

## Vavra enjoys playing ball with Mauer

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 06 August 2014 21:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 August 2014 21:50

---



Tanner Vavra used to hang around the batting cages at the Metrodome and Target Field in Minneapolis, watching Joe Mauer take batting practice with the Minnesota Twins and admiring the way he played ball.

Vavra had an even better view Wednesday night when he played second base for the Cedar Rapids Kernels and Mauer was just a few feet away at first base for the Kernels.

"It's kind of cool, being on the same field with somebody you looked up to and watched during a bit of your high school days and middle school days," said Vavra. "It was a lot of fun. A lot of fun to be out there with him."

Vavra's father, Joe, is a coach with the Minnesota Twins, so Vavra got to spend part of his summers with the Major League team, watching Mauer win batting titles and become a major star.

Mauer has been with the Kernels this week on a rehab assignment, trying to recover from a strained oblique muscle, while Vavra has been with the club all season.

Mauer went 0-for-3 Wednesday as the Kernels lost to Wisconsin, 6-1, before 2,162 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Vavra went 3-for-4 and raised his batting average to .253. Mauer, a three-time American League batting champion and career .320 hitter, has gone 1-for-6 so far for the Kernels.

## Vavra enjoys playing ball with Mauer

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 06 August 2014 21:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 August 2014 21:50

---

Vavra has enjoyed reminiscing with Mauer this week at the ballpark. Vavra and his brothers, Treysen and Terrin, would hang around the batting cages and be encouraged by their father to pick up the baseballs.

"We've been kidding about this the whole time he's been down here," said Vavra. "It always used to be, 'Go ahead, Joe, the boys will pick them up,' because me and my brothers would be out there watching him hit and stuff."

Vavra doesn't have to pick up after Mauer anymore, now that they're teammates for a few days in the Midwest League.

"Hopefully I'm not out there with him too long down here," said Vavra. "Hopefully he gets healthy and gets back to the big leagues soon."

Mauer thoroughly agrees. He worked out with the Kernels Monday, went 1-for-3 as the designated in four innings Tuesday night, then went 0-for-3 in six innings as the first baseman Wednesday.

Mauer blasted a ball to deep left-center in his second at-bat Wednesday for a long out. He also grounded into a force play and struck out.

"I was a little tired there at the end. You know, running around," said Mauer, who played on defense for the first time in more than five weeks. "The swings felt pretty good. I wish I could have had something to show for it. All in all, I thought it was a pretty good day."

Mauer has enjoyed visiting with Vavra, a 30th-round draft pick in 2013 who has defied the odds by playing pro baseball despite being blind in his right eye.

## Vavra enjoys playing ball with Mauer

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 06 August 2014 21:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 August 2014 21:50

---

"I've know him for a long time," said Mauer. "He's definitely a familiar face for me down here.

"It's fun to see him as a ballplayer. I've always seen him around the cages growing up, so it's good to see him out there."

Kernels outfielder Max Murphy, who is from the Twins Cities suburb of Robinsdale, met Mauer for the first time this week, but has admired his work with the Twins.

"It's pretty cool, having grown up a Twins fans," said Murphy. "Obviously Joe Mauer is the face of the Twins. Everyone knows who he is, so to be able to come out here and play on the same team with him is real cool."

Mauer has been taking his rehab step-by-step, carefully trying to get back in the groove without rushing himself. He thought his second at-bat, where he drove the ball to the warning track in left-center, was a good sign.

"I hit it pretty good. I hit the ball well. That was good," he said. "I squared that one up. I'll take that for the day."

He was satisfied with Day 2 in the lineup.

"Obviously making outs is not fun," he said. "There were some positives, just coming back the second day on the field. You have to realistic, too. All in all, physically, I came through it pretty good."

Mauer thinks taking a day off Thursday is a good idea.

"I'll probably be pretty stiff in the morning," he said. "That's part of making your way back.

## Vavra enjoys playing ball with Mauer

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 06 August 2014 21:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 August 2014 21:50

---

"I'm anxious to get back on the field. This is part of that road back. Hopefully when I get back there (to the Twins) I can have some good at-bats and get back to where I should be.

"I've got to get myself healthy and ready to contribute. So a few more days down here and a few more at-bats and hopefully I'm ready to go."

Mauer plans does not plan to play in the first game of a four-game series against Kane County at the stadium Thursday night at 6:35. The current plan is for Mauer to play for the Kernels again this weekend, but that could change.

Cedar Rapids pitcher Chih-Wei Hu, who has been brilliant since joining the Kernels this summer, had his worst outing of the season. Wisconsin scored six runs in the fourth inning against Hu, who suffered his first loss of the year.

Hu (4-1) allowed eight hits in four innings and saw his ERA climb from 1.50 to 2.91.

WISCONSIN (6): Davis, cf, 2 1 1 1, McFarland, 2b, 4 0 2 2, Ratterree, rf, 4 1 1 0, Coulter, dh, 4 1 1 1, Brennan, 1b, 4 1 1 0, DeMuth, 3b, 4 1 1 2, Neda, c, 4 0 0 0, Halcomb, ss, 3 0 0 0, Pena, lf, 4 1 1 0. Totals 33 6 8 6.

KERNELS (1): Vielma, ss, 5 0 1 1, M.Murphy, cf, 5 0 1 0, Mauer, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Christensen, 1b, 0 0 0 0, Garver, dh, 3 0 2 0, Haar, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Swim, rf, 4 0 0 0, Wade, lf, 3 1 1 0, Quesada, c, 4 0 0 0, Vavra, 2b, 4 0 3 0. Totals 35 1 8 1.

Wisconsin 000 600 000 - 6 8 0

Kernels 000 000 100 - 1 8 1

Thompson, Harvey (7), Razo (9) and Neda. Hu, Bixler (5), Montanez (7), Burdi (9) and

## Vavra enjoys playing ball with Mauer

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 06 August 2014 21:27 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 August 2014 21:50

---

Quesada. W - Thompson (2-0). L - Hu (4-1). 2b - Ratterree  
(27), DeMuth (3), McFarland (13). SB - Davis (29). E - Wade (12). T - 2:54. A - 2,162.