

Twins Continued from page 1A

Reaction from the players was mixed. Pitcher Ken Schrom, who started last night's game against Texas, said, "I thought he (Gardner) handled the club well at times. Maybe he didn't grow the same way we did. Who knows."

Pitcher Frank Viola said: "All I'm going to have is respect for the man. He stuck with me, gave me the ball every five days and let me learn. It's tough to lose somebody like that."

Some, such as outfielder Mickey Hatcher, said he felt a change would be better for some of the younger players.

Twins president Howard Fox started the firing-and-hiring process Wednesday when he contacted Baltimore general manager Hank Peters. The Orioles recently replaced Joe Altobelli with former manager Earl Weaver and Fox wanted to know

about the other candidates on Peters' list.

"Everything he told me about Ray was very complimentary," Fox said. "I said, 'Can I talk with him?' and he said that he didn't want to lose a pitching coach but he wouldn't stand in our way."

Fox said he made the decision to fire Gardner about 10:30 a.m. yesterday and went to Gardner's motel in Roseville to deliver the news.

Gardner's downfall, as much as anything else, was his unwillingness to motivate and communicate with his players. Throughout his tenure, Gardner said that players should be able to do those things themselves.

The Twins will offer Gardner a scouting opportunity in New England.