Streaking Kernels win in 11th

Written by S.D. Buhr
Friday, 18 July 2014 22:46 - Last Updated Friday, 18 July 2014 22:48

It took the Cedar Rapids Kernels two extra frames to do it, but after 11 innings of baseball Friday night they had a coveted sweep of their three-game series with the Lake County Captains.

The Kernels topped Lake County, 6-5, in walk-off fashion in front of 3,642 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium when Logan Wade scored from third base on a ground ball by Mitch Garver.

Captains third baseman Grant Fink elected to try to throw Wade out at the plate, rather than turn a potential inning-ending double play. Fink's throw was on target, but plate umpire Tyler Olson called Wade safe on a close play and the Kernels had their win.

"The umpire said, 'Safe,' so he's safe," said Kernels Manager Jake Mauer. "We had several chances to win that game, but a win's a win and we'll take it."

The Kernels won for the eighth time in their last nine games, raising their overall record to 45-52 and their second-half mark to 14-13.

Wade and Garver combined for the final run, but it was the bottom half of the Kernels' batting order that did all the damage early in the game.

Jason Kanzler's bunt single in the second inning scored Alex Swim to tie the game, 1-1, and Michael Quesada's three-run home run in the fourth inning gave Cedar Rapids a 4-1 lead.

Quesada has been struggling at the plate a bit and said Kernels hitting coach Tommy Watkins told him to, "Have some fun – do a leg kick or something."

So Quesada decided to, "Go up there and change everything."

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"It was kind of a pressure situation," he explained, "so it was a really awkward time to change my entire swing, but it worked out. It was nice."

Kernels third baseman Bryan Haar doubled to lead off the sixth inning and scored with the help of a balk by Captains relief pitcher Anderson Polanco and a passed ball by catcher Richard Stock, upping the Kernels' lead to 5-1.

But Lake County struck back for four runs in the top of the seventh with the big blow coming on a three-run home run by newly arrived outfielder Mike Papi. Papi was promoted to the Captains on Wednesday and was the Cleveland Indians' Competitive Balance Round pick (and the 38th pick overall) in the MLB draft last month.

After Papi's homer, the two bullpens took over, combining for more than four complete innings of shutout relief work.

Kernels starting pitcher Aaron Slegers gave up six hits and four runs, but only one of those runs was earned. It was the second consecutive start in which Slegers surrendered just a single earned run. He walked a pair and struck out five Captains.

Brandon Bixler worked 1.1 innings in relief of Slegers and was the victim of Papi's long ball.

Dallas Gallant entered in the ninth and contributed two shutout innings, striking out five batters. Jake Reed (2-0) threw up a zero in the top of the 11th to get the win.

Chad Christensen went 4-for-5 for the Kernels. Wade was 3-for-5.

The sweep tied Cedar Rapids with Wisconsin for a second half wild-card postseason spot, with a lot of season left to play.

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The Kernels begin a three-game series with Fort Wayne Saturday at 5:05 p.m. at Perfect Game Field.

LAKE COUNTY (5): Bautista, 2b, 6 2 3 1, Frazier, cf, 5 1 1 1, Papi, rf, 3 1 1 2, Rodriguez, 1b, 5 0 1 1, Fink, 3b, 5 0 0 0, Stock, c, 5 0 1 0, Martinez, lf, 5 1 0 0, Ruiz, dh, 4 0 2 0, Hendrick, pr/dh, 0 0 0 0, Castillo, ss, 3 0 0 0. Totals 41 5 9 5.

KERNELS (6): Vielma, ss, 6 0 0 0, Wade, 2b, 5 1 3 0, Christensen, 1b, 5 0 4 0, Garver, dh, 6 0 0 1, Haar, 3b, 5 1 1 0, Swim, rf/c, 4 2 1 0, Kanzler, cf, 5 1 2 1, Quesada, c, 4 1 1 3, Walker, pr, 0 0 0 0, Williams, lf, 0 0 0 0, Murphy, lf/rf, 4 0 0 0. Totals 44 6 12 5.

Lake County   100 000 400 00 - 5 9 4

Kernels   010 301 000 01 - 6 12 2

Lugo, Polanco (6), Stokes (10), Melo (11) and Stock. Slegers, Bixler (7), Gallant (9), Reed (11) and Quesada, Swim. W - Reed (2-0). L - Melo (0-1). 2B - Bautista 2 (16), Ruiz (10), Christensen (16), Haar (17), Wade (10). HR - Papi (1), Quesada (3). E - Frazier (6), Fink (18), Polanco (1),

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Castillo (12), Wade (9), Quesada (3). T - 3:32. A - 3,642.