

## Stewart ejected as Kernels fall to Beloit

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 05 July 2014 21:55 - Last Updated Saturday, 05 July 2014 22:05

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Kohl Stewart got a \$4.5 million bonus to sign with the Minnesota Twins last year, but he's won only one game for the Kernels this season despite a fine earned run average and the frustration appears to be mounting.

It came to a head Saturday night when Stewart said a magic word to the home-plate umpire and got ejected in the third inning of a 6-3 loss to the Beloit Snappers.

The Kernels had already made two errors on routine plays in the inning and Stewart had hit a batter with a pitch. And when Beloit catcher Phil Pohl hit an RBI double down the third-base line, Stewart complained to the umpire that the ball was foul and got tossed.

Stewart spent more than 15 minutes in a closed-door meeting with Kernels Manager Jake Mauer after the game and declined to talk about the incident to reporters. "I'd rather not," he said.

Mauer was disappointed in Stewart for getting tossed from the game. Mauer thought the ball was fair, but in any case said a starting pitcher has to learn to deal with adversity and stay in the ballgame.

"I thought the ball was fair. I thought it went right over the bag," said Mauer. "Even the second

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hop, I thought, was on the chalk.

"He wasn't Kohl Stewart tonight. He just wasn't," said Mauer. "He got emotional. It's a good learning point, to move on from this."

Stewart took the loss Saturday as his record fell to 1-5, despite a 2.67 ERA. He won his only game April 25 at Clinton, so it's been 70 days since his last victory.

Stewart, from Texas, was the No.4 overall pick in the 2013 draft and is a promising prospect, but the season has not turned out well. He has a strict pitch count of 70 per game, which rarely puts him in position to be the winning pitcher, and the Kernels have slipped to 36-49 overall.

Kernels second baseman Tanner Vavra made an error on a routine double-play ball in the third inning when he dropped the toss at second base from shortstop Engelb Vielma. Two plays later, third baseman Bryan Haar committed an error on a ground ball to his right.

Stewart hit the next batter, then got a fly ball for the second out of the inning. Luis Baez then hit a two-run single to left field, giving Beloit a 4-2 lead, and Pohl hit his double down the third-base line to make it 5-2.

Stewart ran behind home plate to back up a potential throw to the plate and said something to home-plate umpire Brandon Butler about the ball being foul and got tossed.

Mauer saw what was happening and ran onto the field.

"I went out there with guns blazing," said Mauer. "And he (Butler) told me what he (Stewart) said. And Kohl told me what he said."

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"He said the magic word," Mauer confirmed. "He (Butler) said he gave him a chance to walk away and he didn't. And that's usually what happens (the player gets ejected)."

Mauer got between Butler and Stewart to prevent Stewart from getting into further trouble, then Mauer nudged Stewart toward the Kernels dugout to get him off the field.

Mauer lectured Stewart during the closed-door meeting in the manager's office after the game.

"He's a good pitcher, and he's going to pitch a long time," said Mauer. "Part of his development is being able to overcome adversity and being able to overcome things he can't control."

It's a cardinal rule in baseball that the starting pitcher cannot let himself be ejected.

"He's got to stay in the game. There's no doubt about it," said Mauer. "You put your bullpen in a tough spot, you put your other teammates in a tough spot. That's part of the deal.

"You have a responsibility for being a starter. You get to take the ball once every five days and it's your job to give the team a chance. Good, bad or ugly, you've got to give your team a chance.

"Whether the umpires missed one or they're knocking you all over, you have to find a way to give your team a chance.

"All around, he's just frustrated," said Mauer.

Mauer gave Stewart an education after the game.

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"He feels pretty bad, which is good," the manager said. "And he feels pretty bad for his teammates.

"Kohl will be just fine," said Mauer. "He'll be just fine."

The game had gotten off to a promising start. Stewart retired the side 1-2-3 in the top of the first inning and was flashing a fastball in the mid-90's, then the Kernels grabbed a 2-0 lead in the bottom of the first on a walk by Jon Murphy, a triple by Vielma and a single by Mitch Garver.

It went downhill from there. Stewart surrendered a home run in the second inning, then the third inning was a disaster.

The Kernels had to use four relief pitchers and never caught up after Beloit took its 5-2 lead in the ill-fated third inning.

Beloit snapped a 10-game losing streak before 2,657 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium. The same teams meet Sunday afternoon at 2:05 p.m.

BELOIT (6): Boyd, cf, 4 1 2 0, Pan, 2b, 4 1 0 1, Chapman, 3b, 3 1 0 0, Brugman, lf, 5 1 2 2, Baez, dh, 5 0 1 2, Pohl, c, 5 0 1 1, Mathews, rf, 2 0 0 0, Vollmuth, 1b, 3 1 1 0, Mercedes, ss, 4 1 0 0. Totals 35 6 7 6.

KERNELS (3): Murphy, rf, 1 1 0 0, Vielma, ss, 4 1 1 1, Garver, dh, 4 0 1 1, Haar, 3b, 4 1 0 0, Swim, c, 4 0 1 0, Kanzler, cf, 3 0 1 1, Williams, lf, 4 0 0 0, Altobelli, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Vavra, 2b, 4 0 0

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0. Totals 31 3 3 3.

Beloit 014 100 000 - 6 7 2

Kernels 200 001 000 - 3 3 4

Covey, Stalcup (4), Bragg (8), Wahl (9) and Pohl. Stewart, Wilson (3), Muren (6), Mazza (8), Boyd (9) and Swim. W - Stalcup (1-3). L - Stewart (1-5). S - Wahl (1). 2B - Pohl (6). 3B - Vielma (3). HR - Brugman (8). SB - Boyd (10), Mathews (4). E - Mercedes (11), Vavra (7), Haar (14), Altobelli (4). T - 2:38. A - 2,657.