

Kernels pitchers punch out 16 in opener

Written by S.D. Buhr

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The Major League pitching staff of the Minnesota Twins may have more than their fair share of question marks as the 2013 season opens, but on Thursday night a couple of possible answers were on display at Perfect Game Field in Cedar Rapids.

Of course, those answers may take a couple of years to emerge at the Major League level.

Cedar Rapids Kernels pitchers Taylor Rogers and Tyler Jones combined to strike out 13 Beloit Snappers hitters Thursday night, as the Kernels topped Beloit 9-7. Manuel Soliman and Chris Mazza added three more strikeouts while finishing up the final two innings, giving Kernels pitchers a total of 16 strikeouts on the night.

Rogers gave up a three-run home run to Snappers third baseman Renato Nunez to cap off a four-run third inning, but all four runs came across following an error by Kernels shortstop Niko Goodrum, meaning Rogers escaped without being charged with any earned runs.

Rogers used his mid 90s to tally seven strikeouts in his 3 2/3 innings of work, while walking only one Beloit hitter.

With two runners on base and two outs in the fourth inning, Jones relieved Rogers and struck out Snappers right fielder John Wooten to end the threat. Jones would go on to strike out five more Snappers, without allowing a hit in his 3 and 1/3 innings of work.

Jones walked two of the five batters he faced in his final inning. "I got maybe a little tired," Jones conceded after the game.

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Kernels Manager Jake Mauer is going with a six-man rotation to start the season and it appears Jones is set for a relief role, at least to start the year. He has no objection. "Whatever the coaches tell me to do," is fine with Jones. "I just gotta get outs."