

## **Quesada eager for 'clean slate' with Kernels**

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 14 May 2013 19:46 -

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New Cedar Rapids Kernels catcher Michael Quesada made a mistake last year when he used a banned substance and paid a steep price with a 50-game suspension.

He takes full responsibility for what happened and is grateful to the Minnesota Twins organization for standing behind him and giving him a second chance.

Quesada, 23, arrived in Cedar Rapids Monday and was placed on the Kernels' 25-man roster for Tuesday night's game against the Burlington Bees at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Quesada said he used a nasal decongestant to treat a cold, not knowing the decongestant contained a substance called methylhexanamine, which has been banned by baseball for being an illegal substance.

"It was something I took when I was sick," he said Tuesday afternoon. "I should have been more cautious and talked to my trainer about it, but I didn't take the right steps. I made a mistake and I had to pay for it."

Quesada said he was not seeking a competitive advantage when he used the nasal decongestant. He was just trying to get over a cold and stay in the lineup, but knows that's not an excuse.

"You have to realize as a man growing up, you're responsible for everything," he said after his initial workout with the Kernels. "Like I said, I should have gone to the trainer. It's my fault."

"You can never be too safe. That's something I had to learn the hard way."

Quesada said he did not know he had used a banned substance and was surprised when he tested positive. "It was a very big surprise to me. And to everyone," he said.

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Quesada was playing for Elizabethton in the Appalachian League when he was suspended. He missed the final 15 games of the 2012 season and originally was told he'd have to serve the rest of his suspension once Elizabethton began the 2013 season in June, but the Twins appealed to the commissioner's office and Quesada was allowed to serve the rest of the suspension once the Kernels began their season in April.

He said the Twins filed the appeal on their own. He said he did not ask them to do it and was not planning to file an appeal of his own. He was delighted to learn the appeal had been successful.

"It was a huge relief to me," he said. "It shows what kind of organization the Twins are."

Quesada said the Twins have treated him very well during the entire process.

"They talked to me about it," he said. "They said they weren't too worried about it. They're treating it like an injury for me."

"I felt relieved that they were giving me a chance to wipe the slate clean. They've been amazing. The organization has been first-class. I can't thank them enough. They've really been on my side through this."

Quesada hit .234 with no homers and 10 RBIs in 18 games for Elizabethton last season in the Short Season Appalachian League, but he looked like a slugger in batting practice Tuesday afternoon when he hit a series of long home runs and hit rockets all over the stadium.

"I was a little pumped up today," he said, smiling. "I'm really excited to be here. It's a fun team to be around. The atmosphere is unreal, from the coaching staff to everyone."

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Quesada knows almost everyone on the Kernels from previous years and said he's comfortable being on the club. He regrets not being here from the start and said serving the 50-game suspension was difficult.

"It was really tough, especially with a team like this. Winning is all they know," he said. "They're such a good team.

"It was really tough, but I'm better for it now."

Quesada, from Folsom, Calif., was selected by the Twins in the 24th round of the 2010 draft. This is his fourth year of professional baseball.

Kernels Manager Jake Mauer has told Quesada he'll be in the starting lineup for one of the games in Wednesday's doubleheader against Burlington.

"It's something I've been looking forward to since last year," he said. "I plan on coming in here and trying to win ballgames. They have a really good thing going."

The Kernels began Tuesday night's game with the best record in the Midwest League.