

## Gordon shines again, but Kernels fall

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 07 August 2015 21:36 - Last Updated Friday, 07 August 2015 22:13

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It's now okay to use the words "Nick Gordon" and "Kernels MVP" in the same sentence.

Gordon belted his first home run of the season and went 3-for-5 Friday night, but it wasn't enough to keep the sloppy Kernels from dropping a 7-5 verdict to Bowling Green before 3,850 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Gordon, a 19-year-old shortstop, was hitting about .220 in the middle of the season, but he's turned on the jets and is hitting a healthy .277 now with 29 games left in the regular season.

Gordon ranks 1st, 2nd or 3rd in numerous offensive categories for Cedar Rapids and is putting a solid season together in his second year in pro ball. The "MVP" chant has not begun at Perfect Game Field yet, but it might soon.

"Nick and Eddie Corcino would probably be 1 and 1A," Manager Jake Mauer said after the MPVs on his club. "Both those guys have been huge for us.

"Nick has really come on. He's taking the steps that we were hoping for in April when the year began. He's raised his average 60 points. That's hard to do late in the year."

Gordon has gone 9-for-14 in his last four games, including a walk-off pinch-hit single in a 5-4 victory over Dayton Thursday night. He has 48 RBIs, trailing only Zack Larson, despite normally

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hitting in the No. 2 spot in the order.

Gordon appreciates the "MVP" remark by his skipper.

"Definitely," he said, "but it takes a team. Without them I wouldn't be doing anything."

Gordon was the No. 5 overall pick in the 2014 draft and got a \$3.85 million signing bonus from the Minnesota Twins, but it took awhile for him to get comfortable in the Midwest League and show his potential.



"I'm starting to relax," he said. "It's been a process for me. You have to keep playing and keep hitting and handle good pitches."

Gordon handled a low changeup in the third inning and deposited it over the right-field fence for a two-run homer, only his second home run in pro baseball.

"It feels good," he said. "Home runs right now are not a big part of my game. I'm just trying to hit the ball hard."

Gordon hit a line single to center field in the first inning, belted his home to right field in the third inning and hit a line single to left field in the seventh inning, using the entire park in one game.

"Hit it where it's pitched. Swing at good pitches. Get into a good pitch count and battle and get I pitch I can handle," he said, explaining his successful approach these days.

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Mauer likes the way Gordon is going about his business.

"That's what you're looking for. A professional approach," said Mauer. "He took some borderline pitches they called strikes. Didn't panic. Got a pitch he could handle. That was pretty good."

Mauer thinks Gordon will spend the entire season in Cedar Rapids, but acknowledged that could change if Gordon dominates the league and hikes his batting average to .320 or so. "I hope he stays, but chances are he probably won't (if that happens)," he said.

The Kernels committed three bad errors in the top of the first inning and staked Bowling Green to a 2-0 lead. Some fans probably wanted their money back at that point.

"I don't blame them. I would too," said Mauer. "That was embarrassing. Routine plays. Catching the ball, making the throw."

Gordon's two-run homer tied the game, 2-2, but Bowling erupted for five runs in the sixth inning for a 7-2 lead. The Kernels clawed back within 7-5 and gave themselves a chance in the ninth inning when they loaded the bases with nobody out, but the game ended with two strikeouts and a fly ball.

"We load the bases and three guys try to hit the ball over the fence," said Mauer. "We just need a base hit, the game is tied. The next guy gets a base hit and we win. Very frustrating."

Rafael Valera had three hits for the Kernels, raising his average to .291. T.J. White had two hits and is hitting .236.

The Kernels (64-47) and Bowling Green (57-54) meet again Saturday at 5:05 p.m. on fireworks night.

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**BOWLING GREEN (7):** Milone, cf, 4 0 2 0, Unroe, 2b, 4 2 0 0, Kay, 3b, 4 2 2 0, Williams, rf, 5 0 1 3, Jackson, lf, 5 0 1 0, James, dh, 5 0 0 0, Ciuffo, c, 4 1 1 0, Blanchard, 1b, 4 1 2 1, Sole, ss, 4 1 3 1. Totals 39 7 12 5.

**KERNELS (5):** English, cf, 4 1 1 1, Gordon, ss, 5 2 3 2, Corcino, rf, 4 0 1 0, Larson, dh, 4 0 1 1, White, 3b, 3 0 2 1, Kuresa, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Navarreto, c, 5 0 0 0, Diemer, lf, 4 1 0 0, Doe, ph, 1 0 0 0, Valera, 2b, 4 1 3 0. Totals 38 5 11 5.

**Bowling Green**    200 005 000 - 7 12 2

**Kernels**        002 000 210 - 5 11 3

Pike, Bird (7), Fierro (9) and Ciuffo. Rosario, Wilson (6), Curtiss (9) and Navarreto. W - Pike (9-5). L - Rosario (1-3). S - Fierro (1). 2B - Kay (21), Ciuffo (18), Blanchard (10), Sole (11), Williams (25). 3B - Jackson (2). HR - Gordon (1). E - Sole (1), Kay (17), Kuresa 2 (12), Valera (10). T - 2:57. A - 3,850.