

Miller made quick climb to Kernels

Written by S.D. Buhr

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Cedar Rapids Kernels infielder Sean Miller was wearing a South Carolina-Aiken uniform when his baseball season began in the spring and he's now suiting up for his second pro team this summer.

Miller, a shortstop by trade, has been getting work at second base for the Kernels, who have Nick Gordon solidly entrenched at shortstop. As they have been doing frequently, Miller and Gordon hit in the top two spots of the Kernels' batting order during the nightcap of their doubleheader with the Kane County Cougars Saturday night.

A Saturday fireworks crowd of 4,863 at Veterans Memorial Stadium saw the Cougars sweep both ends of the twinbill, 6-2 and 4-3, giving Cedar Rapids a season-worst five game losing streak.

Miller was a "young junior," to use Kernels Manager Jake Mauer's words, at SC-Aiken. He was just 20 years old throughout his junior season of college and won't turn 21 until after the season ends.

That may have been one factor the Twins found attractive about Miller, whom they selected in the 10th round of the 2015 draft. The Twins sent the middle infielder to their Appalachian League affiliate in Elizabethton, Tenn., just about a four-hour drive north of his college campus in Aiken, immediately after signing him to a contract that included a \$125,000 bonus.

It was a short stay for Miller in Tennessee. On July 11, Miller was promoted to the Kernels.

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The quick promotion caught Miller a bit by surprise.

“Actually, it did. Kind of a lot,” he admitted. “Because I was only in

E-town for two or three weeks, I guess. I played in 12 or 13 games. So it was definitely surprising, but it was really exciting.”

Miller was hitting just .209 in Elizabethton when he was promoted to Cedar Rapids, but his numbers since joining the Kernels have been much more encouraging. He carried a .324 batting average into the weekend.

“Sean’s put the ball in play and gives us a little bit of speed that, obviously with (Tanner) English gone, we’ve been lacking a little bit,” Mauer said.

Miller played high school ball in Maryland for his father, Steve Miller, who played minor league ball for five years after being the 13th round pick of the San Francisco Giants in 1983.

Having a dad with that kind of background comes with both advantages and disadvantages.

“It’s always hard with him being your dad,” Miller conceded. “You don’t want to listen to him, but you have to because you know he’s been there. He’s been through the same stuff you’re going through.

“It’s definitely (a battle), always arguing about something, but you’ve just got to realize that he knows more than you do.”

The Kernels infielder said his dad’s advice has remained on the practical side from the

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beginning.

“He always told me it’s not as glamorous as everyone makes it out to be. It’s more of a job than a game now. And it’s kind of how he described it. He was pretty right on it.”

The Kernels begin a new series at Peoria Sunday at 5 p.m.