

Kernels enjoy 40.5% boost in fans

Written by Jim Ecker

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There's a new love affair blooming on the southwest side of town between the Cedar Rapids Kernels and their growing legions of adoring fans.

The total attendance this season is running 40.5 percent ahead of last year, thanks to the Kernels' new affiliation with the Minnesota Twins, an exciting club and a string of dramatic victories.

Cedar Rapids raised its league-leading record to 29-13 Sunday with an 8-7 victory in the bottom of the ninth over the Kane County Cougars before 2,379 fans who stayed to the very end and cheered every pitch until Dalton Hicks lofted his sacrifice fly to left field to win the game.

The Kernels have drawn 32,410 fans to the ballpark through 19 dates, compared to just 23,073 fans for 19 dates in 2012. That's a healthy 40.5 percent increase and is bringing smiles to everyone, from General Manager Doug Nelson to all the players.

"We came from Beloit last year, so I'm not used to the big crowds. The atmosphere is a lot more electric," said Kernels outfielder J.D. Williams, who led off the ninth inning with a double and scored the winning run. "You can't ask for anything more than that from the community and the people around here.

"It's exciting," he said. "To have the crowd behind you on every pitch, that's just amazing to me."

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