

Goodrum delivers for Kernels (and his dad)

Written by Jim Ecker
Friday, 05 April 2013 22:24 -

Niko Goodrum's father, visiting from Georgia, was taking a video of his son's final at-bat at Veterans Memorial Stadium Friday night when he got something a little unexpected.

He got a collector's item.

Goodrum lined a game-winning single with one out in the bottom of the ninth as the Kernels rallied to trim Beloit, 3-2, before 1,026 fans in a Midwest League game.

The Kernels trailed, 2-1, entering the last inning before winning the game in dramatic style.

D.J. Hicks led off with a sharp single and Candido Pimentel, a speedster from the Dominican Republic, came in to run for the 6-foot-5, 252-pound slugger. Adam Walker flied out to right field, but then came the explosion.

Travis Harrison belted a long double to right-center as Pimentel sped around the bases to tie the game, 2-2. Goodrum then lined his single to right and Harrison scored easily when the right fielder bobbled the ball.

"I was thinking, get a pitch I like and drive it," said Goodrum, a 21-year-old shortstop from Jonesboro, Ga. "No matter who's on the mound, we try to be aggressive and hit it hard.

"In the ninth inning, we're coming back."

Byron Buxton, the Kernels' \$6 million center fielder, led off the game with a long home run to left field on a hanging breaking ball, but the Cedar Rapids bats were quiet until they scored those two runs on three hits in the ninth.

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"To come back like that, I assume against their closer, that's pretty good," said Manager Jake Mauer. "We have pretty good team chemistry. Nobody was panicking."

Harrison was 0-for-3 with two strikeouts when he stepped into the batter's box in the ninth inning with a runner on first base, one out and his team trailing by a run.

"I was thinking he would try to come in on me and I could end the game with one pitch," said Harrison. "So I was looking for him to put it there and I couldn't have hit it any better."

Pimentel scored the tying run without a throw, and Harrison scored the winning run without a throw as well. The Beloit right fielder may have had a play at the plate on Harrison, but he juggled the ball in his haste and never made a throw.

Harrison didn't know the ball had popped loose as he rounded third base.

"I knew I had to go," he said. "Great hit by Niko."

Mauer was sending Harrison to the plate, no matter what.

"He got a pretty good jump, I thought, off the ball," the skipper said. "And the right fielder kind of went to his left a little bit.

"I thought, why not take a chance here and make the young man throw the ball and throw him out."

The Kernels raised their record to 2-0 with the victory.

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Hudson Boyd, a million-dollar bonus baby from Florida, pitched the first 4 2/3 innings for the Kernels. He gave up one run and allowed only two hits.

Steve Gruver pitched the next 3 1/3 innings for Cedar Rapids. He allowed only one hit and was touched for an unearned run in the eighth inning as Beloit took a 2-1 lead.

Brett Lee, who is scheduled to be the Kernels' sixth starter in a six-man rotation, struck out the side in the top of the ninth and got the victory when Cedar Rapids rallied in the home half.

The three Cedar Rapids pitchers allowed only three hits all night.

Buxton, a 19-year-old center fielder from Georgia, displayed the power to hit a 400-foot homer and the speed to beat out an infield single Friday night.

"He's a very talented individual. There's no doubt about it," said Mauer.

"He got a hanging breaking ball that first at-bat and he unloaded on it. That was a big-time swing."

Cedar Rapids and Beloit are scheduled to meet Saturday at 2:05 p.m. and again Sunday at 2:05 p.m.

KERNEL NOTE: Infielder Drew Leachman jammed his shoulder during Thursday night's 9-7 victory over Beloit and was placed on the seven-day disabled list Friday. Mauer said a replacement player for the 25-man roster could arrive this weekend.

BELOIT (2): Shipman, lf/cf, 3 1 1 1, Bostick, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Wooten, rf, 3 0 0 0, Olson, 1b, 4 0 1 1, Maxwell, dh, 3 1 1 0, Nunez, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Pohl, c, 4 0 0 0, Roberts, ss, 3 0 0 0, Vertigan, cf, 2 0 0

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0, Mathews, ph/lf, 1 0 0 0, Ynoa, p, 0 0 0 0, Bacus, p, 0 0 0 0, Pudenz, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 30 2 3 2.

KERNELS (3): Buxton, cf, 3 1 2 1, Polanco, 2b, 4 0 0 0, Jimenez, dh, 4 0 0 0, Hicks, 1b, 3 0 1 0, Pimentel, pr, 0 1 0 0, Walker, rf, 4 0 0 0, Harrison, 3b, 4 1 1 1, Goodrum, ss, 4 0 1 1, Grimes, c, 3 0 0 0, Williams, lf, 2 0 1 0, Boyd, p, 0 0 0 0, Gruver, p, 0 0 0 0, Lee, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 31 3 6 3.

Beloit 010 000 010 - 2 3 0
Kernels 100 000 002 - 3 6 1

Ynoa, Bacus (4), Pudenz (9) and Pohl. Boyd, Gruver (5), Lee (9) and Grimes. W - Lee (1-0). L - Pudenz (0-1). 2B - Maxwell (1), Harrison (2). HR - Buxton (1). SB - Wooten (1), Shipman (1), Williams (1), Buxton (2). E - Grimes. A - 1,026. T - 2:33.