

Hicks homer not enough for Kernels

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 08 May 2013 21:42 -

DAVENPORT - Cedar Rapids Kernels first baseman Dalton Hicks may have wounded one of the catfish in the Mississippi River Wednesday night when he launched a mammoth home run against the Quad Cities River Bandits.

It was an impressive shot by the 6-foot-5, 252-pound slugger, but it wasn't enough to save the Kernels in a 4-2 loss before 1,611 fans at Modern Woodmen Park.

Hicks jumped on an inside fastball on a 3-2 count in the sixth inning and launched a moonshot over the right-field wall in Davenport. The ball landed on a bike path and took one high hop into the Mississippi that flows gently by.

If the fish were smart, they ducked for cover.

"I told you before: As long it gets over," said Hicks, unwilling to brag about his latest tape-measure swat. "Whatever that number is in right field (on the wall), that works for me."

Hicks belted a majestic homer in the season opener in Cedar Rapids and also had a long clout in Clinton. He has five homers this season and 26 RBIs.

"When it goes a little bit far," he allowed, "it does feel good."

Kernels Manager Jake Mauer played for Quad Cities in the Midwest League in 2002 as a light-hitting infielder. He didn't hit any homers that year into the Mississippi or anywhere else, but he did see a few homers land in the Big Muddy on the fly.

"Oh, yeah," he said before digging into his post-game meal of Chinese food. "I played here with Garrett Jones. I've seen him do it."

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"He hit three homers in one game, and two of them landed in the river."

Jones is playing with the Pittsburgh Pirates these days and has 92 home runs in his career. Mauer played five years in the minor leagues and never hit a home run.

"If I had hit one, it would have been in the Florida State League," he said. "I hit a three-run homer in the fourth inning, and in the bottom of the fourth it just started to pour."

The game got rained out and the home run did not count.

"I would have had my homer," he said with a grin. "The story of my life."

The Kernels struck out 13 times against five Quad Cities pitchers Wednesday and committed three errors, but they managed to put the tying runs on base with one out in the ninth inning after Tyler Grimes got things started with a double and came around to score to make it 4-2.

The rally ended when Byron Buxton struck out for the second time in the game and Niko Goodrum grounded out.

Mauer was not happy with the overall performance.

"Very flat," he said. "We pitched well enough to win the game. We didn't catch the ball very good."

"No adjustments," he said. "We were looking for a fastball that never came. Obviously they (opponents) are looking at the boxscores a little bit."

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"We'll have a talk about it and see what happens. I don't mind losing ballgames, but it's frustrating when that happens."

Brett Lee (2-2) made a quality start for the Kernels, allowing three runs (two earned) in six innings. Teoscar Hernandez belted a long homer off Lee to left field in the fifth inning.

Cedar Rapids played the game with only 23 players on the active roster, which is two under the limit. In addition, outfielder J.D. Williams has a slight groin injury and spent the game coaching at first base.

Mauer said no immediate help is on the way, so the Kernels will play shorthanded again Thursday night in Game 2 of the three-game series.

"I'd like to get another body, at least, so you can manage the game a little differently," he said.

Hudson Boyd (1-1) is scheduled to pitch for Cedar Rapids Thursday.

KERNELS (2): Buxton, cf, 4 0 1 0, Goodrum, dh, 5 0 0 0, Polanco, ss, 4 0 1 0, Hicks, 1b, 3 1 1 1, Walker, rf, 4 0 0 0, Harrison, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Grimes, c, 4 1 2 0, Jimenez, lf, 3 0 0 0, Pimentel, 2b, 4 0 1 0. Totals 34 2 6 1.

QUAD CITIES (4): Hernandez, cf, 4 1 1 1, Blasik, 2b, 4 1 3 0, Elkins, ss, 4 0 1 1, Wierzbicki, 1b, 2 1 0 0, Dineen, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Pena, c, 4 0 0 0, Ovando, rf, 3 0 0 0, Joyce, dh, 3 0 0 0, Scott, lf, 2 1 0 0. Totals 30 4 5 2.

Kernels 000 001 001 - 2 6 3
Quad Cities 100 011 10x - 4 5 3

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Lee, Muren (7), Hurlbut (8) and Grimes. Holmes, Dimock (5), Jankowski (6), Lambson (8), Neely (9) and Pena. W - Jankowski (1-0). L - Lee (2-2). S - Neely (6). 2B - Grimes (3), Blasik (1). 3B - Pimentel (1). HR - Hicks (5), Hernandez (2). SB - Scott (7). E - Pimentel (2), Lee (1), Harrison (9), Blasik 2 (3), Elkins (1). T - 2:25. A - 1,611.