

New guys help Kernels win in 12th

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 19 April 2014 19:54 -



B.K. Santy and Jason Kanzler were disappointed when they did not make the Kernels' 25-man roster when the season began, but they're in Cedar Rapids now and making up for lost time.

Santy hit a dramatic home run to force extra innings Saturday and Kanzler delivered the game-winning hit in the 12th inning as the Kernels snapped a four-game losing streak with a 7-6 victory over West Michigan before 1,914 happy customers at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Santy, who arrived in Cedar Rapids Friday afternoon, played his first game Saturday and lofted a towering home run to left field with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning to tie the game, 5-5, and give the fans some free baseball.

Kanzler, who joined the club April 9, belted a base hit to left-center to drive in Engelb Vielma with the winning run with one out in the 12th.

Kanzler was mobbed by his teammates near second base after the dramatic victory. He found a pitch to his liking and clobbered it.

"I think everyone just wants to go home and win," he said, explaining his approach. "I was just looking for a pitch to drive and end the game. That's pretty much it."

Kanzler, a center fielder, and Santy, a catcher, were both left behind in extended spring training in Florida when the Kernels departed for Cedar Rapids three weeks ago, but injuries have given them a chance in the Midwest League. Kanzler replaced Zack Granite, who's on the disabled list with a shoulder injury, and Santy replaced Michael Quesada, who's on the DL with a hand injury.

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Nobody likes being left behind when their friends and teammates leave town for the start of the season, especially when they thought they had a chance to make the squad.



"I was hoping to make it. I had a pretty good spring, but there just wasn't enough room," said Santy. "So you try to keep a good attitude and hope something opens up. It did, so now I'm here."

Quesada got hurt Wednesday night when he was hit by a pitch. Santy got a phone call Thursday night, instructing him to head to Iowa.

"They told me, 'You have a flight in the morning, pack your bags.' So it was pretty cool," he said. "I was excited. I wanted to come up here.

"All those guys are good friends of mine and I like playing with them. I was excited to get here and help them out."

Santy, a 30th-round pick in 2012 from the University of Washington, collected the first home run of his pro career as the designated hitter.

"I knew there was a short porch in left and I hit it pretty high, and the wind might have helped it a little bit," he said. "I knew it would either be out (of the park) or caught."

West Michigan took a 6-5 lead in the top of the 10th inning, but the Kernels were rescued again when Mitch Garver delivered a pinch-hit double with two outs in the bottom of the 10th to drive in Kanzler, who had reached on a bunt single.

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Viola walked to start the bottom of the 12th inning, Joel Licon bunted him to second and Kanzler drove him in to end the game.

Kanzler is not sure how close he was to making the original 25-man roster.

"I think anyone would be frustrated, but there's nothing you can do about that," he said. "I just kept playing and waited for my chance. I did what I had to do and I'm here now."

Kernels Manager Jake Mauer is happy Kanzler and Santy are getting a chance to help the team.

"I'm sure there are some guys down in Florida disappointed they didn't make the team. How quickly things change," the skipper noted. "That's how it works sometime. You just give yourself a chance and do what you're supposed to do and good things usually happen to you."

"You tell those boys that didn't make the club, you have to stay ready. Don't get down here and pout and have somebody pass you up when an opportunity comes."

"It's a good lesson to learn. You go down and do your work and do what you're supposed to. Injuries are part of the game, unfortunately. It happens. You get a chance and you have to make the most of it."

The Kernels (9-7) are idle Sunday for Easter and begin a road trip Monday at Peoria.

WEST MICHIGAN (6): Zambrano, 2b, 5 0 1 1, Betancourt, ss, 6 1 2 2, Rhymes, dh, 6 2 4 1, Ficociello, 1b, 6 0 1 0, Verlander, rf, 5 0 1 0, Bernard, cf, 4 1 0 0, Harrison, 3b, 5 0 0 0, Remes, c, 5 1 2 1, Gibson, lf, 3 1 2 0. Totals 45 6 13 5.

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KERNELS (7): Kanzler, cf, 6 1 2 1, Vavra, 2b, 5 1 2 0, Garver, ph, 1 0 1 1, Wade, pr/2b, 0 0 0 0, Christensen, 1b, 5 1 2 0, Haar, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Larson, rf, 5 2 2 1, Santy, dh, 5 1 1 2, Altobelli, c, 6 0 1 0, Vielma, ss, 5 1 2 0, Pineda, lf, 3 0 1 1, Licon, lf, 1 0 0 0. Totals 46 7 14 6.

West Michigan 000 140 000 100 - 6 13 2

Kernels 010 030 001 101 - 7 14 0

Kubitza, Felix (5), Mantiply (9), Robertson (11) and Remes. Jorge, Muren (5), Landa (7), Boyd (8), Peterson (10) and Altobelli. W - Peterson (1-0). L - Robertson (0-1). 2B - Rhymes 2 (3), Gibson (1), Garver (4). HR - Rhymes (2), Remes (1), Betancourt (1), Santy (1). SB - Bernard 2 (4), Christensen (1). E - Harrison (2), Kubitza (1). A - 1,914.