

Kernels hurlers no-hit Beloit

Written by S.D. Buhr

Sunday, 07 April 2013 17:39 - Last Updated Sunday, 07 April 2013 18:02

The Cedar Rapids Kernels wrapped up their first homestand of the season in style, no-hitting the visiting Beloit Snappers and winning the final game of the series, 9-1.

Right-handed starting pitcher Tyler Duffey tossed seven perfect innings at the Snappers, striking out seven hitters in the process. Newcomer Josue Montanez relieved Duffey in the eighth inning. While he struggled with his control and gave up a run, he kept the Kernels' no-hitter intact. Right-hander Tim Atherton struck out three batters in the ninth inning to seal the no-hitter.

The Kernels' hitters provided plenty of offensive support for their pitching staff, as well. Cedar Rapids totaled 15 hits, six of them for extra bases.

Center fielder Byron Buxton accounted for four hits, falling just a home run short of hitting for the cycle. Buxton is hitting .563.

First baseman Dalton Hicks added three hits of his own, including a pair of doubles. Hicks, Candido Pimentel and Travis Harrison each tallied a pair of RBI in the game.

Buxton got the Kernels off on the right foot with a leadoff triple to open the game and scored on a ground ball by Pimentel that Snappers third baseman Jake Tanis couldn't come up with cleanly.

Jorge Polanco followed with a single for the Kernels before Hicks drove Pimentel in with a single and Polanco scored on an Adam Walker fielder's choice.

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After two more perfect innings by Duffey, supported by a diving stop by Harrison at third base, Hicks led off the Kernels' third inning with a double to the left-center field wall. Walker moved Hicks to third base with a deep fly to right field and Harrison drove him in with a deep fly to center field, increasing the Kernels' lead to 4-0 after three innings.

In the fourth, the Kernels batted around and, in the process, ended the day of Beloit starting pitcher Vincent Vairo. Catcher Jairo Rodriguez started the inning by lining a single to right field and J.D. Williams followed with a double in the left-center field gap. Hicks and Harrison added doubles of their own before the fourth inning closed with the Kernels leading 8-0.

The Kernels wrapped up their scoring with a run in the seventh inning. Williams drew a one-out walk, advanced to third base on Buxton's double and scored on a sacrifice fly by Pimentel.

All along, Duffey and the Kernels defense kept the Snappers off the bases through seven perfect innings of work. Duffey threw 76 pitches through those seven innings and knew at that point that his day was over, perfect game or no perfect game.

"I knew I had 75 pitches to work with from the get-go. I knew I was getting close," Duffey said.

Montanez arrived in Cedar Rapids the night before and was added to the roster Sunday, replacing the injured Drew Leachman. He relieved Duffey to start the eighth. Montanez walked three of the first four batters he faced and yielded the Snappers' only run on the day on a sacrifice fly by Ryan Matthews.

Atherton slammed the door shut on the Snappers, striking out the side in the ninth inning, while allowing one walk.

Duffey was quick to credit the defense behind him.

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"My defense is the only reason I got where I was," he said. "JD (Williams) made a play down the line. Every game you see like that, there's that one play that makes or breaks it. Harrison got some rockets at third. Niko (Goodrum) made some great plays. All around a good feeling."

Similarly, the hitters were quick to compliment Duffey's performance.

"That is unbelievable," said Hicks. "Obviously incredible pitching by Duffey."

Hicks recalled playing against Duffey in college. Hicks played at Central Florida, Duffey at Rice.

"He had some nasty stuff," Hicks said. "I did not want to hit off that guy once I saw him."

Asked if the defense was feeling any additional pressure as the game went on, Buxton said, "Not really. We just said 'it's not dropping.' "

Manager Jake Mauer had compliments all around after the game.

"It was outstanding," he said. "(Duffey) had real good stuff. Jairo (Rodriguez) did a nice job behind the plate. He called a nice game and kept them off balance all day. We had a couple of nice fielding plays. An excellent performance.

"We got a three run lead right off the gate. That helps," added Mauer. "You can be a little more aggressive. Swung the bats good and kept it going."

Mauer even had compliments for the opponents, "They're a good team over there. They're a talented ball club."

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The Kernels take their 3-1 record on the road Monday, when they face the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers for the first of a three-game series. They follow that with four games in Clinton before returning home on Monday, April 15.

BELOIT (1): Shipman, cf, 4 0 0 0, Bostick, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Olson, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Maxwell, c, 3 1 0 0, Nunez, dh, 2 0 0 0, Tanis, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Roberts, ss, 2 0 0 0, Mathews, rf, 2 0 0 1, Vertigan, lf, 3 0 0 0, Vairo, p, 0 0 0 0, DeYoung, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 26 1 0 1.

CEDAR RAPIDS (9): Buxton, cf, 5 1 4 0, Pimentel, 2b, 4 1 1 2, Polanco, dh, 5 2 1 0, Hicks, 1b, 4 2 3 2, Walker, rf, 4 0 1 1, Harrison, 3b, 4 0 2 2, Goodrum, ss, 4 0 1 0, Rodriguez, c, 4 1 1 0, Williams, lf, 3 2 1 0, Duffey, p, 0 0 0 0, Montanez, p, 0 0 0 0, Atherton, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 37 9 15 7.

Beloit 000 000 010 - 1 0 2

Kernels 301 400 10x - 9 15 0

Vairo, DeYoung (4) and Maxwell. Duffey, Montanez (8), Atherton (9) and Rodriguez. W - Duffey (1-0). L - Vairo (0-1). 2B - Hicks 2 (2), Williams (1), Harrison (3), Buxton (1). 3B - Buxton (1). SF - Mathews, Harrison, Pimentel. E - Tanis, Vairo. T - 2:27. A - 1,057.