

Kernels make playoffs, want MWL title

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 24 August 2014 16:26 - Last Updated Sunday, 24 August 2014 16:41



DAVENPORT - The Cedar Rapids Kernels appeared dead and buried six weeks ago when they were mired with a 37-51 record and struggling to put nine healthy guys on the field, but that seems like ancient history now.

The revived Kernels are officially headed to the Midwest League playoffs and nobody can take that away from them.

Cedar Rapids lost to the Quad Cities River Bandits, 8-6, Sunday afternoon on a steamy day in Davenport before 3,598 fans at Modern Woodmen Park, but it did not really matter in the bigger scheme of things.

The Kernels own a nine-game lead over Peoria now with only eight games left in the regular season, so they've clinched the No.2 seed for the second half of the campaign and are in great shape for claiming the No.1 seed in a few days.

"That's good news. Very good," said Kernels first baseman Chad Christensen, who had two doubles and four RBIs Sunday. "We'd like to get that No.1 seed and have a strong finish here and have some good momentum going into the playoffs."

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The Kernels are chasing Kane County for first place in the Western Division for the second half of the campaign and trail by just a single game, but that's merely symbolic. Kane County clinched a playoff spot by finishing in first place in the first half of the season, so the Kernels - currently in second place - simply have to finish ahead of Wisconsin to get the No.1 seed.

The Kernels have a comfortable lead over Wisconsin for that No.1 spot and it appears highly likely that Cedar Rapids will meet Burlington in the first round of the playoffs, beginning Sept. 3 with a home game at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

The Kernels have won 33 of their last 44 games - a .750 clip - to dig themselves out of a deep hole and make the playoffs for the second straight year as members of the Minnesota Twins organization. The Kernels lost in the first round last year and are hoping for better success this time.

"We don't want to just make the playoffs, we want to win the title," said Manager Jake Mauer. "Those kids have been battling their rear ends off. They've been competing, and that's what it's about."



These Kernels have been through a lot this season, but they managed to persevere.

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"It feels good," said outfielder J.D. Williams, who went 3-for-3 Sunday. "We want to make sure we end the season on a good note so we go into the playoffs rolling. That's always good to go in winning."

The Kernels took a 5-4 lead in the top of the eighth inning Sunday, but the River Bandits scored four times in the bottom of the eighth in a nightmarish frame that included an error, a double when the Kernels right fielder slipped in the grass and a long three-run homer.

"Today was a little disappointing," said Mauer. "We thought we were in control of the game."

The Kernels will play two more games in Davenport on Monday and Tuesday, then return home for a three-game series against Kane County on Wednesday through Friday.

KERNELS (6): Hinojosa, 3b, 4 1 1 0, Vielma, ss, 5 2 1 0, Christensen, 1b, 5 0 2 4, Garver, c, 4 0 0 0, Murphy, cf, 4 1 1 0, Williams, lf, 3 1 3 0, Wade, dh, 4 0 1 1, Larson, rf, 4 1 1 1, Vavra, 2b, 3 0 0 0. Totals 36 6 10 6.

QUAD CITIES (8): Boyd, cf, 4 0 2 1, Fernandez, lf, 2 0 1 0, Bottger, ph/lf, 2 0 1 0, Wik, 2b, 3 1 0 0, McDonald, 1b, 4 1 0 0, Reed, dh, 4 2 2 1, Davis, 3b, 4 1 1 3, Booth, c, 4 0 0 0, Ramsay, rf, 3 1 2 0, Lindauer, ss, 3 2 2 3. Totals 33 8 11 8.

Kernels 003 100 011 - 6 10 1
Quad Cities 000 030 14x - 8 11 1

Batts, Bixler (5), Boyd (8) and Garver. Sims, Rivera (7), Tiburcio (8) and Booth. W - Tiburcio (4-3). L - Boyd (4-4). 2B - Christensen 2 (24),

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Williams (19), Vielma (13), Lindauer (13), Reed (6). HR - Lindauer (5), Davis (4). E - Hinojosa (6), Fernandez (13). T - 2:49. A - 3,598.