

Stewart shines for surging Kernels

Written by Jim Ecker
Thursday, 17 July 2014 21:03 -



Cedar Rapids pitcher Kohl Stewart says he learned a valuable lesson when an umpire kicked him out of a Midwest League game here July 5th for mouthing off.

"As hard as it is to say, I think that needed to happen," Stewart said Thursday night. "I deserved to get thrown out.

"He threw me out and I had to sit there and own it and man up to it. It won't happen again, that's for sure."

Stewart has won two straight games for the surging Kernels since he lasted only 2.2 innings against Beloit July 5 before getting the heave-ho for making an unacceptable remark to the home-plate umpire.

He tossed five shutout innings Thursday as Cedar Rapids trimmed Lake County, 4-3, before 2,413 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium to reach the .500 mark for the second half of the season.

The Kernels (13-13) have won seven of their last eight games and have moved into contention for a playoff berth with seven weeks left in the season.

Perhaps it's just coincidence, but Stewart had a 1-5 record the day he got ejected. He has a 2-0 mark since then and has allowed only one run in 11 innings.

Stewart, 19, has been consistent all year, but now he's getting some victories to show for his

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efforts after signing for \$4.5 million last year.

Kernels Manager Jake Mauer said Stewart is not the only young player who's had to learn how to deal with his emotions.

"Sometimes these young kids, they lose perspective on the big picture," said Mauer. "It's part of being young. It's part of maturing.

"Kohl is an emotional kid. He plays with a lot of passion and a lot of fire. We don't want to take that away from him.

"But we've got to be able to channel it into pitching and not have it melt down when things don't go our way. And that's part of why he's here. He's got to learn how to handle stuff like that."

Lesson learned, said Stewart.

"I've got learn how to control that and channel it into the game," he agreed. "I don't want to show emotion on the mound."

Stewart was a star football player in high school and had a scholarship to play quarterback at Texas A&M. He said football is a high-spirited game where there's a lot of talking and emotion on the field.

"It's not like that in baseball," he said. "I think these last two starts, I've done a better job of not letting anyone know how I'm feeling. That's my goal. Just pick up the baseball and make the next pitch."

Stewart allowed four hits, struck out three batters and did not walk anyone. He lowered his

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earned run average to a tidy 2.42 in 17 starts and 81.2 innings.

Stewart said he and catcher Mitch Garver were on the same page all night.

"Mitch caught a really good game and kept those guys off-balance pretty well," he said. "I didn't shake him off one time all night. We were thinking the same thing every pitch."

The Minnesota Twins have their prized prospect on a strict pitch count to protect his talented right arm. He departed after throwing 77 pitches Thursday, even though he felt strong and could have gone longer.

Stewart said he's learned to live with the pitch count.

"It's out of my control," he said. "I'm not going to sit here all day and get mad about it. I know I'm on a pitch count for a reason.

"I'm just trying to do the best I can with what I've got," he said. "I'm trying to get out of innings as quick as I can and keep us in games.

"They have a plan," he said. "And as bad as I want to keep pitching, there's nothing I can really do about it."

Jared Wilson pitched two scoreless innings for the Kernels. Hudson Boyd was touched for one run in the eighth inning, mostly because left fielder Jon Murphy lost a fly ball in the twilight for a gift triple, and the Kernels took a 4-1 lead into the ninth inning.

Flamethrower Nick Burdi retired the first two batters in the ninth for the Kernels, but then he walked two straight batters, threw a wild pitch and gave up a two-run single to Jorge Martinez to

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make it 4-3.

The next batter singled to left, but Martinez strayed too far off second base and was picked off by Murphy on a throw from left field to end the game.

Alex Swim had a two-run single for the Kernels, extending his hitting streak to a team-best 13 games. Jason Kanzler went 3-for-4 with a triple and Engelb Vielma had two hits.

The same teams meet Friday night at 6:35.

LAKE COUNTY (3): Bautista, 2b, 4 1 1 0, Frazier, cf, 3 0 1 1, Papi, dh, 4 0 0 0, Rodriguez, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Haase, c, 4 0 2 0, Hendrix, 3b, 2 0 0 0, Fink, 3b, 1 1 0 0, Paulino, lf, 3 1 1 0, Martinez, rf, 4 0 1 2, Castillo, ss, 4 0 2 0. Totals 33 3 8 3.

KERNELS (4): Walker, 2b, 3 1 0 0, Wade, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Christensen, 1b, 3 1 0 0, Garver, c, 2 0 1 0, Swim, rf, 4 0 1 2, Kanzler, cf, 4 1 3 0, Williams, dh, 3 1 0 0, Murphy, lf, 3 0 0 0, Vielma, ss, 3 0 2 1. Totals 29 4 7 3.

Lake County 000 000 012 - 3 8 0
Kernels 200 101 00x - 4 7 1

Kime, Beras (5), Frank (7), Brantley (8) and Haase. Stewart, Wilson (6), Boyd (8), Burdi (9) and Garver. W - Stewart (3-5). L - Kime (5-11). S - Burdi (1). 3B - Bautista (7), Kanzler (8). SB - Walker (6), Williams (6). E - Stewart (2). T - 2:34. A - 2,413.

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