

Big holiday crowd sees Kernels sting Bees

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 04 July 2015 19:49 - Last Updated Saturday, 04 July 2015 19:56



Cedar Rapids Kernels pitcher Zach Tillery was a little too busy to soak in the atmosphere and pay much attention to the big holiday crowd at Veterans Memorial Stadium Saturday afternoon.

Tillery just wanted to throw strikes and get outs.

"I was mainly focused on that," he said in the Kernels clubhouse. "I didn't really see the fans."

The fans saw him, however.

Tillery fashioned seven shutout innings Saturday as the Kernels blanked the Burlington Bees, 4-0, before a sellout crowd of 5,645 folks on the Fourth of July.

The stadium has a listed seating capacity of 5,300, but hundreds of fans sat on the grass on the left-field side of the stadium and enjoyed a patriotic holiday at the park.

The Kernels wore special red, white and blue outfits and treated the fans to a good ballgame.

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"You can feel the energy," said Kernels Manager Jake Mauer. "There's an energy here when there's a lot of people here.

"It's always nice to play in front of a full house," he said. "It's a good experience for these guys. As they go up (in the Twins organization) it's going to get bigger and louder."

Tillery, 22, a right-hander from Naples, Fla., pitched seven innings for the first time this season since making the conversion from the bullpen to the starting rotation. He said he'll happily fill any role they want.

"I'll go out there and play a position if they want me to," he said. "I don't care. I just want to win."

Tillery had command of all three of his favorite pitches.

"The changeup was good tonight, the cut fastball was real good," he said. "The breaking ball was pretty clutch. I was getting it over for a strike. Everything just worked."

Tillery allowed only five hits, with three strikeouts and one walk. He raised his record to 5-3 and lowered his ERA to 2.31.

"Outstanding," said Mauer. "Threw the ball really good. Got through seven (innings), kind of new territory for him. Kept the ball down, moved it around, his breaking balls were pretty good. Yeah, he was pretty good."

Edgar Corcino had two hits for Cedar Rapids. Tanner English, Alex Real and Zack Larson had RBIs.

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The Kernels (47-33) host the Bees (39-40) Sunday at 2:05 p.m.

The all-time record crowd at Veterans Memorial Stadium was 5,879 on Aug. 13, 2013.

BURLINGTON (0): Yacinich, ss, 4 0 0 0, Arakawa, 2b, 2 0 1 0, Allen, lf, 4 0 1 0, Delgado, rf, 4 0 0 0, Houchins, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Wass, c, 4 0 0 0, Gretzky, dh, 4 0 1 0, Flair, 1b, 3 0 2 0, Salcedo, cf, 4 0 0 0. Totals 33 0 5 0.

KERNEL (4): English, cf, 3 0 1 1, Gordon, ss, 4 1 1 0, Corcino, rf, 4 1 2 0, Real, dh, 3 0 0 1, Larson, lf, 4 0 1 1, Doe, 1b, 3 0 1 0, White, 3b, 3 1 1 0, Navarroto, c, 3 0 0 0, Kelly, 2b, 2 1 1 0. Totals 29 4 8 3.

Burlington 000 000 000 - 0 5 0
Kernels 200 010 10x - 4 8 1

Rhoades, Hoppe (7) and Wass. Tillery, LeBlanc (8) and Navarroto. W - Tillery (5-3). L - Rhoades (4-5). 2B - Allen (2), Corcino (7). 3B - Kelly (4), White (5). E - White (12). T - 2:21. A - 5,645.