

Kernels top Bandits in 13 innings

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 16 May 2015 21:27 -



Trey Vavra gets a little emotional when he talks about his older brother Tanner, who is playing pro baseball in the Florida State League this season despite being blind in his right eye.

Tanner Vavra played for the Cedar Rapids Kernels last year and now Trey has become the leading hitter for the Kernels this season with a lusty .350 average, good for second best in the Midwest League.

Vavra had four hits for the Kernels Saturday night in a 4-3 victory in 13 innings over the Quad Cities River Bandits before 3,070 fans on Fireworks Night at the ballpark.

Max Murphy led off the 13th with a double down the third-base line and scored on a game-winning single to right field by T.J. White.

Vavra nearly won the game for the Kernels with a long blast to left-center in the 12th inning, but the ball was caught on the warning track.

Nonetheless, he played a big part in the victory with his continued good hitting.

"I'm just getting a pitch over the plate I can hit," he said modestly. "I had kind of a rough game that kind of got me back in the groove mentally. It breaks you down and you pull yourself back up. I'm just trying to keep building."

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Vavra struck out five straight times in that "rough game" he was talking about, but otherwise he's been solid for the Kernels all season. He credits his brother for teaching him how to deal with the highs and lows of the game.

"Any baseball thing, I revert back to him. He showed me the way," said Vavra. "He showed me how to prepare. People don't realize how much he's done with me off the field."

Tanner Vavra, 25, has been blind in his right eye since he was a youngster, yet he's beaten the odds to play pro ball.



"Having to play with that, I can't speak enough about my brother," said Trey, 23. "He's been a big influence."

The Vavra brothers were two years apart in high school. They played together briefly on their high school baseball team when Trey was promoted to the varsity as a sophomore and Tanner was a senior, but they spent two years together on the varsity hockey team in high school and spent a lot of time hanging out together as kids.

"When we were little, I'd always tag along with him," said Trey.

Tanner Vavra is struggling with the Fort Myers Miracle in the Florida State League with a .161

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average, but he's always been a good guy to have on the team and a great teammate. With Trey Vavra ripping the cover off the ball, he might get promoted from the Kernels to the Miracle and join his brother in Florida before long.

"He comes to the park with an edge every day," said Trey. "I would love to play with him."

Kernels Manager Jake Mauer thinks there's a good chance Trey Vavra will be promoted at some point this season.

"He can hit. He can flat-out hit. There's no doubt about it," said Mauer. "If he keeps putting up numbers like he's doing, it will be hard to keep him here."

Mauer, always aggressive in the third-base coaching box, waved Murphy to the plate on the sharp single to right field by White in the 13th inning.

The right fielder made a strong one-hop throw to the plate, but the Quad Cities catcher could not hang onto the ball and Murphy slid home with the winning run.

"If they throw him out, they throw him out," said Mauer. "The kid made a good throw. Thank god the catcher couldn't handle it."

Kernels starter Felix Jorge was touched for three runs in 6.1 innings, but only one of the runs was earned. Trevor Hildenberger, Cam Booser and Randy LeBlanc combined for 6.2 innings of shutout ball in relief.

The Kernels (22-13) and River Bandits (28-8) meet again Sunday at 2:05 p.m.

QUAD CITIES (3): Martin, lf, 4 0 0 0, Ritchie, c, 5 0 2 2, Fisher, cf, 6 0 1 0, Hyde, 2b, 4 0 0 0,

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Nottingham, 1b, 6 1 2 0, Tanielu, pr/1b, 0 0 0 0, Bottger, dh, 6 0 1 0, Trompiz, 3b, 6 0 1 1, Boyd, rf, 5 1 0 0, Lindauer, ss, 4 1 2 0. Totals 46 3 9 3.

KERNELS (4): English, cf, 5 1 2 0, Gordon, ss, 5 0 1 0, Vavra, lf, 6 0 4 1, Murphy, dh, 5 1 1 0, Larson, rf, 5 1 1 0, White, 3b, 6 0 2 1, Kuresa, 1b, 5 0 0 0, Silva, c, 5 0 0 1, Kelly, 2b, 5 1 1 0. Totals 47 4 12 3.

Quad Cities 002 000 100 000 0 - 3 9 1

Kernels 101 100 000 000 1 - 4 12 2

Chrismon, Mengden (6), Guduan (10), Mills (13) and Ritchie. Jorge, Hildenberger (7), Booser (10), LeBlanc (12) and Silva. W - LeBlanc (3-0).

L - Mills (0-1). 2B - Ritchie (3), Lindauer (2), Nottingham (5), Fisher (8), Vavra (8), Murphy (7). 3B - Trompiz (2). SB - English (11), Gordon (6). E - Lindauer (6), Jorge (1), Gordon (4). T - 3:41. A - 3,070.