

Mauer mulls pitchers for MWL playoffs

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 25 August 2015 21:48 - Last Updated Tuesday, 25 August 2015 21:57



Cedar Rapids Kernels Manager Jake Mauer is starting to think about his pitching rotation for the Midwest League playoffs and who will get the ball in the opener against Quad Cities on Wednesday, Sept. 9.

And the winner is ... He's not sure yet.

"There's been talk," Mauer said Tuesday night. "Probably next week we'll start lining them up. We're not really set. We've got some options."

Mauer mentioned Felix Jorge, Keaton Steele, Sam Gibbons and Randy Rosario as possibilities, but was not ready to tip his hand.

Jorge pitched six innings Tuesday night as the Kernels lost to Peoria, 7-4, before 1,401 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium and has been the team's most consistent hurler all season.

Jorge allowed nine hits and three earned runs in six innings Tuesday. He has tailed off a little the past two weeks after dominating the league for most of the year, but he's still a strong possibility for the playoff opener.

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If Mauer had been forced to make a decision on Aug. 1, it probably would have been Jorge. Now he's not sure.

"You could say Gibbons and Steele have probably been our best two the last two or three weeks," he said. "Felix has had some tough luck. Tonight we don't make some defensive plays that we should have.

"If we make those plays, I don't say we win the game, but we'd probably still be playing."

Gibbons was sensational in his last outing Saturday night against Clinton. He allowed only one hit in eight innings, struck out 12 batters and was named the Midwest League Pitcher of the Week.

Gibbons has a 7-3 record and 2.72 ERA. Jorge is 6-6 with a 2.70 ERA. Steele is 5-4 with a 3.33 ERA. All three pitchers could start games against Quad Cities in the best-of-3 series in the Western Division semifinals. Mauer has other options as well.

Mauer and pitching coach Henry Bonilla will examine each pitcher's performance against the River Bandits this season to try and find the right matchup.

"We'll take that into consideration," said Mauer. "If they've seen him a bunch, if they haven't."



The Midwest League changed the playoff format this season. Under the current rules, the team that finished in first place in the Western Division for the first half of the season meets the team that finished in

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second place during the first half of the season.

Quad Cities was the first-half champ and the Kernels were the first-half runner-up, so they'll meet right away. The first game will be in Cedar Rapids, with Games 2 and 3 (if necessary) in Davenport.

Eight teams will make the playoffs, with four teams from the Eastern Division and four teams from the Western Division. In some leagues, they might seed the teams 1 through 8 and make the pairings accordingly, but the Midwest League does not operate that way.

The Kernels have the third-best overall record in the Midwest League at 72-55. If the first-round matchup was No. 3 versus No. 6, the Kernels would meet Lansing (68-58). Instead, they'll face Quad Cities and its league-best mark of 80-45.

"It's kind of the way the cookie crumbles," said Mauer. "My first year here we played Quad Cities, and half that team is in the big leagues (with Houston). They were pretty good, obviously."

"Really, whoever you play in the playoffs is going to be good."

The Kernels have 13 more games left in the regular season, including another date with Peoria Wednesday night at the stadium at 6:35.

Peoria collected 17 hits against three Kernels pitchers Tuesday night. The Kernels had eight hits, a day after collecting 27 hits in a 23-3 victory over the Chiefs. Those 23 runs were the most the Kernels have ever scored in a home game since the new stadium opened in 2002.

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Edgar Corcino had two hits Tuesday night and T.J. White had two RBIs.

PEORIA (7): Seferina, 2b, 5 0 4 1, Mercado, ss, 5 0 0 0, DeJong, 3b, 5 1 2 0, DeLeon, dh/1b, 5 0 0 0, Bader, cf, 5 1 1 0, Thompson, rf, 5 1 5 1, Gronskey, 1b, 2 1 0 0, Cruz, ph/1b, 2 0 1 0, Bean, c, 5 2 2 0, Peoples-Walls, lf, 4 1 2 3. Totals 43 7 17 5.

KERNELS (4): Miller, 2b, 5 0 1 0, Gordon, ss, 3 1 0 0, Corcino, rf, 4 2 2 0, White, 3b, 3 0 1 2, Murphy, lf, 4 0 1 1, Real, dh, 4 1 1 0, Doe, 1b, 3 0 1 0, Navarreto, c, 4 0 1 1, Diemer, cf, 4 0 0 0. Totals 34 4 8 4.

Peoria ▯ 000 400 120 - 7 17 0

Kernels ▯ 000 100 120 - 4 ▯ 8 2

Pearce, Frey (8), Grana (8) and Bean. Jorge, Bard (7), Curtiss (9) and Navarreto. W - Pearce (10-10). L - Jorge (6-6). S - Grana (21). 2B - Thompson 2 (19), Bader (8), Bean (12), Murphy (13), Corcino (14), White (19). 3B - Seferina (12), Real (2). SB - DeJong (12). E - Gordon (17), Murphy (6). T - 2:36. A - 1,401.