

Kernels enjoy MWL all-star game

Written by S.D. Buhr

Wednesday, 24 June 2015 04:44 -



PEORIA, Ill. - The Midwest League's Eastern Division All-Stars took two hours and 44 minutes to top their Western Division counterparts, 5-0, in Peoria Tuesday night, but any Cedar Rapids fans who made the trip hoping to watch the Kernels' representatives had to be careful with the timing of their trips to the concession stand.

Pitchers Felix Jorge, Jared Wilson, Trevor Hildenberger and Cam Booser spent less than a combined 15 minutes on the mound while throwing a total of 2 1/3 innings for the West.

Jorge needed just 10 pitches to retire all three hitters he faced in a perfect third inning, striking out one. Wilson started the eighth inning and was just as efficient, using just seven pitches to get through his assigned two outs, including a strikeout.

Hildenberger relieved Wilson and used just four pitches to finish the inning with a strikeout of his own. Booser was assigned the first out of the ninth inning, entering with the West trailing 2-0. He walked one and gave up a pair of hits before getting an out on a bouncer back to him on the mound.

The four Kernels pitchers threw just 34 pitches among them, but All-Star games aren't all about playing time. Hildenberger and Jorge agreed afterward that the experience was well worth the trip.

"It was fun," Hildenberger said between bites of his postgame meal. "Getting to meet players you play against, talking to them about how their seasons are going. And to pitch in an All-Star game is an honor."

Jorge, who's role as a starting pitcher with the Kernels calls for him to prepare to throw six or seven innings at a time, said he did not change his approach for the rare one-inning relief appearance. "I was just trying to do the same," he said.

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West hitters managed just three hits off Eastern Division pitching and perhaps could have used the bat of injured Kernels first baseman Trey Vavra, who made the trip to Peoria after being elected to start the game before going on the Kernels' Disabled List with an ankle injury.

Vavra was happy to get the opportunity to participate in the All-Star festivities, but there was no chance he'd be able to play in the game.

I'm glad that the Twins gave me the opportunity to come here and hang out with everybody," Vavra said before the contest. "It's great that they allowed me to do that.

"My rehab's come a long ways. I'm not going to be able to play in the game tonight. It's unfortunate, but it's kind of how it worked out."

Despite the progress with his rehabilitation, Vavra isn't sure yet when he'll be back in the Kernels lineup. He's also not certain whether he'll complete his rehab in Cedar Rapids or whether he'll make a trip to the Twins' facility in Fort Myers, Fla.

"It's kind of up to (the Twins) at this point. We've been doing some rehab for a long time," he said. "I'm progressing. I wouldn't anticipate anything in the next week, but maybe the week after that.

"I might go down there (to Fort Myers). I've heard both. Going down there to get some extended batting practice, but I've also heard that I'm staying up here and doing all that stuff up here, so I'll just keep my head down and keep working."

With the All-Star break now in the rear-view mirror, it wouldn't be surprising if the Twins make some roster adjustments and that could include promoting any of the four pitchers the Kernels sent to Peoria for the All-Star Game.

Vavra played well enough while he was healthy to warrant consideration for a promotion, but it's

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likely the organization would want to see him get more time with the Kernels when he's ready to resume his season.

Hildenberger indicated they have not heard anything yet from the Twins about possible promotions.

The Kernels will begin the second half of the season Thursday night against Quad Cities. The River Bandits were the champions of the league's Western Division in the first half of the season and the Kernels finished second to earn a playoff berth as well.