

## Walker's slam lifts Kernels by Bees

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 14 May 2013 21:13 -

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Adam Brett Walker's father played football in the NFL and his mother was a national high jump champion in college, so the odds were pretty good he'd turn out to be a quality athlete himself.

The Minnesota Twins and Cedar Rapids Kernels are glad he chose baseball.

Walker blasted a grand slam that cleared the batter's eye in center field and traveled about 450 feet Tuesday to help the Kernels trim the Burlington Bees, 5-4, before 2,265 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Walker, a physical specimen at 6-foot-4 and 230 pounds, leads the Midwest League in home runs (10) and RBIs (44) and twice has been the league Player of the Week.

Adam Brett Walker II - his father is the original Adam Brett Walker - was born to be an athlete.

"Both of my parents were athletes, they both coached," he said. "I grew up around sports.

"I played football, basketball and baseball growing up. I loved sports, but baseball was definitely my favorite. As a little kid, it was always the most fun to me. I loved hitting and running around and catching balls.

"I loved the other sports," he said, "but there's just something about baseball that I've always liked."

His father was an NFL replacement player with the Minnesota Vikings in 1987. His mother, Glynis, was a volleyball player and high jumper at Carthage College in Wisconsin.

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A cousin on his father's side, Damion Easley, played Major League baseball for 17 years and helped steer Walker into the game. "It was kind of cool to have him encourage me," he said.

Walker, from Milwaukee, attended Jacksonville University in Florida and was the Atlantic Sun Conference Player of the Year in 2011. The Twins selected him in the third round of the 2012 draft and gave him a \$490,000 bonus to sign on the dotted line.

Walker patrols right field for the Kernels and is hitting .309 for the team with the best record in the Midwest League.

"It's a lot of fun," he said. "We have a lot of great guys. We have a pretty energetic group and we like to have fun.

"We're pretty laid back, but when we get on the field we all love to win, so we try to do whatever it takes to come out on top. That's always fun, to come out with a win."

Walker could be in line for a promotion to the Florida State League this season, especially if he keeps hitting like this.

"Nobody has really said anything," he remarked. "I mean, they said 'Keep going, keep working every day.' You can't control where you're going to be at.

"If I happen to get moved up, that would be awesome. Whatever happens, I'm just trying to keep working on my game.

"Some day I want to be playing in Minnesota," he said. "That's all I'm working for right now."

Lefthander Brett Lee (3-2, 2.27 ERA) pitched seven strong innings for Cedar Rapids. He struck

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out 10 batters, walked only one and was charged with two unearned runs.

The Kernels (25-11) took a 4-0 lead on Walker's tape-measure shot. Burlington (12-21) drew within 4-2 in the top of the seventh, but Byron Buxton made it 5-2 in the bottom of the seventh when Burlington center fielder Chevy Clarke (a former Kernel) misplayed his long fly ball into a four-base error.

The Bees scored twice in the top of the ninth and threatened to score more, but David Hurlbut relieved Manuel Soliman with one out and got of trouble. Hurlbut faced three batters and struck out two of them for his third save.

The Kernels and Bees are scheduled for a doubleheader at Perfect Game Field on Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

BURLINGTON (4): Soto, ss, 5 1 2 2, K.Johnson, rf, 5 0 2 0, S.Johnson, 3b, 5 0 1 0, Hinkle, 1b, 5 0 2 1, Bolaski, dh, 5 0 1 0, Bemboom, c, 4 0 2 0, Clarke, cf, 3 1 0 0, Ray, lf, 4 0 1 0, Toribio, 2b, 3 2 2 1. Totals 39 4 13 4.

KERNELS (5): Buxton, cf, 3 2 0 0, Goodrum, dh, 3 0 1 0, Polanco, ss, 4 1 0 0, Hicks, 1b, 3 1 0 0, Walker, rf, 4 1 1 4, Harrison, 3b, 3 0 1 0, Pimentel, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Arias, c, 3 0 0 0, Williams, lf, 3 0 1 0. Totals 29 5 4 4.

Burlington    000 000 202 - 4 13 1  
Kernels       000 004 10x - 5 4 3

Crowley, Bedrosian (6) and Bemboom. Lee, Soliman (8), Hurlbut (9) and Arias. W - Lee (3-2). L - Crowley (2-1). S - Hurlbut (3). 2B - Ray (7), Goodrum (9). HR - Walker (10). E - Clarke (2), Pimentel (3), Lee (2), Arias (1). T - 2:29. A - 2,265.