

Game with Twins makes Perry feel like a child at Christmas

By Howard Sinker
Staff Writer

Portland, Ore.
He wore No. 30 and tried to fit in with the guys in the Twins dugout. But Jeff Perry quickly figured it was little use trying to act like this was just another night at the ballpark.

Perry, 24, was brought in from Class A Visalia to be the second Twins pitcher Thursday night. Les Straker started the game because it was his turn in the five-man rotation and manager Tom Kelly wasn't keen on using any of his other pitchers.

"I feel like a kid at Christmas," said Perry, pinching his uniform leg for effect. "They told me at the end of spring training that I was going to be pitching this game. It's pretty exciting, the first time I get to wear one of these jerseys."

Perry was St. Louis' No. 1 draft choice in January 1983, but was released by the Cardinals last year. The Twins signed him in July and he went 7-2 with a 3.25 ERA for Visalia.

Jim Rantz, the Twins minor league director, said yesterday's thrill was intended to make up for Perry not getting a promotion to Class AA Orlando. The Twins had other prospects whose progress was accelerated, and Perry was left behind.

"I'm really not thinking of this as my big chance," Perry said, "because even if I struck everyone out here I'd be going back to Visalia. But maybe I'll stick in the back of somebody's mind."

Perry succeeded in making an impression, and in getting the victory. In four innings, he allowed two hits, struck out four and walked none.

The Twins rallied with five runs in the eighth to beat Portland 8-7. The winning rally included an RBI single by Mark Salas, a bases-loaded double by Tom Brunansky good for two runs and a two-RBI single by Mark Davidson. Danny Clay, the third Portland pitcher, allowed the runs.

The Beavers had taken a 7-3 lead during the five innings worked by Straker. The right-hander allowed 13 hits and two walks. Gene Larkin had the hottest bat, with three singles and a double. Several other Beavers had

Twins notes

Gary Gaetti homered for the Twins in the fourth inning and gave the Twins dugout a brief scare when he slipped at the plate on his return. Greg Gagne was treated with ice after fouling a pitch off his left instep. A light rain fell for parts of the evening.

The Twins-Portland exhibition drew 7,200 people to 27,000-seat Civic Stadium. The Beavers haven't been drawing well this season. They drew less than 1,500 on Opening Night and haven't reached 1,000 since.

The exhibition was supposed to help, and the Twins agreeing to come here was a big reason owner Joe Buzas affiliated with them instead of the Chicago White Sox.

"I need this because there's a carry-over effect for the rest of the season," Buzas said. "We'll start drawing when school is out. That's when we have a lot of our promotions scheduled."

It would probably help fan support if the Beavers win more often. Their 2-5 record is worst in the Pacific Coast League's Northern Division. A 6.41 ERA is the main reason.

The Twins are trying to help, having signed Jeff Bittinger to a minor league contract. Bittinger was 13-8 for the Beavers and signed as a minor league free agent with Atlanta. He was released earlier this month.

Alvaro Espinoza is the leading Portland hitter so far with a .455 average (10 for 22). He has no RBI. Chris Pittaro is at .444 with five doubles and a triple among his 12 hits.

Portland starter Allan Anderson, who allowed one run on three hits in three innings, was making his first appearance since spring training. He's been bothered by the back injury he suffered last month.

"He's been hurting and we haven't wanted to do anything to rush him," said manager Charlie Manuel. "We want him to be completely well, but I also need him."

Gaetti, aided by a short left field fence, won a pregame home run contest with six homers in 15 swings. Other participants included Manuel, Kirby Puckett and Twins coach Tony Oliva. ... Portland outfielder Alex Ariare suited up with the Twins last night and replaced Puckett midway through the game. Coach Rick Steblinski did the pitching and plunked Gaetti in the hip. Gaetti feigned a charge toward the mound.

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