

After All-Star Party, Baseball Gets Back To Work

BY JAY COHEN
AP Sports Writer

Sure, it was great for a couple days. The cheers for Derek Jeter. The power of Giancarlo Stanton. The excellence of Mike Trout in the American League's 5-3 victory.

Baseball's All-Star party in the Twin Cities was a long series of smiles for players and fans. But the break is over now, and the real fun begins Friday night.

Heading into the second half of the season, there are all sorts of compelling stories from coast to coast. It could be one fun summer in California, where Oakland begins the weekend with the best record in the majors, and the Giants, Angels and Dodgers are in prime playoff position. The trade deadline is in two weeks, and the recovery of several key injured players could dramatically affect a couple of divisions.

The A's bearded collection of shaggy misfits and stars is looking for the franchise's first World Series title in 25 years. Sensing an opportunity, general manager Billy Beane got an early jump on the deadline when he acquired pitchers Jeff Samardzija and Jason Hammel in a deal with the Chicago Cubs on July 4.

The blockbuster trade created an awkward scene at the All-Star game, where Samardzija was introduced with the NL reserves and then joined his new teammates in the AL dugout.

"I'm really excited to just put all this to rest now and the sideshow that's happened right in the middle of all this," Samardzija said. "It was a great opportunity to get to know these guys more. I flew out here with them. I'm excited."

There will be no such problem for any other players on the move this month. Boston pitcher Jake Peavy, Philadelphia second baseman Chase Utley, San

Diego closer Huston Street and New York Mets right-hander Bartolo Colon are thought to be on the market as contenders shop for that missing piece that could pay off into October.

"I guess there's a possibility for anything, but at this point I love playing in Philadelphia," said Utley, who could veto any deal.

Jeter was warmly greeted everywhere he went this week, and the Yankee captain contributed two hits to the AL All-Star win. Any chance of his final season ending in the playoffs likely depends on the return of rookie ace Masahiro Tanaka, who is out with a partially torn ligament in his right elbow. He is going through a six-week rehab program but season-ending surgery is an option. Michael Pineda also could return from a back injury to New York's battered rotation.

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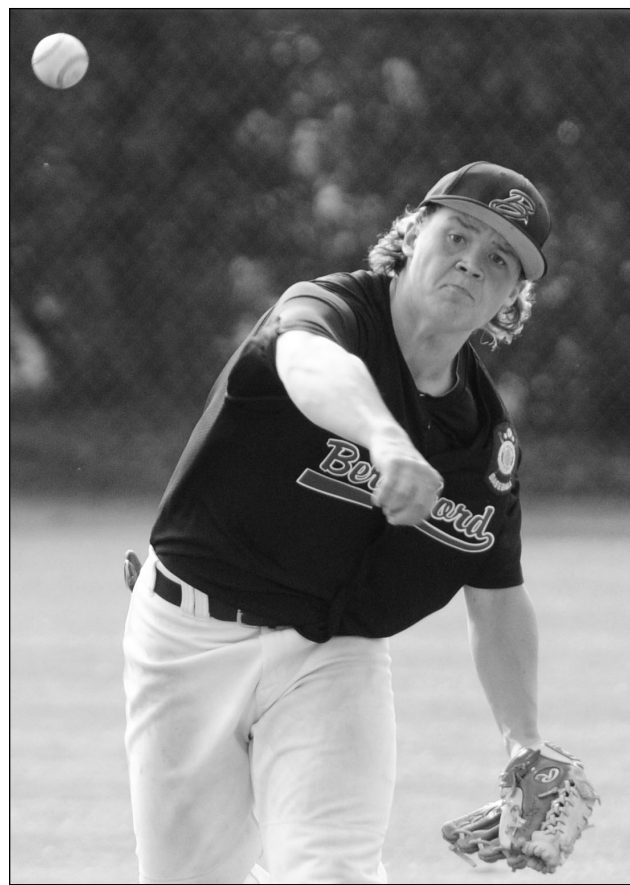


BRIAN MARK PETERSON/
MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE/MCT
Minnesota Twins closer Glen Perkins, left, gets a high-five from catcher Kurt Suzuki after recording the save in a 5-3 win against the National League during the All-Star Game at Target Field in Minneapolis on Tuesday.

Legion Baseball



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D
Elk Point first baseman Carter Herrity, right, takes a pickoff throw as Vermillion's Tanner Anderson lunges back to the base during their matchup in the Region 3B American Legion baseball tournament on Thursday in Elk Point. Vermillion won 12-2.



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D
Beresford's Chris Kroupenske fires to first during the Bombers' matchup with Dakota Valley in the Region 3B American Legion baseball tournament on Thursday in Elk Point. Beresford rallied from a six-run deficit to beat Dakota Valley 10-8.

Vermillion, Beresford Claim First-Day Victories

Amateur

ELK POINT — Vermillion Post 1 pulled away late, scoring nine runs in the final four innings of a 12-2 victory over Elk Point in the Region 3B American Legion Baseball Tournament, which began Thursday at Todd Larson Field in Elk Point.

Jayce Huska had three hits and two RBI, and Jack Brown drove in two runs for Vermillion. Peter Haught walked three times in the victory.

Nate Rausch had two hits for Elk Point.

Jacob Odens struck out six batters over six innings for the win. Jacob Herrity took the loss.

Earlier in the day, Elk Point beat Canton 15-5 to advance. Beresford rallied from six runs down to beat Dakota Valley 10-8 in the other game.

Play today (Friday) begins with Canton against Dakota Valley in an elimination game at 1 p.m. Beresford and Vermillion face off at 4 p.m. The winner of the Canton-Dakota Valley game faces Elk Point at 7 p.m.

Crofton 11, Irene 2

IRENE — Rand Thygeson struck out 16 batters and homered as Crofton downed Irene 11-2 in South Central League amateur baseball action on Thursday.

Carl Schieffer had four hits, including a double, and Aaron Losing had three hits, including a double, for Crofton. Joe Wiebelhaus also had three hits in the victory.

Simon Healy doubled and singled for Irene.

Thygeson pitched eight innings, with Alex Mueller throwing the ninth for Crofton. Alex Loes took the loss.

Crofton, 16-1 in the SCL, finishes the regular season at Lesterville on Sunday. Irene, 9-8 in league play, hosts Menno on Sunday.

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Rand Thygeson, Alex Mueller (8) and Carl Schieffer, Alex Loes, Trevor Jacobsen (6) and Sam Parkinson

McIlroy And Woods Deliver At British Open

HOYLAKE, England (AP) — Rory McIlroy had everything go his way Thursday in the British Open.

A lovely summer day in England with abundant sunshine and minimal wind allowed him to attack Royal Liverpool. He made half his six birdies on the par 5s and kept bogeys off his card. And on the day Tiger Woods made a promising return, McIlroy took the lead with a 6-under 66, his best score in nearly two years at a major.

Now if he can only find a way to get to the weekend.

McIlroy either set himself up for a good run at the claret jug or another dose of Friday failures. In what already has been an unusual year for golf, no trend is more mysterious than Boy Wonder going from awesome to awful overnight.

Six times in his last eight tournaments, he has had a nine-hole score of 40 or higher on Friday that has taken him out of the mix.

"It's not like I've shot good scores in first rounds and haven't backed them up before," McIlroy said. "I'm used to doing that. I just haven't done it recently. We'll see what tomorrow brings and what weather it is and try and handle it as best I can.

"Hopefully," he said, "it's

just one of those things and I'm able to turn it around tomorrow."

Woods also would like to keep moving in the right direction. He got off to a troubling start with two quick bogeys, nearly made another one on the fourth hole, and then looked like a 14-time major champion when he ran off five birdies in six holes toward the end of his round for a 69.

Not bad for guy who had back surgery March 31, who started taking full swings only a month ago and who had not played in a major in 11 months.

"It felt good to be back out there competing again," Woods said.

Such pristine weather — how long it lasts is the big unknown — gave just about everyone a chance to score. Matteo Manassero broke par in The Open for the first time since he was a 16-year-old amateur. He began his round by hitting into a pot bunker, blasting out to the fairway and holing out from 160 yards for birdie. He made five birdies on the back nine, three on the par 5s.

That made him low Italian — barely. Francesco Molinari and Edoardo Molinari have games that are nothing alike, though they shot the same score. They were in a large group at 68

along with Jim Furyk, Sergio Garcia, Brooks Koepka, Shane Lowry and Adam Scott.

Scott stands out as the No. 1 player in the world, and because he was the only player in the top 10 who played in the afternoon when the wind made Hoylake tougher. Scott went out in 31 and was slowed only by two bogeys on the back nine.

Even in tame conditions, the British Open can mete out punishment — to players, to spectators and even a golf club.

Phil Mickelson was trying to get back to even par when he hooked his approach to the 18th beyond the out-of-bounds stakes down the right side of the hole and had to scramble for a bogey and a 74. He hasn't broken par at a major since winning at Muirfield last summer.

That still doesn't top the bad day of Ernie Els. His opening tee shot hit a spectator in the face, and the sight of so much blood shook the Big Easy. When he got to the green, he missed a 1-foot putt, and then carelessly tried to back-hand the next one into the hole and missed that one. The triple bogey sent him to a 79.

Henrik Stenson knocked a 30-foot birdie putt off the 12th green and made double bogey,

and then took two hacks out of the shin-high grass left of the 17th fairway. Walking to his next shot, he snapped his gap wedge over his thigh like a baseball player — Bo Jackson comes to mind — who had just struck out with the bases loaded.

Through all this activity, two names came to the forefront — McIlroy and Woods, both trying to restore their games from different circumstances.

McIlroy's only victory this year was at the BMW PGA Championship, where he started his week by breaking off his engagement with Caroline Wozniacki. He could have had more chances to win except for that 40 on the front nine at Quail Hollow, the 42 on the front nine at The Players Championship and the 43 on the back nine at the Memorial.

He met with Jack Nicklaus, and the topic of his freaky Fridays came up.

"I didn't mention it to him," McIlroy said. "He mentioned it to me — 'How the hell can you shoot 63 and then 78?' No, I think what we talked about was just holding a round together. And he was never afraid to make a change in the middle of the round ... to get it back on track."

ASG Was Moment To Savor For Perkins

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
AP Sports Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The script for Glen Perkins hasn't always gone so smoothly. Sure, there have been hiccups. Life is never perfect.

Rare, though, are the occurrences in sports that come together as marvelously as this for the Minnesota closer: taking the mound for the American League All-Star team and pitching a 1-2-3 ninth inning in front of his roaring, adoring home fans.

When Perkins jogged out of the bullpen on Tuesday night at Target Field, he was taken aback by how loud the crowd became.

"I wasn't fighting back tears, but it was an overwhelming moment to hear," Perkins said. "It was a moment like that where you realize why you play the game and what makes the game so fun, and it's the fans in the stands."

His All-Star status and salary of more than \$4 million this season put him in the societal elite, but in many ways Perkins is a lot alike many of those fans in the stands.

He grew up in a Twin Cities suburb, Stillwater, and lives year-round in Minnesota, a rarity for Twins players. Boating and fishing are two of his favorite pastimes. He's regularly on social media, with a sharp sense of humor and down-to-earth perspective that further endear him to the masses.

Minutes after finishing one of his shakiest saves of the season, at Milwaukee last month, Perkins posted on Twitter: "I just did my best Ron Davis impression," alluding to the Twins closer of the mid-1980s prone to wild pitches and blown leads.

Perkins has proven to be far more effective than Davis, though, putting himself on track to approach Joe Nathan franchise-leading all-time saves total. At age 31, under contract through at least 2017, Perkins isn't going anywhere. The Twins have an option on his deal for 2018 that would be a market bargain at \$6.5 million if he stays healthy and productive.

Perkins was the one who approached the front office during spring training about an extension, willing to take a contract that could've been richer. He started the year as the 17th-highest paid closer in the majors.

That's fine by him. Becoming an All-Star for his hometown Twins has been beyond his grandest goals.

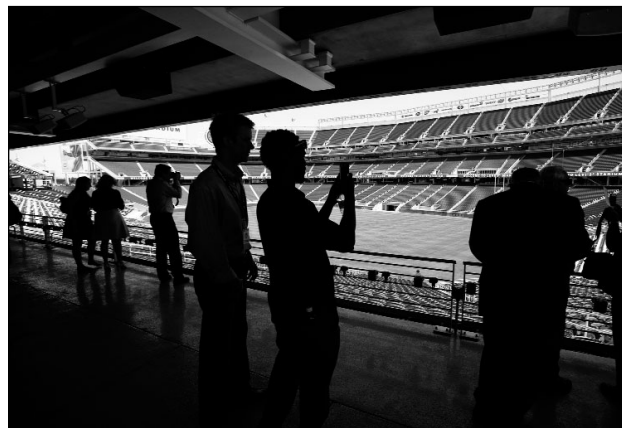
"Hearing how loud the fans were, it makes me want to get to the playoffs," said Perkins, who made one appearance in the 2006 first-round series as a rookie but wasn't on the postseason roster in either 2009 or 2010.

The Twins went 5-2 on their road trip before the All-Star break and have generally been more competent and competitive than their last three teams that each lost 96 games or more.

Still, they're 10 1-2 games out of first place. Their starting pitchers, despite progress by Kyle Gibson and the upgrade with Phil Hughes, have a 4.86 ERA, the third-worst mark in the majors.

Veterans on expiring contracts like Suzuki, left fielder Josh Willingham and starting pitcher Kevin

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KARL MONDON/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP/MCT
Ribbon-cutting ceremony attendees take pictures of the new Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif., on Thursday.

49ers Open Posh, High-Tech Stadium In Santa Clara

BY ANTONIO GONZALEZ
AP Sports Writer

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — San Francisco 49ers CEO Jed York got a little teary on his drive to Levi's Stadium on Thursday. His voice cracked while talking about taking his young son to games at the stadium for years to come.

Others had a different reaction upon walking into the building: Wow!

With confetti streaming down under a blue sky, the 49ers officially opened the \$1.2 billion stadium in Santa

Clara with a ribbon-cutting ceremony complete with all the opulence of their new home.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, 49ers coach Jim Harbaugh, linebacker Patrick Willis and left tackle Joe Staley joined York and others on stage to cut the ribbons.

They used oversized red scissors with gold-colored blades in keeping with team colors. Hard-hat wearing construction workers lined the steps in fluorescent yellow

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