

## **Future Kernels will be drafted this week**

Written by S.D. Buhr  
Wednesday, 05 June 2013 09:44 -

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It's an event that will go largely unnoticed by even the most loyal Cedar Rapids Kernels fans, but the 2013 MLB First-Year Player Draft that stretches over three days beginning Thursday evening will likely play a critical role in determining the Kernels' on-field fortunes for at least the next two summers.

While local fans are enjoying a successful season that has the Kernels sitting atop the Midwest League's Western Division standings with less than two weeks to play in the first half of the season, the front office of the parent Minnesota Twins organization is busy finalizing decisions that will determine, in large part, who will wear Kernels uniforms in 2014 and 2015.

If you want a sneak peek at who is likely to play starring roles for the 2014 Cedar Rapids Kernels, here's a suggestion: Pay close attention to who the Twins select with the fourth overall pick in the first round of the draft on Thursday and any college-age players drafted in the following 15 rounds or so.

Through Tuesday, nine of the players who have suited up for the Kernels this season were selected by the Twins in last summer's amateur draft.

The list includes several players most Kernels fan will recognize: Outfielders Byron Buxton and Adam Brett Walker, first baseman Dalton Hicks, and pitchers Jose Berrios, Tyler Duffey, Mason Melotakis, Alex Muren, Taylor Rogers (who started the season with the Kernels before earning a promotion) and infielder Joel Licon, who was added to the Kernels roster earlier this week.

In addition, Christian Powell, reported to be joining the Kernels this week, would be the 10th member of the Twins 2012 draft class to play for Cedar Rapids.

Of that group, only 2012 first-round picks Buxton and Berrios were selected following their senior seasons of high school baseball. The others all had at least some amount of college experience prior to being selected and signed by the Twins.

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Through Tuesday's games, the hitters in that draft class had combined to bat at a .299 clip with 40 doubles, 10 triples and 24 home runs.

The pitchers, through Tuesday, had accumulated a 14-7 won-loss record while posting a combined 3.17 ERA in 173 innings.

The Twins' brass will have a big task trying to replace that kind of productivity from the draft class of 2012.

Of course, most players drafted this week won't wear a Kernels uniform next year. More will likely arrive in Cedar Rapids the following year during the 2015 campaign.

Eleven of this year's Kernels were selected by the Twins in the 2011 draft. That list includes third baseman Travis Harrison, catcher Tyler Grimes and eight pitchers who have toed the rubber at some point during the season as a member of the Kernels' pitching staff.

All together, 20 of the 32 players who have appeared in a Kernels uniform this season were drafted by the Twins in the past two years and several more could arrive in Cedar Rapids this summer as promotions and injuries create roster openings.

Here's something else for Kernels fans to bear in mind: You may not have to wait until 2014 to get a look at some of this year's draft talent.

Under the terms of the current Collective Bargaining Agreement, players with college eligibility remaining must be signed by July 15. That's much earlier than under the agreement in place before last year, which makes protracted contract negotiations almost impossible.

As a result, some of the players selected in this week's draft may have an opportunity to be assigned to Cedar Rapids before the end of this season. Last year, the Twins sent four pitchers from their 2012 draft class to their Midwest League affiliate, the Beloit Snappers, to help the

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Snappers during their playoff run.

The first and second rounds of the 2013 MLB Amateur Draft will be broadcast on the MLB Network and streamed live on MLB.com Thursday evening, beginning at 6 p.m. Rounds 3-10 will be streamed on MLB.com beginning Friday afternoon and rounds 11-40 will be streamed on MLB.com beginning Saturday afternoon.