

Garver homers twice to power Kernels

Written by Morgan Hawk

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LANSING, Mich. — Mitch Garver hit two home runs and drove in the go-ahead run in the ninth inning as the Cedar Rapids Kernels downed the Lansing Lugnuts, 10-7, in a Midwest League game before 2,819 fans at Cooley Law School Stadium.

Chad Christensen, playing first base for the first time this season, went 2-for-4 and drove in two runs for the Kernels.

The game featured a flurry of activity over the final two innings as the teams combined for eight runs.

The Kernels entered the eighth inning with a slim 5-4 lead. Garver led off the inning with his second home run of the night, a towering blast that hit the foul pole down the left-field line.

The Kernels relinquished their 6-4 lead in the bottom of the eighth inning, however. Reliever Yorman Landa issued two hits and three consecutive walks as Lansing took its first lead of the game, 7-6.

Mitch Nay singled with one out, and a pair of two-out walks loaded the bases. Nay scored on a wild pitch to make the score 6-5. Another walk by Landa reloaded the bases for Ian Parmley.

Parmley lined a two-run single into left field to score Justin Atkinson and Carlos Ramirez, giving Lansing its 7-6 advantage.

The Kernels fought back with four runs in the top of the ninth inning to take a 10-7 lead. The inning started when Lugnuts reliever Jimmy Cordero walked Jeremias Pineda and Pineda advanced to second base on a wild pitch.

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With one out, Logan Wade struck out swinging but was able to reach first base on a passed ball by catcher Jorge Saez. The passed ball also allowed Pineda to reach third base. Zack Larson came to the plate and lined an RBI single into center field, tying the game 7-7.

Michael Quesada followed by drawing a walk, loading the bases for Garver. Garver, already with two home runs in the game, skied a fly ball to center for a sacrifice fly that scored Wade and gave the Kernels an 8-7 lead.

Christensen gave the Kernels some insurance when he bounced a two-run single into left field to score Wade and Quesada, pushing the Kernels ahead by three runs.

Hudson Boyd picked up his second save by pitching a perfect bottom of the ninth inning with two strikeouts. Despite getting charged with a blown save, Landa (2-0) was credited as the winning pitching. Landa allowed three runs in the eighth inning.

The night began with a terrific start from Randy Rosario. The Kernels lefty faced the minimum through three innings and ended up going five innings in a no-decision. Rosario allowed two runs on four hits while striking out two and walking one.

The Kernels scored three runs with two outs in the second inning to take the early 3-0 lead. Christensen and Joel Licon drew back-to-back walks with two outs. Engelb Vielma's RBI single plated Christensen, and Licon came home on a throwing error by Lugnuts centerfielder D.J. Davis.

Against reliever Chase De Jong, the Kernels increased their lead to 4-0 in the fifth inning. Pineda led off with a triple to deep right-center. Jason Kanzler followed with an RBI single to score Pineda.

Garver hit his first homer in the sixth inning. The blast went to deep left field, putting the Kernels in front 5-2.

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The Lugnuts made the score 5-4 with consecutive RBI doubles by Matt Dean and Nay in the sixth inning off Kernels reliever Ethan Mildren. Mildren went two innings and allowed two runs on three hits while striking out three and walking one.

The Kernels (5-3) continue the three-game series at Lansing on Saturday at 1:05 p.m. Kohl Stewart (0-0, 3.60) will make his second start for the Kernels.