

## Kernels nip Bees, knot series 1-1

Written by S.D. Buhr

Thursday, 04 September 2014 21:48 - Last Updated Thursday, 04 September 2014 22:07

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BURLINGTON - The Cedar Rapids Kernels lived to play another day in the Midwest League playoffs by edging the Burlington Bees, 2-1, Thursday night before 526 fans at Community Field in Burlington.

The best-of-3 series is tied, 1-1, with the decisive third game scheduled for Burlington Friday night.

Logan Wade socked a solo home run in the eighth inning to snap a 1-1 tie and give Cedar Rapids the decisive run.

Burlington put runners on first and third with nobody out in the bottom of the ninth inning, but Cedar Rapids relief ace Jake Reed got a strikeout and 6-4-3 double play to end the game.

Burlington ace Sean Newcomb was the starting pitcher with top-prospect pedigree as the Los Angeles Angels' No.1 pick in this year's draft, but it was Kernels lefty Mat Batts who won the duel and kept his team alive in the postseason.

Batts, a 17th-round selection by Minnesota this season, went 5.2 innings for Cedar Rapids, giving up the Bees' lone run before exiting with two outs in the sixth. He gave up just three hits and a walk, while striking

out three batters.

The plan was to be as efficient as possible with his pitches, Batts said.

“They were swinging early in the count and that helps out,” he said. “We know they’re aggressive, especially on fastballs early in the count so we just try to make sure we throw first-pitch strikes. They rolled over a lot of them and we made some good plays.”

“He threw the ball good,” said Manager Jake Mauer. “Got a couple of big double plays. He just kept pounding and attacking the zone and that’s what we needed.”

Mauer did not get to see the dramatic final inning of the game after being ejected by base umpire Adrian Gonzales in the home half of the eighth inning.

“I heard it. There was a delay on the radio, too. It was kind of stressful,” said Mauer.

Gonzales called Bees batter Bo Way safe at first base on a bunt in the eighth, claiming Kernels first baseman Chad Christensen came off the bag early while catching the throw. Mauer saw the play differently and was ejected while voicing his views to Gonzales.

Mauer was blunt in his assessment of the call while speaking to the media.

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"You guys saw it. It was unbelievable to me and it's been that way all year," he said. "I just don't get it.

"I don't know if the moment got to him, he got too excited or whatever. It was a pretty simple, elementary call, as far as I was concerned. At that point in the game, to impact the game like that, that's just not right."

Things worked out for the Kernels, however, when the Bees' lead runner, Erick Salcedo, was promptly picked off second base by Cedar Rapids relief pitcher Brian Gilbert, who then coaxed a double play ground ball from Kody Eaves to end the Burlington threat.

Newcomb didn't give up a hit to the Kernels in the first three innings, but the heart of the Cedar Rapids batting order - Chad Christensen, Max Murphy and Alex Swim - lined three straight singles to start the fourth inning and give the Kernels a 1-0 lead.

Christensen and Swim, with two hits each, were the only Cedar Rapids hitters with multiple hits.

Newcomb gave up just four hits in five innings while striking out six Kernels hitters. The Kernels fared no better against Newcomb's relief, lefthander Greg Mahle. Mahle gave up just one hit in 2.1 shutout innings for Burlington.

After Mahle exited with one out in the Kernels' eighth, Wade greeted Ben Carlson with a high, deep solo home run to right field, putting the Kernels up 2-1.

Gilbert (1-0) gave the Kernels 2.1 shutout relief innings before Reed came on to close out the game in the ninth. Reed got the save, but not without drama.

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The first two Bees hitters singled off Reed in the ninth, putting runners at the corners with no outs.

Reed struck out Zach Houchins and pinch-hitter Ismael Dionicio hit a sharp ground ball to Kernels shortstop Engelb Vielma, who started a game-ending double play to set up a deciding game 3 of the playoff series.

Stephen Gonsalves will get the start Friday for the Kernels and he's looking forward to the opportunity.

"I'm excited. I'm ready to go," the lefty said. "This is going to be fun, especially with the vibes going after tonight."

Kernels catcher Mitch Garver did not play Thursday after leaving Wednesday's game with concussion symptoms. It's unlikely Garver will return to action for the Kernels as he goes through baseball's mandatory seven-day concussion waiting period.

KERNELS (2): Hinojosa, 3b, 4 0 1 0, Wade, lf, 4 1 1 1, Christensen, 1b, 4 1 2 0, Murphy, cf, 4 0 1 0, Swim, rf, 4 0 2 1, Williams, dh, 4 0 0 0, Vielma, ss, 4 0 0 0, Quesada, c, 4 0 0 0, Walker, 2b, 2 0 0 0. Totals 34 27 2.

BURLINGTON (1): Way, cf, 4 0 1 0, Eaves, 2b, 4 1 1 0, Bayardi, rf, 4 0 2 1, Aguilera, dh, 3 0 1 0, Houchins, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Dalton, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Dionicio, ph, 1 0 0 0, Gretzky, lf, 2 0 0 0, McGee, c, 3 0 0 0, Salcedo, ss, 3 0 2 0. Totals 31 17 1.

Kernels 000 100 010 - 271  
Burlington 000 001 000 - 172

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Batts, Gilbert (6), Reed (9) and Quesada. Newcomb, Mahle (6), Carlson (8) and McGee. W - Gilbert (1-0). L - Carlson (0-1). S - Reed (1). HR - Wade (1). E - Hinojosa (1), Bayardi (1), Houchins (1). SB - Murphy (1), Salcedo (1), Eaves (1), Gretzky (1). T - 2:35. A - 526.