

TWINS PREVIEW WEEK

Can Twins pitch apace?

By MARYJO WEBSTER, JIM FOSTER and STEVE ZIMMERMAN • Star Tribune staff

The Twins will need better pitching, especially from their relievers, in order to compete this season. That's not the only challenge, though. They have to get better and faster, all at once.

We know the pitch clock will speed up games and most pitchers. How will these pitchers perform when they're required to work faster? How will their effectiveness change as they do? Will faster pitching wear down frequently used arms? Twins fans will be carrying these questions into Opening Day on Thursday and beyond. The bullpen will be watched closely. The Twins were third in the majors last season in innings pitched by relievers, and fourth in pitches thrown.

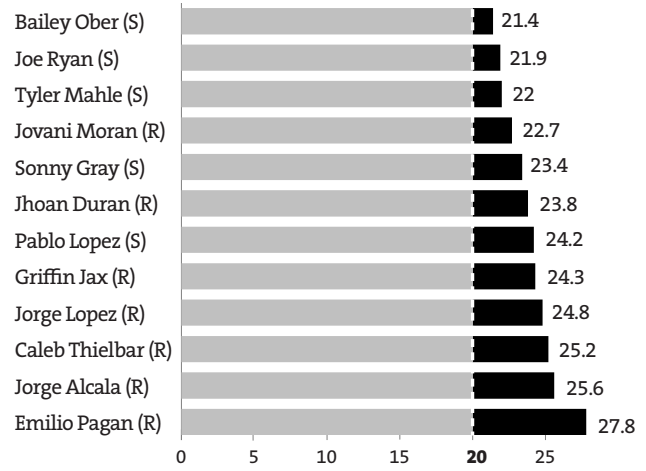
Four of the five slowest Twins pitchers were relievers, with Emilio Pagan clocking in at 27.8 seconds between pitches. Now they will have 15 seconds if the bases are empty and 20 seconds with runners on. These new rules will hasten Twins relievers who were relied on heavily last season with 549 appearances and charged with the second-most relief losses (35) among AL teams. Better *and* faster? We'll soon see.

TWINS PITCHERS NEED TO HURRY UP

Most of the Twins' pitching roster this season will need to speed up their pace in order to meet the new rules that limit time between pitches.

Average pace: seconds between pitches, 2022

S - Starter R - Reliever



*Data for Kenta Maeda, who did not pitch in 2022, is not available.
Source: FanGraphs

TWINS BULLPEN + PITCH CLOCK: THREE AREAS OF CONCERN

1. BURDEN

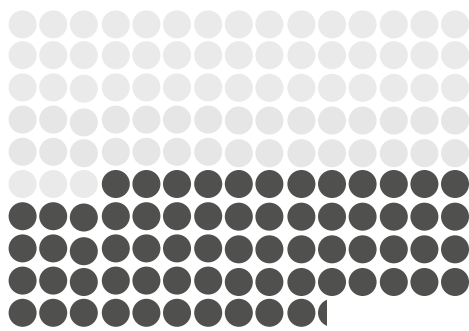
The accelerated pace a pitch clock brings for pitchers could have a negative impact on the Twins bullpen, a unit that was relied on heavily last season. Twins starters went five or fewer innings 110 times last season — the worst total in MLB — which meant the bullpen was asked to come in early and often. Here's where the Twins relievers and starters ranked in usage in 2022:

654 1/3

Innings pitched by Twins relievers last season
MLB rank: Third-most among 30 teams

78.0

Pitches thrown by Twins starters per game
MLB rank: 29th



67.2

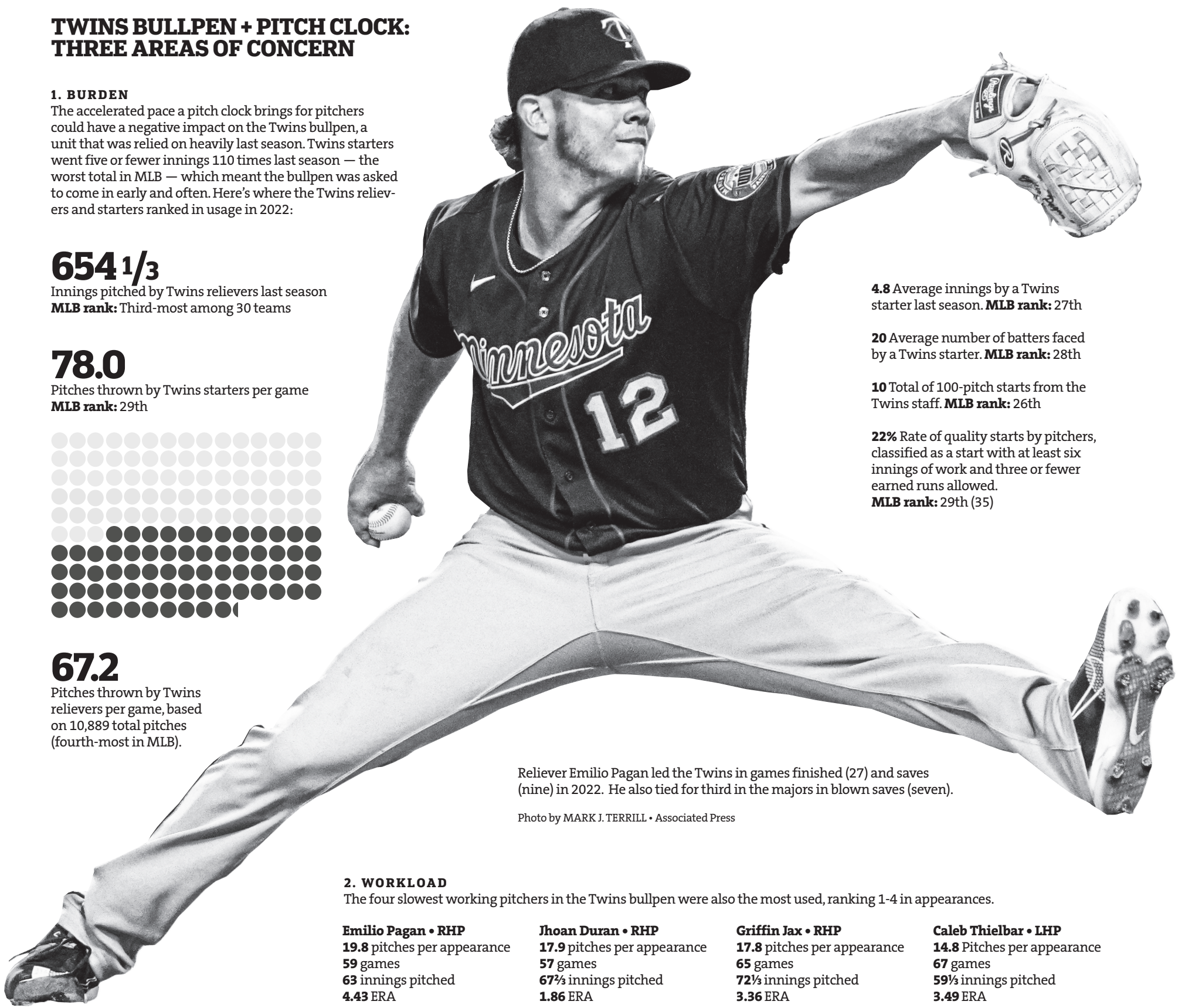
Pitches thrown by Twins relievers per game, based on 10,889 total pitches (fourth-most in MLB).

4.8 Average innings by a Twins starter last season. **MLB rank:** 27th

20 Average number of batters faced by a Twins starter. **MLB rank:** 28th

10 Total of 100-pitch starts from the Twins staff. **MLB rank:** 26th

22% Rate of quality starts by pitchers, classified as a start with at least six innings of work and three or fewer earned runs allowed.
MLB rank: 29th (35)



Reliever Emilio Pagan led the Twins in games finished (27) and saves (nine) in 2022. He also tied for third in the majors in blown saves (seven).

Photo by MARK J. TERRILL • Associated Press

2. WORKLOAD

The four slowest working pitchers in the Twins bullpen were also the most used, ranking 1-4 in appearances.

Emilio Pagan • RHP

19.8 pitches per appearance
59 games
63 innings pitched
4.43 ERA

Jhoan Duran • RHP

17.9 pitches per appearance
57 games
67 2/3 innings pitched
1.86 ERA

Griffin Jax • RHP

17.8 pitches per appearance
65 games
72 1/2 innings pitched
3.36 ERA

Caleb Thielbar • LHP

14.8 Pitches per appearance
67 games
59 1/2 innings pitched
3.49 ERA

3. EFFECTIVENESS

While the Twins relievers were pressed into work with a lead 272 times last season (sixth-most in MLB), it often did not lead to saves. Instead they finished with 35 bullpen losses (25th).

Save conversion rate: 51%



30th

Saves converted: 28 (out of 55 opportunities)



Runners stranded: 72.7%



27th

Inherited runners scored: 29%

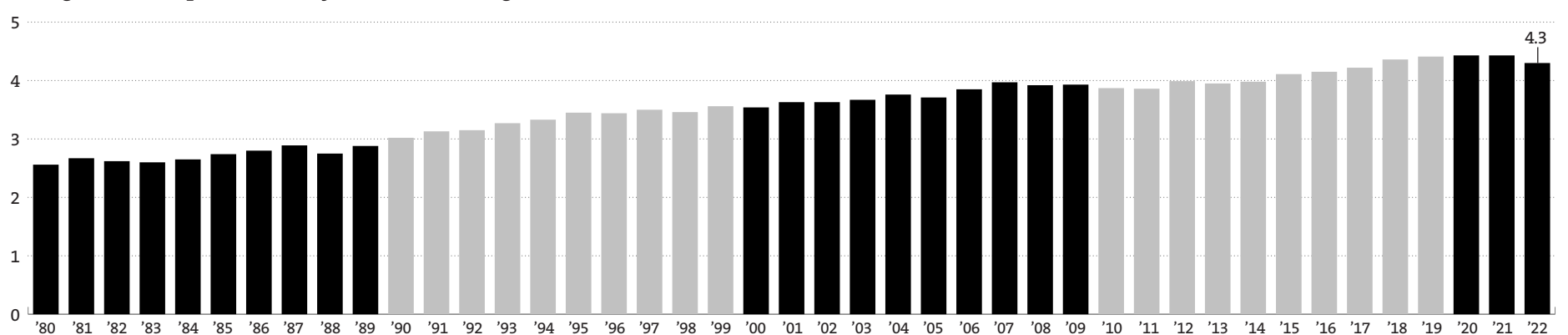


22nd

MORE AND MORE PITCHING CHANGES

The average number of pitchers used by a team in a major league game rose from 2.6 in 1980 to 4.3 last season. The new pitch clock that limits rest time might cause this to increase even more this season.

Average number of pitchers used by a team in an MLB game



Source: Baseball-Reference.com

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