

## Kernels bang out 18 hits in 8-3 win

Written by S.D. Buhr  
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GRAND CHUTE, Wis. - The Cedar Rapids Kernels have come out of the chute hot for the second half of their Midwest League season. The Kernels topped the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers 8-3 Saturday night for their third straight win since the All-Star break.

The six Kernels hitters that represented the team in Tuesday's Midwest League All-Star game did most of the damage against the host Timber Rattlers. Byron Buxton, Niko Goodrum, Jorge Polanco, Dalton Hicks, Travis Harrison and Adam Brett Walker accounted for 15 of the Kernels 18 hits. Every batter in the Kernels' lineup collected at least one hit.

The Kernels' All-Stars spent close to eight hours traveling to Dayton on Monday, another eight returning to Cedar Rapids on Wednesday and then another five hours on the bus up to Appleton on Thursday. But if all the travel in the past week has tired them, you wouldn't know it from their performances in the three wins over the Timber Rattlers.

Hicks pretty much shrugged off the travel. "It was a little rough, but once we get here, we're good to go," the big first baseman said following Saturday's win.

Hicks has a nine-game hitting streak and has 6 hits in 15 at-bats in the three games played since the All-Star break. He's also added four more RBIs to his league-leading total in this series, giving him 67 for the season.

Harrison has three doubles and a home run in the three games with the Timber Rattlers.

Buxton had a pair of hits Saturday night, the biggest coming with two runners on and two outs

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in the top of the seventh inning. He lined a triple to the left-center field wall that scored both runners and broke the game open for the Kernels.

The Kernels jumped on top of Wisconsin with three runs in the top of the first inning.

Buxton led off the game with a single and stole second base. Polanco reached base on a throwing error and then Hicks drove in Buxton with an RBI single to right field.

Harrison followed with the first of his two doubles, driving in both Polanco and Hicks.

Wisconsin answered with one run in the bottom of the first inning, but the Kernels added single runs in both the second and fourth innings.

The Rattlers closed the lead to 5-3 through five innings and the score remained there until the Buxton's triple in the seventh.

The importance of that triple wasn't lost on Kernels Manager Jake Mauer. "That was fun. Buxton got the big hit to open the game up there."

Mauer was quick to give credit to the Kernels pitchers, as well.

Starting pitcher Brett Lee went five innings, giving up all three of the Rattlers' runs, but only two of those were earned.

From there, the Kernels' bullpen shutout the Wisconsin hitters. Alex Muren threw three perfect innings and Tyler Jones finished up with a scoreless ninth inning.

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"The bullpen was excellent again," said Mauer. "That's three nights in a row. Atherton did it (Friday) night and Merck made some big pitches and Brewer did it the night before.

"If the bullpen pitches like that, we're going to be in pretty good shape."

The Kernels will be facing a Major League pitcher in their 1:05 series finale on Sunday. Milwaukee Brewers pitcher Marco Estrada is scheduled to start for the Timber Rattlers on a rehabilitation assignment.

Mauer pointed out that you never really know what you'll see out of a big league pitcher on such a rehab assignment, but, "It'll be a good test for us, without a doubt, for however many innings he's going."

KERNELS (8): Buxton, cf, 5 1 2 2, Goodrum, ss, 6 1 2 0, Polanco, 2b, 6 2 3 1, Hicks, 1b, 6 1 3 2, Harrison, 3b, 4 0 3 2, Kepler, lf, 5 0 1 0, Walker, rf, 4 1 2 1, Grimes, dh, 4 1 1 0, Quesada, c, 3 1 1 0, Lee, p, 0 0 0 0 Muren, p, 0 0 0 0, Jones, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 43 8 18 8.

WISCONSIN (3): Reed, rf, 4 0 1 1, Rodriguez, dh, 3 1 0 0, Taylor, cf, 4 1 1 0, Roache, lf, 4 0 1 1, Giacalone, 1b, 2 0 0 1, Garza, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Arcia, ss, 4 1 1 0, Berberet, c, 3 0 1 0, McFarland, 2b, 2 0 0 0, Lopez, p, 0 0 0 0, Mangum, p, 0 0 0 0, Lorenzo, p, 0 0 0 0, Arnold, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 30 3 5 3.

Kernels 310 100 210 - 8 18 1

Wisconsin 100 110 000 - 3 5 2

Lee, Muren (6), Jones (9) and Quesada. Lopez, Mangum (5), Lorenzo (8), Arnold (9) and Berberet. W-Lee (5-4). L-Lopez (3-6). 2B-Harrison 2 (21), Goodrum (14), Taylor (20). 3B-Buxton (9), Roache (1). SF-Walker, Giacalone. SB-Buxton (32), Reed (17). E-Kepler (1), McFarland (10), Reed (2). T-2:54. A-3,396.