

Kernels win again, but Stewart hurt

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 19 August 2014 21:14 -



The Cedar Rapids Kernels won their eighth straight game Tuesday night, but they may have paid a severe price as they chase the Midwest League pennant.

Kohl Stewart, their \$4.5 million bonus baby, had to leave the game in the top of the second inning with what could be a recurrence of the shoulder ailment that landed him on the Disabled List for 19 days recently.

The Kernels rallied for a 5-3 victory over Quad Cities before 1,678 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium, but Stewart looked dejected as he left the mound after conferring with Cedar Rapids Manager Jake Mauer, pitching coach Ivan Arteaga and the Kernels trainer.

"It's frustrating," Stewart said in the locker room. "It didn't feel right the first inning, but I tried to get through it. We'll see what happens."

Stewart was placed on the DL from July 25 through Aug. 13 with an "impingement" in his right shoulder. He pitched four strong innings against Beloit Aug. 13 and looked good, according to Mauer, but Stewart struggled from the outset Tuesday.

He gave up a long home run in the top of the first inning and did not have any pop on his fastball, which normally sits in the low to mid-90's.

"It's disappointing," said Mauer. "I thought we were over the hump with him."

Mauer said Stewart, 19, will be examined by a doctor in Cedar Rapids and probably will be

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examined by a Minnesota Twins doctor in Minneapolis before any decisions are made about his future.

"Hopefully this isn't anything major," said Mauer. "We don't anticipate it being major. He just didn't look right tonight."

Mauer and Arteaga could tell from the dugout that Stewart was not throwing as hard as he usually does. Kernels catcher Mitch Garver went out to the mound to check on Stewart in the second inning, then Garver looked toward the dugout.

"You could see he was kind of worried about him," said Mauer.



Mauer spoke briefly with Stewart, then made a pitching change after Stewart said he did not have his normal strength in his right arm.

"He said there wasn't anything in there," said Mauer. "That was enough. Hopefully it's just a little dead arm, but we'll get him looked at and see what's going on."

The Kernels have only 13 games left in the regular season, followed by a likely spot in the playoffs. It's possible Stewart will be done for the season, but that remains to be seen.

Stewart was the fourth overall pick in the 2013 draft from St. Pius X High school in Houston.

Stewart tried to be optimistic after the game. "I'll get through it. It's not a big deal," he remarked.

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The Kernels fell behind, 3-1, in the third inning but found another win to win a ballgame.

Engelb Vielma socked his first home run in the sixth inning to pull the Kernels within 3-2, setting the stage for a three-run rally in the eighth.

J.D. Williams drew a walk in the eighth inning and advanced to second base on a sharp single by Vielma. Tanner Vavra tied the game, 3-3, with an RBI double down the first-base line. Vielma and Vavra both scored when the Chiefs committed two errors on an infield grounder by Jonatan Hinojosa.

Mat Batts (2-0) tossed five shutout innings in relief for the Kernels and got the victory. He struck out six batters, did not walk anyone and allowed only two hits.

"He came in and gave us a chance," said Mauer. "Five zeroes he put up. Changed speeds, racked up the K's. He's been good."

Jake Reed pitched a 1-2-3 ninth inning for his second save, extending his scoreless innings streak to a team-best 17.2 innings.

The Kernels raised their overall record to 67-60, the fourth-best mark in the Midwest League. They raised their record for the second half of the season to 36-21, but remained one game behind Kane County in the second-half standings.

Vielma went 4-for-4 for the Kernels and drove in two runs. Vavra was 3-for-4 with an RBI. Chad Christensen went 3-for-5.

Cedar Rapids and Quad Cities meet again Wednesday night at the stadium at 6:35.

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QUAD CITIES (3): Boyd, cf, 4 0 0 0, Fernandez, 2b, 4 1 2 0, Wik, 3b, 4 1 2 2, McDonald, 1b, 4 0 1 0, Reed, dh, 4 0 0 0, Bottger, lf, 4 0 0 0, Booth, c, 3 1 2 0, Ramsay, rf, 2 0 0 0, Parker, ss, 3 0 0 0. Totals 32 3 7 2.

KERNELS (5): Hinojosa, dh, 5 0 1 0, Wade, 3b, 5 0 0 0, Christensen, 1b, 5 0 3 0, Garver, c, 3 0 1 0, Murphy, cf, 4 0 0 0, Williams, lf, 3 2 1 0, Larson, rf, 4 0 0 0, Vielma, ss, 4 2 4 2, Vavra, 2b, 4 1 3 1. Totals 37 5 13 3.

Quad Cities 111 000 000 - 3 7 2
Kernels 010 001 03x - 5 13 0

Sims, Minnis (7) and Booth. Stewart, Wilson (2), Batts (4), Reed (9) and Garver. W - Batts (2-0). L - Minnis (2-2). S - Reed (2). 2B - Booth (9), Fernandez (5), Williams (17), Christensen (22), Vavra (12). HR - Wik (4), Vielma (1). SB - Vavra (7). E - Fernandez (12), Minnis (2). T - 2:50. A - 1,678.