

GM's top electric car exec quits



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SPORTS

The Detroit News Wednesday, September 30, 2009 | Section B



Players don't have time for sightseeing
RED WINGS, 2B

GAME 1: TWINS 3, TIGERS 2 (10 INNINGS) | GAME 2: TIGERS 6, TWINS 5

Justin the nick of time



Robin Buckson/The Detroit News

Tigers ace Justin Verlander gave up four runs on eight hits in eight innings to improve to 18-9. He also struck out eight and walked none.

Opening-game defeat could yet burn Detroit

Detroit

What the Tigers, Minnesota Twins, and anyone else on hand for a 10-hour day and night of marathon baseball at Comerica Park might have taken from Tuesday's doubleheader split (Twins 3, Tigers 2 in 10 innings, followed by a 6-5 Tigers triumph):



LYNN HENNING

The Tigers could yet be haunted by Tuesday's afternoon loss: The

Twins victory in the opener was crushing from Detroit's perspective because it was a rare game served by the Twins to the Tigers on a platter. And the Tigers promptly blew it.

Twins starter Nick Blackburn was all over the place early when the Tigers had runners galore. They got one run. Meanwhile, Rick Porcello was throwing a gem of a game for the Tigers. It was Detroit's game on two fronts and instead ended up a Twins victory.

Should the back end of the Tigers' rotation (Eddie Bonine and Nate Robertson) not hold up in tonight's or Thursday's game, that inaugural series defeat could be the one they'll most

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Robin Buckson/The Detroit News

Curtis Granderson misplayed this fly ball to center field in the ninth, allowing the Twins to pull within, 6-5.

More online: Find this poster from Monday's reunion of the 1984 Tigers' title team at edetroitnews.com



With first-place lead down to a game, right-hander's strong effort lifts Tigers

BY TOM GAGE
The Detroit News

Detroit — A horse is a horse — of course, of course.

But Justin Verlander's thoroughbred status has never been more clearly defined than it is right now — after a 129-pitch performance in Tuesday night's 6-5 victory over the Minnesota Twins.

It was a win that, for all anyone knows, could have salvaged the Tigers' season.

No wonder manager Jim Leyland referred to Verlander as a horse at least three times in his postgame interview.

Had they lost the second game after falling short, 3-2, in the opener of the day-night doubleheader, the Tigers no longer would be leading the American League Central by themselves.

They and the Twins would be tied with five games left.

Fans would be worried sick. Marlboro sales, wherever Leyland buys them, would be skyrocketing. Even after the game, Leyland said he smoked one "to slow down my heart beat."

But the two teams aren't tied. Verlander prevailed in a stirring eighth-inning showdown with Michael Cuddyer after being left in the game by Leyland with a one-run lead at the 125-pitch mark.

"He had to be out there," Leyland

Verlander by the numbers

9-2 Verlander's home record this season

9-7 His road record

2.76 His home ERA

4.04 His road ERA

More online: For photo galleries of Tuesday's games and the Tigers Talk fan forum, visit detnews.com/tigers.



Tigers magic number 4

said. "He knew how badly, after the first game, we needed to win," Gerald Laird said.

On the fourth pitch of the at-bat, Cuddyer grounded out to third.

And with the larger cushion that Curtis Granderson's 30th home run provided in the bottom of the eighth, Fernando Rodney closed it out.

But not before a misplay by Granderson in center with two outs in the ninth cut the lead back down to a run.

A misplay with one out to go? You

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Verlander comes through at most crucial time



BOB WOJNOWSKI

This is when seasons are defined and careers are shaped. This is when the best have to deliver, or you've got no shot.

The Tigers were teetering, no doubt about it. And then in the biggest game of the year, their best stepped up and saved the season. Am I being overly dramatic? Not really. Justin Verlander pitched with

Detroit

nasty feistiness Tuesday night, and that's where it started for the Tigers, just a few hours after their toughest loss of the season. Miguel Cabrera and Magglio Ordonez had the big early hits and the Tigers temporarily quelled gigantic pressure with a 6-5 victory over the Twins, after dropping the opener of the doubleheader, 3-2 in 10 innings.

Amid incredible tension on a

riveting day, the Tigers used a reliable baseball formula — trust your stuff and lean on your best.

They're not looking for sudden heroes these days. They're looking for hits and horses. What Verlander did was take the mounting danger and toss it right back on the Twins, who ended the day as it began — two games behind.

What Cabrera did, slugging a

monstrous home run in the second inning, and what Ordonez did, with a two-run double in the third, was relieve the pressure before it became unbearable. And I guarantee, someone will have to do the same tonight and Thursday, because with Eddie Bonine and Nate Robertson starting the final two games of the series for

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Lidstrom now an ambassador

Another day, another honor for **Nicklas Lidstrom**.

After the Wings practiced Tuesday morning in Sweden, Lidstrom was proclaimed Ambassador of Honor by his home county of Dalarna. He was given the honor by Governor **Maria Norrfalk**.

"We can give this honor only once a year and it should be given to somebody who lives abroad; they can be a Swede or from another country," Norrfalk said. "But this person should have a connection with Dalarna and should have a strong feel for our county."

"And we think Nicklas Lidstrom is the very best person that we could give this title to."

Lidstrom was clearly moved by the honor.

Chris McCosky



David Guralnick/The Detroit News

Nicklas Lidstrom was honored by his county.

Wings exhibition on NHL.com

There's good news and bad news to report on the Red Wings TV front.

In the good news department, the Wings exhibition game today against Farjestad BK in Karlstad, Sweden, will be shown live via streaming video by NHL.com. It starts at 1 p.m.

While you will be able to watch the exhibition game, some metro viewers will be shut out of the team's season opening game Friday against St. Louis, which will be played in Stockholm.

The game will be carried by Versus, the official NHL network, which because of a pricing dispute is no longer available on Direct TV and some area cable firms. The game will be available on Comcast, which owns Versus.

The Wings have nine games scheduled on Versus this season.

USC player recovering after throat surgery

USC tailback **Stafon Johnson**

could communicate non-verbally with his family members and teammates on Tuesday morning, less than 24 hours



Johnson

after his bench-pressing accident in the Trojans' weight room. The bar crushed his neck and larynx, which required seven hours of surgery.

Johnson is unlikely to play again for USC.

Contact us

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