

Gibbons pays price for Kernels victory

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 25 July 2015 22:33 - Last Updated Saturday, 25 July 2015 22:47



Cedar Rapids pitcher Sam Gibbons was easy to spot in the Kernels clubhouse after the game Saturday night.

He was the lanky Australian with a red blotch on the upper part of his chest near his heart, thanks to a scary line drive that deflected off his body during the second inning against Beloit.

Gibbons, stunned by the shot, had the presence of mind to chase the ball and get the out at first base before getting a chance to catch his breath.

"I just wanted to get the out, I guess," he said.

Gibbons bravely stayed in the game and pitched six strong innings as the Kernels blanked the Snappers, 3-0, before a fireworks night crowd of 4,118 at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

The Kernels bullpen had a long night Friday when starting pitcher Randy Rosario was knocked out in the first inning of a 13-7 loss. It might have been another long night for the Kernels pitching staff if

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Gibbons had not been able to continue, but he was determined to stick it out.

"Before the game, I knew the team needed me to go deep," he said. "No, I was never thinking about coming out at all."

Beloit first baseman Sandber Pimentel, a strong man at 6-foot-3 and 220 pounds, led off the top of the second inning with a shot up the middle.

Fortunately for Gibbons, the ball deflected off the thumb of his glove before striking him in the chest.

"It was a fastball, up in the zone," said Gibbons. "He hit it pretty well."

The Kernels trainer rushed to make sure Gibbons was OK. Gibbons took a few minutes to recover, then pronounced himself able to continue after throwing a few practice pitches.

"I kind of reacted to knock it down. I wasn't trying to catch it," he said. "I didn't really see it coming too well."

"It caught me off-guard. You never want something like that to come back at you. When it does, you just try to protect your body."

Gibbons looked a little uncomfortable on the mound against the next two batters and his velocity was down a bit.

"Yeah, maybe a little rattled," he said. "But I battled through that inning and got through the next

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couple OK."

Max Kuhn, the batter right after Pimentel in the second inning, hit a hard single up the middle and Gibbons appeared to shy away from the ball as it bounced past him.

"Yeah, I was a little hesitant, I guess. You could definitely say that," he remarked.

Gibbons has been hit by comebackers before, but not like this. "Never above the waist before," he said. "Always in the leg or the foot or something."



Gibbons (4-2, 3.72 ERA) allowed only four hits in six innings, with four strikeouts and four walks. He pitched five shutout innings in his previous start last Saturday against Quad Cities and now has 11 shutout innings in a row.

Gibbons, 21, joined the Kernels May 28 from Extended Spring Training. He signed with the Minnesota Twins as an international free agent on July 2, 2011 from Australia. This is his fourth year in pro baseball and he's become a dependable starter for Cedar Rapids.

"I was pretty shaky at first, coming here and trying to settle in," he said.

The Kernels grabbed a 2-0 lead in the first inning on a triple by Nick Gordon, a walk by Edgar Corcino and RBI singles by Zack Larson and Tyler Kuresa. The Kernels made it 3-0 in the second on a double by Austin Diemer and RBI single by Sean Miller.

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Yorman Landa pitched two shutout innings in the seventh and eighth for the Kernels and twice flashed a 99 mph fastball. Jared Wilson pitched the ninth inning for his second save.

The Kernels (58-42) and Beloit (40-59) meet again Sunday at 2:05 p.m.

BELOIT (0): Bennie, lf, 5 0 2 0, Gilbert, 2b, 4 0 0 0, Munoz, ss, 4 0 0 0, Pimentel, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Kuhn, rf, 2 0 1 0, Brizuela, dh, 3 0 0 0, Raga, c, 3 0 1 0, Higley, cf, 4 0 2 0, Proudfoot, 3b, 3 0 0 0. Totals 32 0 6 0.

KERNELS (3): English, cf, 2 0 0 0, Gordon, ss, 3 1 1 0, Corcino, dh, 3 1 0 0, Larson, lf, 4 0 1 1, Kuresa, 1b, 4 0 2 1, Real, c, 4 0 1 0, Kelly, 3b, 3 0 1 0, Diemer, rf, 4 1 1 0, Miller, 2b, 3 0 1 1. Totals 30 3 8 3.

Beloit 000 000 000 - 0 6 0
Kernels 210 000 00x - 3 8 1

Fillmyer, Stull (4), Navas (7) and Raga. Gibbons, Landa (7), Wilson (9) and Real. W - Gibbons (4-2). L - Fillmeyer (1-10). S - Wilson (2). 2B - Diemer (2), Kelly (10). 3B - Gordon (4). E - Gordon (15). T - 2:57. A - 4,118.