

## Vielma swings hot bat for Kernels

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 30 May 2014 21:46 - Last Updated Friday, 30 May 2014 22:15

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Engelb Vielma was barely 17 years old and living in Venezuela when he signed his first pro contract with the Minnesota Twins organization as a non-drafted free agent in 2011.



"He's a lot bigger now," said Twins General Manager Terry Ryan, who is in Cedar Rapids this week watching the Kernels. "We first saw him when he was 15. He looked like he was 12."

Vielma is still only 19, a slender middle infielder with good quickness and good hands, and he flashed a good bat Friday night.

Vielma went 4-for-4 and drove in four runs as the Kernels rallied to defeat Wisconsin, 10-5, before a season-high 3,749 fans on Star Wars Night at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Vielma, from Maracaibo, Venezuela, is still growing into his body at 5-foot-11 and 157 pounds, and he's still working on his English after speaking Spanish his entire life.

"He's working on it. He's learning," said Kernels outfielder Jeremias Pineda, who served as Vielma's bilingual translator after the game.

Vielma singled in the first inning, singled again in the fourth, hit a sacrifice fly in the fifth, collected a two-run single in the sixth and had an RBI double in the eighth, raising his average 22 points to .259.

He played second base Friday night, but is equally adept at shortstop.

"He says he likes both positions," said Pineda. "He will do whatever it takes in the infield to help the team."

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Kernels Manager Jake Mauer had Vielma in the No.2 spot in the batting order Friday, right behind shortstop Ryan Walker, giving the Kernels good speed at the top of the lineup.

"He had a big night," said Mauer. "When the calendar turned from April to May, he's really come on. He's playing a good second base, and he's playing a really good shortstop. Really good."

Vielma kept coming up in clutch situations against Wisconsin. And he kept delivering.

"He's gaining more experience," said Mauer. "He's gaining more confidence and is used to what's going on now and have an understanding. He's been putting good at-bats together for about a week straight.

"He's a guy that wants that at-bat in tough situations with guys in scoring position."

Vielma began his pro career with the Minnesota organization in the Dominican Summer League in 2012 at the tender age of 17. "He said it was hard because he left his family from Venezuela when he came to the Dominican to play Summer League there," said Pineda.

Vielma said he likes the progress he's making with the Twins.

"He says he's feeling good," said Pineda. "He's now 19 and he's in the Midwest League. He's feeling good."

The Kernels (26-29) trailed 4-0 early, but an RBI single by Jason Kanzler and a big three-run homer by Michael Quesada tied the game 4-4 in the fourth. The Kernels kept tacking on runs from there and finished with 13 hits.

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The Kernels host Burlington Saturday at 5:05 p.m. on Fireworks Night.

WISCONSIN (5): Garcia, cf, 4 1 2 0, Halcomb, ss, 2 0 0 1, Coulter, dh, 4 0 0 0, Pena, lf, 4 1 1 2, Ratterree, rf, 4 1 2 2, Brennan, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Castillo, 2b, 4 0 0 0, Neda, 1b, 4 1 1 0, Eshleman, c, 2 1 0 0. Totals 32 5 6 5.

KERNELS (10): Walker, ss, 5 1 2 0, Vielma, 2b, 4 2 4 4, Garver, dh, 4 2 1 1, Haar, 3b, 5 0 1 1, Kanzler, cf, 4 1 1 1, Quesada, c, 4 1 1 3, Altobelli, 1b, 4 1 1 0, Licon, lf, 4 1 2 0, Thomas, rf, 1 1 0 0. Totals 35 10 13 10.

Wisconsin 004 000 100 - 5 6 1

Kernels 000 412 03x - 10 13 2

Astin, Fernandez (6), Razo (8) and Eshleman. Mildren, Bixler (7), Boyd (9) and Quesada. W - Mildren (1-3). L - Astin (5-3). 2B - Ratterree (13), Neda (6), Garcia (5), Walker 2 (2), Licon (4), Vielma (6), Haar (10). HR - Ratterree (9), Quesada (2). SB - Kanzler 2 (9). E - Halcomb (2), Walker (3), Vielma (8). T - 2:48. A - 3,749.