

Wounded Kernels fall to South Bend

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 16 April 2014 21:09 - Last Updated Thursday, 17 April 2014 10:39



Kernels Manager Jake Mauer has not hung any "Help Wanted" signs in his dugout yet, but he has asked one of his pitchers if he could play the outfield in an emergency.

The injuries are starting to pile up.

Mauer had only one healthy substitute on his bench for most of Wednesday night's 4-2 loss to South Bend before 732 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Chad Christensen, a versatile guy who can play the outfield and infield, has been sidelined the past three days with a sore right elbow. Michael Quesada, the starting catcher Wednesday night, left the ballgame with a swollen wrist on his right hand after being hit by a pitch in the second inning.

That left infielder Tanner Vavra as the only healthy reserve, not counting pitchers. Everyone else was either playing or hurt.

Quesada stayed in the game for an inning after being hit, but he could not grip a bat and had to retire for the night. He'll have an X-Ray Thursday morning on his wrist and right hand.

"The doctor will look at it and let us know by the end of the day," said Quesada. "Right now I guess I could squeeze it a little bit, but it hurts pretty good."

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Christensen, the pride of Cedar Rapids, went 2-for-4 with a triple and an RBI Sunday at Lansing, giving him a six-game hitting streak and a .286 batting average, but his right elbow became sore on the bus ride back home that night and he has not played since.

"I'm just taking a day or two to be safe about it," he said. "We'll do some more work tomorrow with the trainer and see if I'm good to go."

The Kernels (8-5) open a three-game series against West Michigan Thursday night at 6:35.

Cedar Rapids has 13 pitchers and 12 position players on its 25-man roster, but Mauer might have only 10 positions players at his disposal Thursday night if Quesada and Christensen cannot play.

"It was a tough one with 'Q' tonight," the skipper said. "We thought we were out of the woods. That next inning he went out and caught. He came in and tried to swing in the tunnel and couldn't do it.

"We'll see what he looks like tomorrow. Hopefully it's nothing. We're praying it's just a bruise. But he whacked him pretty good. He's pretty stiff right now and not feeling too good."

Quesada was plunked by South Bend right-hander Adam Miller. Miller also got hurt in the game and had to leave with a leg injury after the third inning.

Christensen was hitting well for the Kernels prior to the sore elbow.

"I'm hoping tomorrow he's good to go," said Mauer. "I don't think we could have used him tonight. His elbow is still bothering him."

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Mauer has several infielders who can play in the outfield, if necessary, and he's also asked pitcher Christian Powell if he could play the outfield in a pinch. "He said, 'I can handle it,'" Mauer reported.

It was a fairly quiet night at the ballpark, with a small gathering of fans and a light seven-hit attack by the Kernels.

"We just didn't put many good offensive at-bats together," said Mauer. "We took a bunch of called thirds (strikes). That's disappointing."

Ethan Mildren made his first start on the mound for the Kernels. He allowed six hits and two runs in five innings. He struck out five batters and did not walk anyone.

Andrew Velazquez and Stryker Trahan hit home runs for South Bend (6-7).

SOUTH BEND (4): Velazquez, ss, 5 1 1 1, Westbrook, 2b, 5 1 1 0, Trahan, lf, 4 2 2 2, Palka, dh, 5 0 2 1, Roberts, 1b, 4 0 1 0, Queliz, c, 4 0 2 0, Esquerra, rf, 4 0 1 0, Almadova, cf, 3 0 1 0, Parr, 3b, 4 0 0 0. Totals 38 4 11 4.

KERNELS (2): Kanzler, cf, 5 1 1 1, Wade, 2b, 5 0 1 1, Larson, rf, 4 0 1 0, Garver, dh, 3 0 0 0, Haar, 1b, 4 0 1 0, Quesada, c, 0 0 0 0, Altobelli, c, 2 0 1 0, Licon, 3b, 4 0 1 0, Vielma, ss, 4 1 1 0, Pineda, lf, 3 0 0 0. Totals 34 2 7 2.

South Bend 000 110 200 - 4 11 2
Kernels 000 010 100 - 2 7 1

Miller, Weller (4), Gibson (8), Omahen (9) and Queliz. Mildren, Landa (6), Muren (8) and Quesada, Altobelli (4). W - Weller (1-1). L- Mildren (0-1). S - Omahen (1). 2B - Queliz (2), Trahan (3), Palka (3), Vielma (1), Larson (7). 3B - Kanzler (2). HR - Velazques (1), Trahan (2). SB - Trahan 2 (2). E - Esquerra (1),

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Queliz (1), Vielma (3). T - 2:41. A - 732.