

Swim helps Kernels with hot bat

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 16 July 2014 21:46 -



Alex Swim declined an offer to join the St. Louis Cardinals organization in 2012 after they selected him in the 36th round of the draft, but it had little to do with money or his desire to stay at Elon University and get his degree.

Swim's mother, Mary, has been afflicted with multiple sclerosis since the late 1980's and was hospitalized around the time of the 2012 draft, so he decided to stay home in North Carolina to be with her and help as much as he could.

"I wouldn't change it for the world," Swim said Wednesday night. "I stayed and helped out around the house. It was the best decision for me.

"She's fine now," he said. "She's doing well."

Swim, 23, got another chance to turn pro when the Minnesota Twins picked him in the 23rd round of the 2013 draft following his senior campaign at Elon, which made the NCAA tournament last year.

He joined the Cedar Rapids Kernels June 19 and has quietly done a terrific job with the local club as a catcher, right fielder and designated hitter.

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Swim went 3-for-4 Wednesday with two RBIs and two runs scored as the Kernels bopped Lake County, 10-4, before 2,189 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

The Kernels (43-52) won for the sixth time in their last seven games. Swim raised his batting average to a lusty .378. He's collected 15 RBIs in 21 games and is riding a 12-game hitting streak, the longest for any Kernel this year.

"He seems to have a nose for RBIs," said Manager Jake Mauer. "He's been racking them up here. I'm happy to have him."

Swim hit .287 in 37 games for the Gulf Coast League Twins in rookie ball last season. He began the 2014 season in extended spring training and spent two weeks with the Fort Myers Miracle in the Florida State League as a replacement player, but appeared in only one game before being assigned to Cedar Rapids in the Midwest League.

"I'm kind of in a groove right now," he said. "The ball looks big to me. I just want to continue to ride this out as long as I can."



The Kernels collected 13 hits with Swim leading the way. Chad Christensen, Mitch Garver, Jason Kanzler and J.D. Williams had two hits apiece.

Kanzler socked a two-run homer and made a terrific diving catch in right-center field. Williams had two RBIs. Christensen had two doubles.

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Chich-Wei Hu (1-0) pitched six strong innings in his second start for the Kernels before getting tired in the seventh inning. He was charged with four earned runs in six-plus innings, but the right-hander from Taiwan pitched better than that.

"He ran out of gas, but he was real good," said Mauer. "He's got a good change-up, moves the ball, keeps the ball down. He gave us everything he's got, and that's all you can ask for."

The Kernels host Lake County (42-53) again Thursday night at 6:35 with Kohl Stewart pitching for Cedar Rapids.

LAKE COUNTY (4): Bautista, 2b, 5 0 1 0, Frazier, cf, 3 0 1 0, Hendrix, 3b, 4 1 1 0, Rodriguez, dh, 4 0 1 1, Haase, c, 4 0 0 0, Paulino, lf, 3 1 0 0, Fink, 1b, 3 1 0 0, Ruiz, rf, 4 1 2 1, Castillo, ss, 4 0 1 2. Totals 34 4 7 4.

KERNELS (10): Vielma, ss, 5 1 1 0, Wade, 3b, 4 1 1 0, Christensen, 1b, 4 2 2 1, Garver, c, 5 2 2 1, Swim, rf, 4 2 3 2, Kanzler, cf, 4 2 2 2, Williams, dh, 3 0 2 2, Vavra, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Murphy, lf, 4 0 0 0. Totals 36 10 13 8.

Lake County 000 001 300 - 4 7 5
Kernels 403 012 00x - 10 13 0

Hamrick, Garcia (5), Melo (7) and Haase. Hu, Muren (7), Reed (9) and Garver. W - Hu (1-0). L - Hamrick (3-5). 2B - Ruiz (9), Garver (20), Christensen 2 (15). 3B - Wade (3). HR - Kanzler (9). E - Frazier 2 (5), Castillo (11), Ruiz (3), Hamrick (4). T - 2:44. A - 2,189.