

2004 OPENING DAY

TWINS
7

CLEVELAND
4

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StarTribune Tuesday, April 6 • Section C • www.startribune.com/twins

RHBGV
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Exuberant Twins players waited impatiently at home plate for Shannon Stewart to circle the bases and score after he hit the winning three-run homer in the 11th inning. AP/WideWorld/Star Tribune

WELCOME HOME

Stewart's three-run blast in 11th inning beats Cleveland

For openers...

The victory: Juan Rincon pitched a scoreless 11th.

The highlight: Shannon Stewart's three-run homer in the 11th.

The nudge: Joe Mauer (below) went 2-for-3 with two runs scored, two walks and a strikeout in his major league debut.

Turn to A1 and C13 for details.

AP/WideWorld/Star Tribune

Up next

Up next: Twins vs. Cleveland 7:10 tonight • Metrodome

Game of the day

Royals @ White Sox 7: Carlos Beltran's two-run home run capped a six-run Kansas City rally and lifted the Royals past the Chicago White Sox. **C11**

Star of the day

Bary Bonds: Had a day before a National League MVP; he went 5-for-3 with a home run, two runs scored, three RBIs and a walk in San Francisco's 5-4 victory against Houston. **C11**

By Jim Souhan
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Once upon a time, a kid from Carlin broke into the big leagues and earned the nickname "The Ignitor." Monday night, fellow Carlin star Joe Mauer paid homage to that kid, whose name was Paul Molitor.

Not so long ago, a newcomer to the Twins lineup ignited one of the more remarkable turnarounds in recent baseball history. Monday night, Shannon Stewart repeated his MVP-caliber 2003 season.

On opening night at the Metrodome, he ran 49,264 fans. Mauer started the Twins comeback from a first-run deficit, and Stewart finished it.

Stewart's three-run homer in the bottom of the 11th gave the Twins a 7-4 victory, scoring Nick Punto from third and Mauer from second.

A year ago, Mauer was playing in Class A Fort Myers, and Stewart was playing in Toronto.

Who could have known that on April 5, 2004, they would meet at the Metrodome's home plate?

"It's amazing when a 20-year-old kid like Mauer walks to the plate, and you expect big things," first baseman Doug Mientkiewicz said. "And with Shannon, honestly, I'm surprised when he doesn't come through."

For all of these changes this winter, the Twins have only two relatively new faces in their everyday lineup — Mauer and Stewart.

"It was their night," said center fielder Tullie Hansen.

But not until the eighth inning. For the first seven innings, the night belonged to Cleveland ace left-hander C.C. Sabathia, who seemed to be suggesting that one of those Cs stood for "Cy Young."

Mientkiewicz said, "You could be looking at the next Cy Young winner."

TWINS continues on C13

Patrick Reusse
columnist

Slow turf, slow start forgotten after late rally

When last spotted at the Metrodome, the Twins were scoring once against left-handers David Wells and Galen Gagne and being finished off in a four-game division series by the New York Yankees.

On Monday night, the Twins opened their 61st season, and the announced crowd of 49,264 was able to share in the discovery the players had made during a Sunday workout.

This new turf looks better, there are no dangerous gaps at the seams, and the baseball goes through it with all the ease of a Ty-Lost stick in U.S. Open rough.

Clark Griffith, the man who loves baseball, stepped by the press box early in Monday's game to make this observation: "The Twins had been playing on the Bonerville Salt Flats. Now they are playing in the middle of the Everglades."

The claim with this PiedTurf is that it will speed up play, meaning it should have its proper rap about the time Randy Stiles had his reunion with Derek Green on Aug. 14.

REUSSE continues on C12

— Shannon Stewart got one home run, got past his glove, but he never then made up for that with a three-run shot in the 11th.

Shannon Stewart watched his game-winning three-run homer sail into the left field seats Monday night at the Metrodome. Chris Szewczyk/Star Tribune

SPORTS • Connecticut captures NCAA men's basketball championship • INSIDE, C