

Haar's walk-off homer warms up Kernels

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 03 April 2014 22:02 - Last Updated Friday, 04 April 2014 10:44



Bryan Haar gave the Cedar Rapids Kernels a warm, happy feeling on a cold, miserable night at Veterans Memorial Stadium in Cedar Rapids on Thursday.

Haar belted a towering walk-off home run into the fog and mist in the bottom of the 10th inning to give Cedar Rapids a 4-3 victory over Clinton in the season opener before about 50 brave fans who stuck around to the end.

Haar, from San Diego, had never played in rotten conditions like this. "Not this cold," he said in the warm clubhouse.

The air temperature was about 40, but there was a 19 mph wind that blew the mist sideways — from right field to left field — and made it feel like winter.

The Kernels wore their newly issued parkas and huddled around a giant heater in the dugout to try to stay as warm as possible. Several fielders wore special face gear that covered their ears and chins and left only their eyes and nose exposed to the weather.

"It was tough," said Haar. "It was cold."

The Kernels won despite committing five errors, all on errant throws by third baseman Logan Wade and shortstop Engelb Vielma.

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Wade, who is from Australia, and Vielma, who is from Venezuela, are not accustomed to playing in this type of weather, but Kernels Manager Jake Mauer did not give them a free pass.

"You always give the boys the benefit of the doubt," said Mauer, "but that wasn't very pretty. They're going to have to play in cold in the big leagues. If they're uncomfortable, they have to figure out a way to get through it.



"That's about as ugly as it gets," said Mauer. "The pitchers threw the ball very, very well. We put them in jams, they got themselves out of jams. I was very happy with the way the pitchers threw the ball tonight."

Aaron Slegers, a 6-foot-10 right-hander, pitched the first five innings and allowed two runs. Christian Powell, Miguel Sulbaran and Hudson Boyd followed him to the mound. Boyd got the win with two innings of relief.

Haar came to the plate with one out in the bottom of the 10th. He claimed he was not thinking about a game-winning home run.

"I was thinking, 'Get on base, drive the ball up the middle,'" he said. "And then he hung a slider and I hit it. It felt good right off the bat."

Haar hit a majestic shot that disappeared into the fog and mist, well over the left-field fence and into the night. He circled the bases and was mobbed by his teammates at home plate, relieved the miserable night was finally over after 3 hours and 27 minutes.

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Mauer said there was no conversation with the umpires about suspending the game. "No. We were going to play until somebody scored," he said.

Haar was the hero.

"On a night like tonight, it's awfully hard to hit the ball out of the park, with the wind howling like that," said Mauer. "He absolutely crushed that ball. Thank god."

The Kernels and LumberKings are scheduled to play Game 2 of their four-game series Friday night at 6:35.

CLINTON (3): Barbosa, cf, 5 1 1 0, Littlewood, c, 5 0 1 0, Reinheimer, ss, 4 1 2 0, Wilson, rf, 4 0 1 1, O'Neill, lf, 5 0 2 1, DeCarlo, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Zimmerman, 1b, 5 0 1 0, Seager, dh, 3 0 2 0, Miller, pr/dh, 1 0 1 0, Shank, 2b, 4 1 0 0. Totals 40 3 11 2.

KERNELS (4): Granite, cf, 4 0 1 1, Licon, 2b, 3 1 2 0, Larson, rf, 4 1 2 1, Garver, dh, 5 0 0 0, Haar, 1b, 3 1 1 2, Quesada, c, 2 0 0 0, Wade, 3b, 4 0 1 0, Vielma, ss, 4 1 1 0, Pineda, lf, 4 0 0 0. Totals 33 4 8 4.

Clinton 101 000 010 0 - 3 11 0

Kernels 000 200 100 1 - 4 8 5

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Diaz, Huijter (5), Bordonaro (7), Cleto (10) and Littlewood. Slegers, Powell (6), Sulbaran (8), Boyd (9) and Quesada. W - Boyd (1-0). L - Cleto (0-1). 2B - Wilson (1), Licon (1), Larson (2), Wade (1). 3B - Vielma ().

HR - Haar (1). SB - Barbosa 2 (2), Reinheimer (1). E - Wade 3 (3), Vielma (2). A - 1,072.