

Kernels make migrant Twins fans happy

Written by S.D. Buhr

Sunday, 09 June 2013 22:07 - Last Updated Monday, 10 June 2013 18:46



After tallying just one run in each of their past two games, the Cedar Rapids Kernels found their offense Sunday in topping the visiting Kane County Cougars, 8-4, before 1,677 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium in a Midwest League ballgame.

That crowd brought the total attendance for the three-day weekend to 10,929 with another game against Kane County on tap for Monday at 12:05 p.m.

A sizable contingent of Twins fans have been making the trip south from across Minnesota to watch the future Twins in Cedar Rapids. Their presence was evident this weekend.

As the minor leagues near the end of the first half of their seasons, more and more of the top prospects are being promoted to the next level and many of the visitors from north country were here to catch Kernels center fielder Byron Buxton before the Twins decide to send him to his next challenge with the Class High-A Fort Myers Miracle.

Mike Waldren of Forest Lake, Minn., was planning a trip to Cedar Rapids later this summer but moved up his plans. Why?

“Short answer, Byron Buxton,” Waldren said.

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But his interest extends beyond just the Kernels' star outfielder.

"Cedar Rapids being the new Twins affiliate, we decided it would be fun to come down and watch some baseball. We go to Twins games all the time and we wanted to see who's coming up through the system, have a fun weekend and come check it out," he said.

Expectations for fans making the five-hour drive from the Twin Cities are high. Are those expectations met when they see the Kernels?

"Very much so, yes," said Rachel Lockwood of Mounds View, Minn. "It's nice to see these guys. I've seen them on Twitter and I wanted to see them in person."

As fans of the Fort Myers Miracle club found out Sunday, any game this time of year can prove to be their final opportunity to see one of the Twins' rising stars. Infield prospects Miguel Sano and Eddie Rosario both reportedly got the word they were being promoted to AA New Britain after the Miracle game on Sunday. Fort Myers outfielder Angel Morales also is being promoted, which could affect the Kernels' roster.

For his part, Buxton contributed to his team's win on Sunday with a double in the fifth inning that drove in Travis Harrison and Michael Quesada. He also walked three times.

The Kernels scored their first four runs in the second inning on the strength of just one hit, a two-RBI double by Quesada. Kane County starting pitcher Dillon Maples struggled with his control, giving up five walks in the frame. It would be Maples' final inning of work.

Hudson Boyd gave up just two runs in his first four innings on the mound for the Kernels, but ran into trouble to start the fifth. He gave up a leadoff single to Cougar center fielder Albert Almora and first baseman Dan Vogelbach followed with his 11th home, which tied the game at 4-4.

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Adam Brett Walker started the Kernels' half of the fifth inning with a double and by the time Quesada and Buxton had added their doubles and J.D. Williams had driven Buxton across the plate with an RBI single, the Kernels had moved in front 8-4.

Steve Gruver relieved Boyd after Vogelbach's home run with no outs in the Cougar fifth and worked four near-spotless innings. The only blemish was an error by Gruver himself when he fielded a bunt by Cougars catcher Wilson Hernandez and threw the ball past Dalton Hicks at first base, allowing Hernandez to reach and advance to second.

After the game, Kernels Manager Jake Mauer was appreciative of Gruver's efforts. "Right now he's our closer (and) our long guy. We use him in so many different ways," said Mauer.

Tyler Jones entered the game to pitch the ninth inning and gave up one hit. He struck out two Cougars to wrap up the win.

KANE COUNTY (4): Rademacher, rf, 5 1 2 0, Almora, cf, 5 1 2 0, Vogelbach, 1b, 3 1 2 2, Candelario, 3b, 3 0 1 1, Shoulders, dh, 4 0 0 0, Contreras, c, 4 0 0 0, Hernandez, ss, 4 1 1 1, Golden, lf, 4 0 0 0, Amaya, 2b, 4 0 0 0. Totals 36 4 8 4.

KERNELS (8): Buxton, cf, 2 1 1 2, Williams, lf, 4 0 2 2, Polanco, ss, 4 0 0 1, Hicks, 1b, 5 0 0 0, Walker, rf, 4 2 2 0, Harrison, 3b, 3 1 1 0, Grimes, dh, 4 1 1 0, Quesada, c, 4 2 2 3, Licon, 2b, 3 1 1 0. Totals 33 8 10 8.

Kane County 100 120 000 - 4 8 0
Kernels 040 040 00x - 8 10 1

Maples, Amlung (3), Fe.Pena (5), Dorris (7) and Contreras. Boyd, Gruver (5), Jones (9) and Quesada. W - Gruver (3-1). L - Fe.Pena (2-1). 2B - Candelario (18), Vogelbach (13), Quesada 2 (5), Walker (14), Buxton (13). HR - Hernandez (2), Vogelbach (11). SB - Almora (2), Williams 2 (11), Walker (5). E - Gruver (1). T - 2:57. A - 1,677.