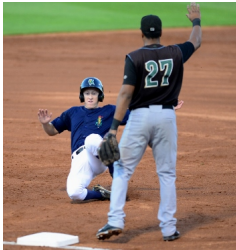


## English helps Kernels in playoff loss

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 06 September 2014 22:37 - Last Updated Saturday, 06 September 2014 22:43

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Tanner English was back home in South Carolina Friday when he got an unexpected phone call from the Minnesota Twins.

A day later, he was the starting center fielder and leadoff hitter for the Cedar Rapids Kernels in their 5-2 loss to Kane County in the semifinals of the Midwest League playoffs at Veterans Memorial Stadium before 973 fans.

English sparkled with his new team with three hits, a triple, an RBI and a run scored. He thought his season was over when Elizabethton lost in the Appalachian League playoffs last week, but the Kernels needed a new player and he was it.

"I got called about 2 o'clock yesterday," he said. "I was going to Subway and they said if Cedar Rapids wins, get on a plane in the morning. So I'm here now."

English had to wait and see how the Kernels did Friday night in the decisive game of their opening-round series against Burlington. When the Kernels won the series, he hopped on planes from Columbia, S.C., to Chicago to Cedar Rapids.

English had returned to South Carolina after the E-Town Twins lost in the playoffs.

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"We were all bummed out about that," said English, an 11th-round pick from the University of South Carolina this year. "It's kind of like I get a new life. So it's pretty cool."

The Kernels dropped their first game in the Midwest League playoffs at home against Burlington before winning Games 2 and 3 on the road to take the series. Now they'll have to do the same thing in the Western Division finals with Games 2 and 3 (if necessary) at Kane County Sunday night and Monday night.

The Kernels will throw another new player onto the field Sunday when right-hander John Curtiss, who also joined the club Saturday, gets the ball as the starting pitcher in an elimination ballgame. Curtiss, a sixth-round pick from the University of Texas this year, also played for Elizabethton this season.

Mauer got his first look at both new players when they arrived at the stadium Saturday.

"It's the first time I ever met them," he said. "I didn't know who was who. I kind of put 2-and-2 together."

English is 5-foot-10 and Curtiss is 6-foot-4, so Mauer figured it out.

Adding two new players for the playoffs is a little strange, but they were needed when catcher Mitch Garver and pitcher Lewis Thorpe were put on the Disabled List.

"It's call to action," said Mauer. "I asked Tanner what he was doing the last three days. He said he was getting ready to go to a football game today."

The Kernels had their chances against Kane County, but a two-run error by second baseman Ryan Walker and missed opportunities on offense cost them dearly. The Kernels out-hit the

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Cougars, 9-5, but it didn't do them any good.

"That's playoffs," said Mauer. "Everything is so important."

Now the Kernels are putting all their hopes on a new pitcher in the biggest game of the year against the best team in the league. Mauer thinks Curtiss will be fine after appearing in big games for the Texas Longhorns.

"I'm not worried about him," the skipper said.

English agreed. "He made some really, really good hitters look silly in Elizabethton," the other new Kernel said.

KANE COUNTY (5): Dunston, lf, 4 1 0 0, Zagunis, rf, 5 1 2 2, Candelario, 3b, 3 0 1 0, Balaguert, dh, 3 0 0 0, Rogers, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Brockmeyer, c, 4 1 1 0, Lockhart, 2b, 3 0 0 1, Penalver, ss, 3 1 1 0, Martin, cf, 2 1 0 0. Totals 30 5 5 3.

KERNELS (2): English, cf, 5 1 3 1, Hinojosa, 3b, 5 0 2 0, Christensen, 1b, 4 0 1 1, Murphy, lf, 4 0 1 0, Swim, rf, 4 0 2 0, Wade, dh, 3 0 0 0, Vielma, ss, 4 0 0 0, Quesada, c, 4 0 0 0, Walker, 2b, 4 1 0 0. Totals 37 2 9 2.

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Kane County 001 000 211 - 5 5 2

Kernels 100 000 100 - 2 9 2

Torrez, Hermans (6), Heesch (7), Carrillo (9) and Brockmeyer. Eades, Bixler (6), Montanez (7), Boyd (9) and Quesada. W - Hermans (1-0). L - Bixler (0-1). S - Carrillo (1). 2B - Murphy (2). 3B - Zagunis (1), Brockmeyer (1), English (1). HR - Zagunis (1). SB - Marin (3). E - Brockmeyer (1), Penalver (1), Hinojosa (2), Walker (2). T - 3:15. A - 973.