

Buxton, Kernels wow Twins fans on TV

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 10 June 2013 17:41 -



Byron Buxton sent a greeting card to all the Minnesota Twins fans who were watching the Cedar Rapids Kernels on Fox Sports North Monday afternoon.

So did 6-foot-3 lefty Mason Melotakis.

Buxton went 3-for-4, socked a three-run double and made a sensational diving catch as the Kernels topped Kane County, 6-2, before 3,559 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Melotakis (6-2, 3.24 ERA) tossed seven shutout innings to give the Kernels' over-worked bullpen a good rest coming down the stretch in the first half of the regular season.

Fox Sports North brought its TV cameras and crew to Perfect Game Field for the first time this season to see Buxton and the Kernels, who are the new Class A affiliate of the Twins this year.

Fox Sports North reaches 2.1 million households in Minnesota, the Dakotas, northern Iowa and western Wisconsin, and the Kernels put on a show for the television audience that reportedly included top officials in the Twins organization.

The TV folks grabbed Buxton for a quick interview after the game and asked a few routine questions, but Buxton's actions spoke much louder than his words. "See you soon," he seemingly told Twins fans with his terrific performance.

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Buxton, 19, raised his batting average to .350 with his single, double and triple, but his diving catch on the warning track in deep center field in the third inning was the play that will make the highlight shows. He also made two other running catches Monday to rob hitters of doubles.

"It's unbelievable to see him every day," said Melotakis. "He really came out today and had my back. Three times. Especially that one (in the third inning). That was an incredible catch."

Buxton has walloped a few tape-measure home runs this season, but said he takes more pleasure in making a great catch.

"My pitcher is trying to work hard and get an out and I was just helping him out," he remarked. "The closer I got to it, in my mind I said, 'I'm going to get this.'"

The Kernels (39-23) were clinging to a 1-0 lead in the fifth inning when Buxton strode to the plate with the bases loaded and nobody out. He ripped a pitch off the wall in deep left-center for a double as Tyler Grimes, Michael Quesada and Candido Pimentel scored for a 4-0 advantage.

Buxton later turned a would-be double to right-center into a triple in the seventh inning with his great speed and instincts on the bases.

"That's just him," said Kernels skipper Jake Mauer. "You hate to say you get used to it. That's pretty fun to watch.

"He kind of took over that game. I can't put it any other way. He made beautiful plays in center field."

The Fort Myers Miracle promoted an outfielder to Double-A ball on Sunday, creating speculation the Twins would promote Buxton from Low-A Cedar Rapids to High-A Fort Myers, but the Miracle activated an outfielder off the disabled list and Buxton stayed put with the Kernels.

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Buxton said he hasn't heard anything of substance about being promoted. "Nothing really," he said. "I'm just out there playing ball, having fun with my teammates and I'm trying to bring us a win."

Mauer said nothing is imminent, as far as he knows.

"It's a guessing game, really," he said. "Nothing as of yet. We have no info, no anything.

"It's usually, 'OK, grab this guy, he's flying out at 8 in the morning.' That's usually how it goes."

Adam Brett Walker made a diving catch for the Kernels in right field in the ninth inning and went 2-for-4 with an RBI double.

Melotakis allowed four hits in seven shutout innings. He struck out two batters, walked three and flashed a 93 mph fastball at times.

"The fastball was really good today," he said.

The Kernels needed a quality start and got it, giving Mauer a chance to rest his bullpen. Alex Muren pitched the last two innings and everyone else got the day off.

"I'm really proud of Melotakis today," said Mauer. "We needed that bad. He was excellent today. When he gets into trouble, he finds ways to wiggle out."

The Kernels maintained a two-game lead in the loss column with six games left in the first half of the season.

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Cedar Rapids will begin a three-game series at Quad Cities Tuesday night, then will finish the first half of the regular season at home with a three-game series against Peoria on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

KANE COUNTY (2): Amaya, 2b, 1 0 0 0, Almora, cf, 4 0 1 0, Vogelbach, dh, 3 0 0 1, Candelario, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Shoulders, 1b, 4 1 2 0, Rademacher, rf, 4 0 1 0, Escobar, c, 3 0 0 1, Bote, ss, 4 0 0 0, Zapata, lf, 3 1 2 0. Totals 30 2 6 2.

KERNELS (6): Buxton, cf, 4 1 3 3, Williams, lf, 3 1 0 0, Polanco, ss, 4 0 1 1, Hicks, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Walker, rf, 4 1 2 1, Harrison, 3b, 4 0 1 1, Grimes, c, 3 1 1 0, Quesada, dh, 4 1 1 0, Pimentel, 2b, 3 1 1 0. Totals 33 6 10 6.

Kane County	000 000 011 - 2 6 0
Kernels	000 140 01x - 6 10 1

Johnson, Castillo (5) and Escobar. Melotakis, Muren (8) and Grimes. W - Melotakis (6-2). L - Johnson (4-5). 2B - Almora (7), Shoulders (12), Walker (15), Buxton (14), Harrison (17). 3B - Buxton (8). SB - Pimentel (10), Williams (12), Walker (6). E - Pimentel (12). T - 2:32. A - 3,559.