

MLB - 2010 Fantasy Baseball Minnesota Twins Team Preview

Written by Todd Nord

Tuesday, 02 February 2010 14:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 02 February 2010 16:09

We have many great articles planned leading up to the 2010 Fantasy Baseball season including sleepers, busts, rookies, strategy, full player rankings and projections all wrapped up into a nifty draft kit to help you win your league next year. Stay tuned for more, but for now, here's a team preview for you.

Ask a question about your fantasy team in our [FORUM](#) . Leave a comment about this article down below.

2009 RECORD: 87-76, 1st in AL Central, ALDS losers 3-0 (NNY)

The 2010 Twins will play their home games outdoors for the first time since they left Metropolitan Stadium after the 1981 season. The HHH Metrodome had been good to the Twins, as they have finished first in the AL Central division five times in the last eight seasons. One of the major unknowns for the Twins in 2010 is exactly how Target Field will play out. Will it be a hitter's park or a pitchers park? No one will know the answer to that question for quite some time. The field dimensions for Target Field are 339 to left, 377 to the left field power alley, 404 to center, 367 to the right field power alley, and 328 to right. The outfield walls are 8 feet high from the left field foul pole to right center field and 23 feet high from right center field to right field foul pole. Not really all that much different from the Metrodome where it was 339 to left, 408 to center and 327 to right.

Stat table note: The better the ranking number, the better the stat, in all categories. For example, for the SO cat for hitting, a #2 ranking means that the team tallied the second fewest strikeouts. For the BB and SB cats for pitching, the #1 teams allowed the fewest bases on balls and steals.

Hitting	BA	R	HR	BB
Stats	274	817		
172	585			
1021	85			
AL	3			
4				
9				
3				
14				

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14

MLB 3

5

13 12

26

18

Pitching	BAA	ERA	HR	BB
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Stats	272	4.50	185	
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466

1052	107			
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AL	11T			
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11	2			
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1

10	7			
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MLB	24T	23	5	
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2

22

19T

LINE-UP

1. Span, Denard CF
2. Hardy, J.J. SS
3. Mauer, Joe C
4. Morneau, Justin 1B (back, wrist - should be ready for spring training)
5. Cuddyer, Michael RF
6. Kubel, Jason DH
7. Young, Delmon LF
8. Harris, Brendan 3B
9. Punto, Nick 2B (wrist, should be ready for spring training)

When you talk about the Minnesota Twins you start with their home star AL batting champ and AL MVP catcher **Joe Mauer**. Mauer missed the first month of the 2009 season due to a back injury and still hit a remarkable .365-94-28-96. Even if you think this was a career home run season for Mauer, you still have to put him down for a solid .327-93-21-96-5 season in 2010. If your fantasy team wants to have the #1 catcher, this is your man, but you'd better be looking to draft him late in the first or early in the second round or he will be gone. The other half of the M&M boys plays 1B, and **Justin Morneau** is no slouch himself -- I

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see him as one of the top six first basemen in baseball. This might be the year when you can steal Morneau in your draft because a number of fantasy players will be scared off by his back injury in 2009, which limited Justin to 135 games. Morneau is a RBI machine, and you can plan on a .275-94-33-117-0 season. Second base remains a problem for Minnesota, after their 2B of the future

Alexi Casilla

forgot how to hit and lost his job. Unless Casilla suddenly regains his batting form, or the Twins sign either Felipe Lopez or Orlando Hudson from the free agent heap, (don't hold your breath) it looks like Manager Ron Gardenhire will send out one of the favorites,

Nick Punto

to play 2B. If that is the case, Punto will have very little fantasy value, unless your are desperate for SB and Punto might be able to help you there, but you will pay for those stolen bases dearly in all the other hitting categories.

The Twins filled their shortstop hole by trading their crown jewel from the Johan Santana trade -- outfielder Carlos Gomez -- to Milwaukee to acquire **JJ Hardy**. Hardy had a miserable season in 2009 and was actually sent to the minors for a period of time. I see 2010 as a rebound season for Hardy, as he probably will hit second in the Twins line-up and put up numbers like .278-90-22-76-2. The hot corner has not been kind to the Twins for a long time, and it looks no different this year. They still have a shot at signing a free agent like Joe Crede, who played there last year before getting hurt, but if they pass on him, they will probably go with a platoon between

Brendan Harris and

Matt Tolbert

, neither of whom deserves a spot on your fantasy team. The outfield will have

Michael Cuddyer

in right who went on a hitting tear late in the season and ended up with a career high 32 home runs. Although I don't expect Cuddyer to hit that many home runs this season, he should still put up a line of .275-92-25-93-5 -- and don't forget that he also is 1B-eligible, having played 34 games there filling in for Morneau last season.

Center field will be manned by lead-off hitter **Denard Span**, who quietly put up some very good numbers for a lead-off hitter and could be underrated again this year. I think you can expect Span to hit .299-100-8-65-10. Left field will be manned full-time this year by

Delmon Young

, who has been a huge disappointment to the Twins since he was acquired from Tampa Bay two years ago. I am a firm believer that Young is a much better player than what he has shown so far in Minnesota, and I think Gardy did Delmon a huge disservice by platooning him. Don't get me wrong, Young will not suddenly become a star in 2010, but he can put up a serviceable .290-80-10-72-6 line. Delmon needs to show more plate patience -- I don't think anyone likes to swing at the first pitch more than he does. The DH role was filled very nicely last year by part-time outfielder

Jason Kubel

. Kubel can be a streaky hitter, but I look for a .290-78-26-102-0 line this season. The Twins

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recently signed

Jim Thome

, and Gardy is already on the record as saying that he will find "plenty of at bats" for Thome in 2010. I don't see it. Thome will be a pinch hitter plus spell Kubel in the DH role now and then. You should not have Jim Thome on your fantasy team -- if you do, you will be disappointed.

STARTING ROTATION

1. Baker, Scott RHP
2. Slowey, Kevin RHP (wrist, should be ready for spring training)
3. Blackburn, Nick RHP
4. Pavano, Carl RHP
5. Liriano, Francisco LHP
6. Duensing, Brian LHP
7. Perkins, Glen LHP
8. Swarzak, Anthony RHP
9. Manship, Jeff RHP

The Twins thought they were going to start the 2009 season with a solid rotation of Scott Baker, Francisco Liriano, Kevin Slowey, Nick Blackburn, and Glen Perkins. When the smoke cleared after the season they ended they looked back and saw the Baker, Slowey, Perkins, and Liriano all had spent some time on the DL during the season. When you look back on their Central Division title, you have to wonder how they did it with a pitching staff that had the fourth-worst ERA in the league (4.50). Only the Royals, Indians, and Orioles were worse. One of the reason the ERA was so bad is that the Twins pitchers gave up 185 long balls -- only the Oriole pitchers did a worse job of keeping the ball in the park. The saving grace for this pitching staff -- like many other past Twins staffs -- was that they walked fewer batters than any team in the AL -- far and away the best, with only 466 free passes.

In 2010, look for **Scott Baker** to be the staff ace, but not a true #1 pitcher like you might find on other teams. Look for Baker to put up number like 15-4.41-1.20-169.

Slowey

should come back strong and finish 14-4.41-1.24-138 and challenge Baker for the #1 starter role.

Pavano

will try to avoid the DL and put up number of 13-4.90-1.36-144.

Blackburn

, the real work-horse of the staff, will put up a 12-4.10-1.36-95 line. The final spot in the starting rotation is up for grabs. The Twins hope that

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Francisco Liriano

can bounce back and be the pitcher he once was, and the reports from winter ball have been very good.

Glen Perkins

has a shot, but I see him getting traded before spring training is over, because he and the Twins are just not seeing eye to eye. Maybe it has something to do with Perkins complaints of injuries each time he takes a pounding on the mound.

Anthony Swarzak

is a possibility, but in the 12 games he started last year, he had an ERA of 6.25.

Brian Duensing

has a chance -- he was 5-2 with 3.64 ERA in 9 starts last season. Then again,

Jarrold Washburn

still has the Twins high on his wish list, and the Twins for some reason have always liked him and have tried to acquire him in the past. So the Twins have lots of options to choose from... they would just like to see someone really take that step forward in spring training and grab hold of the job.

BULLPEN

1. Nathan, Joe RHP
2. Guerrier, Matt RHP
3. Neshek, Pat RHP (elbow, should be ready for spring training)
4. Mijares, Jose LHP
5. Rauch, Jon RHP
6. Crain, Jesse RHP
7. Condrey, Clay RHP

The Twins relief staff is led by closer **Joe Nathan**, who I think is one of the best closers in the game. My cheat sheet for closers has Nathan down for 41 saves with an ERA of 1.96 and a WHIP of 0.97. If you want this stud closer on your team, you had better pick him early. Looking for a back-up closer on this team?

Jon Rauch

, who has closed in the past for the Nats, is your man, but he will not get many save opportunities for the 2010 Twins unless something really unexpected and bad happens to Nathan. The Twins best set-up pitchers should be

Matt Guerrier

and

Pat Neshek

(assuming he comes back from Tommy John after sitting out all of 2009 and part of 2008).

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In writing this article, Todd was assisted by JJ Swol, who runs a great [Twins Trivia](#) website.

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