

Grimes excited about Pelfrey joining Kernels

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 30 June 2013 18:41 -

Tyler Grimes plans to be the first member of the Cedar Rapids Kernels to greet Mike Pelfrey when the Minnesota Twins pitcher arrives at Veterans Memorial Stadium Monday afternoon.

Grimes and Pelfrey both grew up in Wichita, Kan., and both played baseball at Wichita State, although not at the same time. They are friends and golfing buddies, so Grimes is excited to see his buddy pitch for the Kernels on an injury rehab assignment Monday night against Peoria.

"I talked to him last night," Grimes said Sunday after the Kernels beat Peoria, 6-5. "He asked me if I was going to catch him. I told him I don't know. We don't know until Jake puts in the lineup. We'll see what happens."

The answer is probably not. Cedar Rapids Manager Jake Mauer said Sunday that Michael Quesada probably will be the starting catcher with Grimes the likely designated hitter. Grimes and Quesada have been sharing most of the catching duties, with Jhonatan Arias also getting a spot start, but Mauer said it's probably Quesada's turn.

Mauer knows Grimes and Pelfrey are friends, but the skipper has an entire team to run.

"Either way, if I catch or not, it's still going to be good to see him and be in the same dugout with him," said Grimes, who caught Sunday's game. "It should be pretty fun."

Pelfrey, 29, left Wichita State in 2005 after being drafted in the first round (No.9 overall) by the New York Mets and signing for \$4 million. Grimes, who turns 23 Wednesday, left Wichita State in 2011 when he was selected in the fifth round by the Minnesota Twins. They were not contemporaries with the Shockers, but those Wichita State boys stick together.

"The alumni guys, we all go back and work out at Wichita State," said Grimes. "Mike's a great guy. It's good to see somebody from Wichita in the big leagues and having success. I'm excited to see him."

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Pelfrey, a 6-foot-7 right-hander, signed with the Twins in December of 2012 as a free agent. He has a career 50-54 record with a 4.36 ERA in 153 Major League games. Pelfrey is recovering from a back ailment and hopes to be pitching for the Twins again in the near future after throwing five innings (or 75 pitches) for the Kernels.

Grimes got a chance to work out with Pelfrey in Fort Myers, Fla., this year prior to spring training. Grimes was an infielder prior to this season and has made rapid progress as a catcher.

"I showed up a month early for spring training and I got to catch Mike on side-pens and everything like that," he said. "We text message all year. Down in spring training, we golf together."

Pelfrey was scheduled to drive to Cedar Rapids Sunday with his wife and two children. They plan to spend another night in Cedar Rapids on Monday and return to Minnesota on Tuesday.

"I'll get here to the park early on Monday," said Grimes. "He's got a little routine he goes through."

"He's an old man," joked Grimes. "He's got to get in that hot-tub before he does anything."