hot-hitting Nunez opts for sac bunt amid rally

Rhett Bollinger | MLB.com | May 30, 2016

During the Twins' four-game winning streak, they had no issues scoring runs, hitting 11 homers over that stretch while averaging 6.3 runs per contest.

But that win streak and their recent success offensively came to a halt against the A's on Monday, as the offense struggled to get anything going in a 3-2 loss at Oakland Coliseum. The Twins went 1-for-5 with seven runners in scoring position and didn't have an extra-base hit despite facing A's right-hander Kendall Graveman, who entered with a 5.36 ERA and hadn't completed six innings since May 2.

"It was a good game, but not a lot offensively for us," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "It was a little disappointing in that we liked the matchup headed in and how we'd been playing, but we didn't swing the bats well today."

The Twins had a prime opportunity in the seventh, when Juan Centeno and Danny Santana singled to open the inning against reliever John Axford with the A's leading by a run. Eduardo Nunez, the club's hottest hitter, came to the plate and was given the option to bunt for a hit, but missed his first bunt attempt. After a fastball missed up and away, Nunez decided to bunt on his own to move the runners over even though he entered the game with a team-high .338 average.

Though Nunez got the bunt down and moved the runners up to second and third, the move ended up not panning out. Brian Dozier and Joe Mauer struck out and lined out, respectively, to strand the runners, but Molitor defended Nunez's decision to bunt.

"We have Dozier and Mauer behind him, so I gave him an option to bunt for a hit the first pitch and took it off, so he elected to do it on his own," Molitor said. "I didn't have a big issue with it given where we were at in the game and the bullpen being fresh."

Dozier, who came through with a sacrifice fly in the fifth, hurt the Twins with his inability to make contact in the seventh, as Axford used three straight outside fastballs to strike him out. Mauer nearly gave the Twins the lead, as he ripped a hard line drive down the first-base line, only to see first baseman Yonder Alonso make a sprawling catch to end the inning. The Twins went down in order the next two innings.

"We just couldn't put the ball in play with Dozier," Molitor said. "Joe had a nice at-bat. As little as we did offensively, we were just a couple inches away from taking the lead there. Alonso made a really nice play."

Santana (hamstring) to DL; Buxton called up

Do-Hyoung Park | MLB.com | May 30, 2016

Outfielder Danny Santana was placed on the 15-day disabled list with a left hamstring strain sustained in the Twins' 3-2 loss to the Athletics on Monday afternoon. In the corresponding roster move, Byron Buxton was recalled from Triple-A Rochester and is expected to join the team in time for Tuesday night's game.

Santana first felt the hamstring tighten up when going from first to third on an Eduardo Nunez single in the fifth inning but initially stayed in the game. He was later removed in the top of the seventh inning for pinch-runner Trevor Plouffe after moving up to second base on a sacrifice bunt by Nunez.

"It [stinks]," Santana said through interpreter Carlos Font. "You never want this to happen -- not to me, or to anyone, really."

This will mark Santana's second trip to the disabled list this season, as he already missed 14 games in April with the same injury. He finished the game 2-for-3 with two singles and a run scored. Left fielder Robbie Grossman moved to center in Santana's absence, with shortstop Eduardo Escobar finishing the game in left field.

Santana hit .268 with one home run, 10 RBIs and nine stolen bases since his return from the disabled list on April 25 as Minnesota's starting center fielder.

Meanwhile, Buxton, the Twins' Opening Day center fielder, has hit .336 with six home runs and 14 RBIs hitting leadoff for Triple-A Rochester, seemingly experiencing the improvement at the plate that the Twins were hoping to see when they optioned him to the Minors.

He had been hitting .156 with 24 strikeouts and just two walks in 17 Major League games before his demotion, but he should be Minnesota's primary center fielder upon his return.

A's will hand ball to Surkamp vs. Twins

Do-Hyoung Park | MLB.com | May 30, 2016

Both the Athletics and Twins will look to stay on the upswing when they meet for the second of a three-game series in Oakland on Tuesday. Despite seeing its four-game winning streak snapped on Monday, Minnesota has won four of its last five, while Oakland has now won three straight.

Minnesota will turn to 25-year-old right-hander Tyler Duffey, who earned a win against Kansas City in his last outing despite getting tagged for five runs on nine hits in 6 2/3 innings. Duffey is 2-3 this season with a 3.93 ERA.

Left-hander Erik Surkamp will take the mound for the Athletics after being recalled from Triple-A Nashville to make his third stint with Oakland this season. Although the southpaw is 0-3 with a 6.55 ERA in the big leagues in 2016, he has struck out 28 hitters against just eight walks in four minor league starts.

Things to know about this game

Joe Mauer has the fifth-highest batting average among active players at Oakland Coliseum with his .319 mark in 35 career games. At 1,749 career hits, Mauer is still two hits away from tying Kent Hrbek for fourth on the Twins' all-time hit list since the franchise moved to Minnesota.

Khris Davis has hit 11 home runs in the month of May, the most an Oakland player has hit in a month since Jason Giambi hit 13 in September 2000.

The Twins are 7-3 against the AL West and 8-32 against the rest of baseball this season. Oakland hasn't lost a series at home to Minnesota since the Twins swept a two-game set at the Coliseum from May 18-19, 2011.

Wetmore's 5 thoughts: Rally thwarted, Buxton replacing Santana, Hughes to 'pen

Derek Wetmore | 1500 ESPN | May 30, 2016

The Twins had their four-game win streak snapped Monday when they lost the first game of a series in Oakland, 3-2.

1. Miguel Sano fell short of tying the great Harmon Killebrew, when he didn't hit a home run in Monday's game.

Sano had homered in four consecutive games entering Monday, a feat that Killebrew topped three times and Marty Cordova beat once. Those two men each homered in five games in a row.

Sano went 1-for-4 as the DH and scored a run in the 2nd inning after going from first base to third on Eduardo Escobar's single up the middle. Juan Centeno plated Sano from third base to tie the game at 1-1.

The Twins only scored one other run Monday against Kendall Graveman and Oakland's bullpen. The other run came in the 5th inning when Brian Dozier hit a sacrifice fly to center field to score Danny Santana from third base.

The Twins have developed a strange habit this year of not generating much offense against opposing starting pitchers that many casual observers have never heard of. Graveman started Monday's game with a 1-6 record and a 5.36 ERA this season, and he held the Twins to 2 runs on 6 hits and 3 walks in 6 innings pitched.

2. Joe Mauer lined a pitch from Sean Doolittle toward right field, but A's first baseman Yonder Alonso made a nice dive stop to effectively save the game for Oakland.

The Twins had runners on second and third base with one out. Brian Dozier struck out swinging, which brought Mauer to the plate. Mauer got a 2-2 fastball and smoked it to his pull side. Unfortunately for the Twins, Alonso made a catch that saved at least two runs to preserve a 3-2 lead for the A's.

With 51 outs in a baseball game, it's sometimes dangerous to pick a play of the game, but if you're looking for one from Monday's contest, Alonso's catch might have been it.

Mauer was 0-for-3 with a walk, and had his 3-game home run streak snapped.

2b. The Twins may have been playing for one run in that situation and wound up with a chance for more.

After Juan Centeno led off the inning with a single, Danny Santana tried to bunt. When he didn't get it down, he swung away for a hit with two strikes. He succeeded in that second pursuit, and poked a ball to left field. Then Eduardo Nunez bunted both runners up one base, sacrificing an out to advance both runners into scoring position.

Dozier struck out and Mauer hit a liner that was caught and a potential rally was extinguished.

3. The Twins hit the pause button on their recent home run binge in Monday's game. Part of their 4-game win streak was hitting the ball out of the park.

They won Friday's game, 7-2, with home runs from Mauer and Sano, and the Twins won a game that pitted starter Pat Dean against King Felix Hernandez.

They won Saturday's game, 6-5, with Mauer and Sano again homered, and Eduardo Nunez chipped in a big fly, too.

On Sunday they won despite interim closer Kevin Jepsen allowing a 2-run homer in the 9th inning, in part because Mauer, Sano and Robbie

Grossman all went deep for the Twins.

On Monday, nobody hit a home run for Minnesota and the Twins lost for the first time since last Tuesday.

4. Danny Santana was lifted for a pinch runner in the 7th inning Monday, as Trevor Plouffe took his place on the bases. Santana strained his left hamstring and the Twins put him on the disabled list. They recalled top prospect Byron Buxton to take his place.

Santana had previously missed time this season with a strained right hamstring. It's not clear exactly when it happened, but it was clear something was wrong, given that the Twins were trailing by a run and they lifted one of the fastest players on the team – who represented the go-ahead run at the time – for Plouffe, who is not only slower than Santana, but had dealt with a minor bone bruise in his knee the past couple days in Seattle.

One reason an outfielder makes the most sense to replace Santana: when he left the game, Eduardo Escobar moved from shortstop to left field, Robbie Grossman moved from left to center, and Oswaldo Arcia remained in right field. Just a guess here, but I'm imagine that Escobar-Grossman-Arcia is not a defensive outfield alignment that any pitcher wants to see backing him up.

After struggling at the plate in the big leagues this year, Buxton was sent to the minor leagues and has hit nine doubles, two triples and six home runs with the Red Wings.

Read this column for more on Buxton's dominance in Triple-A and what the call-up means for the 22-year-old.

5. Phil Hughes has been knocked from the starting rotation, according to reports, and Kyle Gibson will take his place Thursday against the Rays.

Hughes is 1-7 with a 5.74 ERA, and has given up at least one earned run in all 10 of his starts this year. It's more troubling, from my perspective, that he's allowed at least 3 earned runs in 8 of his 10 starts. That can't be the guy the Twins expected when they signed him to a contract extension following a dominant first year in Minnesota.

Gibson, meanwhile, is on the mend from a strained shoulder and has had two rehab starts to boost his pitch count, and he said two weeks ago that he would not feel comfortable returning if he wasn't able to give the team a solid start. His return, then, must mean that he's ready to be in the neighborhood of 90-100 pitches, assuming he's successful in his outing.

Hughes had pitched five starts with shoulder fatigue, and in the fifth of those starts, manager Paul Molitor decided to take him out of the game after 75 pitches when he had been rolling along. The Twins bullpen coughed up the lead, the Twins lost the game, and a lot of criticism ensued. My opinion at the time was that it's smart of Hughes to be forthright with the medical staff and his manager about the health of his shoulder, and that a good, healthy and well-rested bullpen indeed would be a better option to face a hitter the third time through a batting order. The big problem was that the Twins didn't have a well-rested bullpen, and it's a unit that has struggled on the whole this season.

Now, it's hard to argue with Molitor's decision to yank Hughes and make him a long reliever as Gibson returns. It's a bit surprising, of course, because the rotation currently has a couple rookies – Tyler Duffey and Pat Dean – while Hughes has 3 years and at least \$39 million left on his contract after this season. I say good for the Twins for not worrying about that and instead making a decision they think will be best for them in the short term. Even in a disaster of a season, the obligation is to try to win games.

One final point on the move: it's fascinating to me the level of turnover that happens annually, and yet we obsess over the opening day roster. I'm as guilty of that as anyone.

Consider: The Twins have already used 9 starting pitchers this season.

Here's the opening day bullpen: Glen Perkins, Kevin Jepsen, Trevor May, Casey Fien, Fernando Abad, Ryan Pressly and Michael Tonkin.

Out: Perkins (injured), Fien (claimed off waivers).

In: Brandon Kintzler, Taylor Rogers and Buddy Boshers.

Fear not. I'll continue to take my best guess in the winter about who will make the club out of spring training.

Reports: Phil Hughes knocked from starting rotation to bullpen with Kyle Gibson's return

Derek Wetmore | 1500 ESPN | May 30, 2016

Phil Hughes has been knocked from the starting rotation, according to reports, and Kyle Gibson will take his place Thursday against the Rays.

Hughes is 1-7 with a 5.74 ERA, and has given up at least one earned run in all 10 of his starts this year. He's allowed at least 3 earned runs in 8 of his 10 starts.

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It's a bit surprising, of course, because the rotation currently has a couple rookies – Tyler Duffey and Pat Dean – while Hughes has 3 years and at least \$39 million left on his contract after this season. It appears the Twins are not worried about contract demands, or they wouldn't make a move like this. Instead, they'll roll with the five starters they perceive to have the best chance to pitch deep into a game and position the team for win. Those have been hard to come by this season for Minnesota.

The reports indicated that Hughes will pitch in long relief, since he's capable of throwing enough pitches to start a game.

Twins call up Byron Buxton, put Danny Santana back on disabled list

Derek Wetmore | 1500 ESPN | May 30, 2016

Danny Santana missed some time with a strained right hamstring earlier this year. Now, he's returning to the disabled list after straining his left hamstring, the team announced Monday.

To take his place on the active roster, the Twins are calling up top prospect Byron Buxton, who has struggled at the plate so far in his young major league career, but has destroyed pitching at Triple-A Rochester.

Buxton is the best defensive center fielder in the organization, and perhaps already one of the best in the Major Leagues. The problem so far for the 22-year-old has been his bat in the Majors. In parts of two seasons, the speedster has hit just .195/.239/.316, which isn't enough even for an elite fielder like Buxton.

The most concerning part about the beginning of this year for Buxton is the fact that he struck out in 24 of his 49 plate appearances before the Twins mercifully sent him to the minors to work on his pitch tracking and recognition, among other things.

Something must have clicked.

Buxton entered Monday hitting .333/.402/.605 with the Red Wings. It's still a relatively small sample size (114 at-bats), but it teases at the potential value Buxton could bring once he figures out big league pitching the way he has conquered pitchers in the minors. A guy with top-of-the-charts speed and arm strength plus a good bat to boot would offer plenty of value.

He's still young, and patience will be important this time around, but Buxton has shown the promise of being that guy. The Twins likely are hoping to see it on display at the highest level.

Zulgad: Let's hope Twins are calling up Byron Buxton for the right reasons

Judd Zulgad | 1500 ESPN | May 30, 2016

As Byron Buxton spent recent weeks tearing up pitching at Triple-A Rochester, the obvious question became this: When does Buxton get a return ticket to Minnesota?

This question was met with differing answers. Yes, Buxton seemed to have found himself at the plate, and was getting his confidence back, but

the argument to keep the center fielder in the International League was based on the fact that bringing back Buxton and having him fail (again) made little sense.

One of the top prospects in baseball, Buxton looked absolutely lost at the plate in 17 games with the Twins to start the season. He hit .156/.208/.289 and struck out 24 times in 45 at-bats before being sent down in late April. That gave Buxton a .195 batting average with two home runs and eight runs batted in 63 big-league games. He also had 68 strikeouts in 174 at-bats.

The ultra-speedy Buxton is so good in center field that the Twins didn't need him to be great at the plate, but they also couldn't have him embarrassing himself and when it became apparent he had no clue in the batter's box he was jettisoned.

The prediction here was that the Twins would wait until at least mid-June before giving Buxton another chance. But faced with center fielder Danny Santana going on the 15-day disabled list Sunday because of a strained left hamstring suffered in Oakland, the Twins decided Buxton was ready for his next shot.

One would hope that in what already is a lost season, the Twins are doing this for the right reasons. If Buxton is being called up because the Twins need a body to replace Santana, that's cause for concern and a potential disservice to Buxton. But if the franchise truly believes that Buxton is ready to stick this time, that's another story.

Buxton, 22, entered Monday hitting .333/.402/.605 with nine doubles, two triples, six home runs and 14 RBIs in 28 games at Triple-A. He was named the International League Batter of the Week on Monday and had a .372 average with six homers and 14 RBIs in 22 games this month.

The only setback Buxton had at Rochester came in the middle of this month when he missed a few days because of back spasms. Brad Steil, the Twins' director of minor league operations, told the Star Tribune two weeks ago that Buxton had returned to using a leg kick as a timing mechanism and was working on staying through the ball more with his swing.

Buxton is so fast that many have wondered why he hasn't tried to bunt more often in order to get base hits. But the Twins don't view Buxton as just a speedster. He also has the ability to drive the ball and eventually should hit for power. Being better at putting down a bunt would make Buxton a bigger threat, but that's only a small piece of who he's expected to become.

The most important thing is that when Buxton next puts on a Twins uniform he has a clue about what he's doing at the plate.

When Buxton was called up by the Twins for the first time last June, there was a real buzz from the team's fan base because they wanted to get a look at the second-overall pick in the 2012 draft. When he made the team out of spring training this year, the hope was that he would be able to learn on the job and develop into a superstar while doing so.

This time there should be the realization that we simply don't know what we're going to get from Buxton. Will he resume his struggles to hit a big-league pitch? Will he return from Rochester with a new approach that at least gives him a chance to have a competitive at-bat?

There is a feeling from some that Buxton already qualifies as a disappointment. That is a premature opinion that qualifies as silly. Buxton's window isn't even close to starting to close.

The Twins know this and realized the best move for his development was to have him spend time in Triple-A. That approach turned out to be the right one.

But is promoting Buxton without even playing 30 games in the minors the smart play? If it isn't, the Twins are again leaving themselves open to criticism during a season in which there has been plenty of reason to second-guess general manager Terry Ryan and company.

Twins edged out in close loss in Oakland

Associated Press | May 30, 2016

Erwin Santana gave up a leadoff home run to Coco Crisp but then settled in and pitched effectively. The offense never did get it going and that spelled the end of a four-game winning streak.

Santana turned in a quality start but Oakland starter Kendall Graveman did him one better as the Athletics extended their win streak to three, beating the Minnesota Twins 3-2 on Monday.

"Not a lot offensively for us," Twins manager Paul Molitor said. "It's a little disappointing, considering the matchup on paper and how we were swinging the bats. Once they got the lead, their bullpen did a great job of shutting us down."

Juan Centenio singled in a run to tie the game in the second and Brian Dozier's sacrifice fly put the Twins ahead in the fifth.

Khris Davis hit a tiebreaking sacrifice fly in the sixth after Marcus Semien doubled in a run in the fifth.

The Twins had runners on second and third with one out in the seventh. Dozier struck out and Joe Mauer drilled a low liner that Yonder Alfonso speared to end the inning.

"As little as we did offensively, we were a couple of inches away from taking the lead," Molitor said. "Alfonso made a really nice play."

All of the A's runs came off Santana, who had only lost twice in 12 previous career starts at the Coliseum. Santana (1-4) gave up seven hits in seven innings with five strikeouts.

Crisp hit his fifth home run this season on the second pitch from Santana, the 16th leadoff homer of his career.

Graveman (2-6) allowed two runs and six hits for his first win since April 20. The right-hander struck out five and walked three.

John Axford, Sean Doolittle and Ryan Madson pitched the final three innings for Oakland. Madson retired three batters in the ninth for his 12th save.

SANTANA STRAIN MEANS DL

Twins outfielder Danny Santana was placed on the 15-day disabled list following the game, with a left hamstring strain. It's the same injury that landed him on the DL last month.

"When I went from first to third, that's when I felt it," Santana said. "It's the same leg. It sucks. You don't want this to happen to anybody."

The Twins will recall OF Byron Buxton, who is expected to be in time to play Tuesday night in Oakland.

NEAR MISS

A's right fielder Chris Coghlan made a tremendous catch in the fifth after colliding with Crisp while both men were chasing down Dozier's sacrifice fly. Coghlan took the brunt of the collision that sent him crashing into the outfield wall as well. Both men were checked out by a team trainer and stayed in the game.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Twins: OF Danny Santana singled in the seventh but left the game with a strained left hamstring. . . . Right-hander Kyle Gibson will come off the disabled list to start Thursday's home game against Tampa Bay. RHP Phil Hughes will move to the bullpen when Gibson returns to the rotation. . . . Trevor Plouffe (bruised knee) worked out before the game then came in as a pinch-runner in the seventh.

Athletics: Rich Hill, who left Sunday's game in the seventh inning due to a groin strain, has not been ruled out from making his next start. Hill is sore, according to manager Bob Melvin and could get an extra day of rest. . . . RHP Henderson Alvarez (shoulder) threw off flat ground before the game and will next throw off the mound in the bullpen.

UP NEXT

Twins: RHP Tyler Duffy (2-3) pitches the second game of the series in his first career start. Duffy is the only Minnesota starter with more than one win.

Athletics: LHP Eric Surkamp (0-3) will be called up from Triple-A Nashville to start against Minnesota. It will be Surkamp's third stint with the big league club and his first career start against the Twins.

Preview: Twins at Athletics

Associated Press | May 30, 2016

Though May has been mostly rough for the Oakland Athletics, they have a chance to conclude the month on a roll.

The A's look for a fourth consecutive victory Tuesday night against the visiting Minnesota Twins.

Oakland (23-29) opened the month by losing 10 of 12 before winning four in a row. The A's followed that winning streak by dropping seven of eight before their current three-game run.

With Monday's 3-2 victory over Minnesota (15-35), Oakland has recorded six of its 10 May victories at home. Jed Lowrie had two hits and scored the go-ahead run in the sixth inning as the A's snapped the Twins' four-game winning streak.

With a leadoff homer, Coco Crisp is batting .310 with seven RBIs in his last seven games for Oakland. The 36-year-old outfielder has started 15 consecutive games - his longest stretch since 2014.

"It's easy for me having a guy like that, who plays all-out, who plays hard all the time," manager Bob Melvin said. "For some of the new guys coming in, this is how we play."

After Rich Hill and Kendall Graveman each allowed two runs in the past two games, Eric Surkamp (0-3, 6.55 ERA) will be recalled from Triple-A Nashville to make a sixth start in his third stint with Oakland this season. Replacing Zach Neal in the rotation, Surkamp made his last major league appearance May 11 at Boston.

The left-hander gave up three of his four runs over 2 2/3 innings on a homer to Jackie Bradley Jr. in the 13-3 defeat.

Despite that outing, Melvin sees potential in Surkamp.

"He's done well at times here," Melvin told MLB's official website. "When we talk about pitching depth, he's definitely one of the guys we consider in that mix as far as starters go."

Surkamp allowed four runs in four innings of relief over four 2014 contests against the Twins, but this will be his first start against them.

Joe Mauer went 11 for 25 with four home runs and seven RBIs in six games prior to going 0 for 3 with a walk Monday.

Teammate Danny Santana had two hits in three at-bats, but was placed on the disabled list following Monday's game because of a hamstring strain. Byron Buxton will be called up to replace Santana, who landed on the DL last month with the same injury.

"It sucks," said Santana, who has batted .381 in his last five games at Oakland. "You don't want this to happen to anybody."

Buxton struggled in his first stint with Minnesota this season, batting .156 with two RBIs in 17 games before he was sent to the minors April 24.

Trevor Plouffe has not started the past three games for the Twins because of a bruised knee, but could be in the lineup after seeing action off the bench Monday. He is 3 for 28 in his last eight contests.

In his first four starts since being called up from Triple-A Rochester on April 24, Minnesota's Tyler Duffey (2-3, 3.93) posted a 1.85 ERA despite going 1-2. While splitting his last two, the right-hander was tagged for 11 runs and 18 hits in 12 1/3 innings.

Duffey last took the mound Wednesday when he allowed five of those runs in the fourth of the 6 2/3 innings he lasted of a 7-5 win over Kansas City.

This will be his first appearance against the A's.