

10 Kernels have been here before

Written by Metro Sports Report

Monday, 06 April 2015 19:02 - Last Updated Wednesday, 08 April 2015 20:02



The Cedar Rapids Kernels, in conjunction with the Minnesota Twins, announced their official 25-man roster Monday afternoon and there are a lot of familiar names on the list.

Ten of the 25 players spent time with the Kernels in 2014 and are back for another shot.

The roster features four of the Twins' Top 30 Prospects, according to Baseball America, including shortstop Nick Gordon.

In addition to Gordon, who is ranked as the Twins' No. 6 prospect, the roster includes left-handed pitcher Stephen Gonzalves (No. 14 prospect), right-handed pitcher Michael Cederoth (No. 23 prospect) and right-handed pitcher Felix Jorge (No. 28 prospect).

The Kernels' pitching staff features five hurlers who spent either all or part of the 2014 season in Cedar Rapids with Mat Batts, John Curtiss, Gonsalves, Jorge and Jared Wilson. It also features a strong core from Elizabethton, including Cederoth (third round 2014), lefthander Sam Clay (fourth round 2014) and righthander Randy LeBlanc (10th round 2014).

Elizabethton finished second in the Appalachian League in team ERA and led the league with 14 shutouts and two complete games.

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"I think our starting pitching will be pretty good this year," Manager Jake Mauer said Monday.

Five position players return to the Kernels for the 2015 season, including infielder Jonathan Hinojosa and outfielders Tanner English, Zack Granite, Zack Larson and Max Murphy. Infielder Trey Vavra finished fourth in the Appalachian League with a .319 batting average and led the league in doubles with 20.

Tyler Kuresa was second with 44 RBIs and posted a .478 slugging percentage. Gordon finished second in the league with 46 runs scored.

Mauer expects to have another competitive club.

"We should be," he said. "We'll play hard. We did pretty well in spring training."

Seven pitchers begin the season on the disabled or restricted list. The DL pitchers include Brandon Bixler, Yorman Landa, Chris Mazza, Randy Rosario, Fernando Romero and Lewis Thorpe. Thorpe needs Tommy John surgery and has been lost for the season.

Hudson Boyd begins the season on the restricted list. All will remain in Fort Myers and continue to rehab as part of Extended Spring Training.

Tuesday will be "Meet The Kernels Night" at the ballpark, beginning at 5 p.m.

Cedar Rapids opens the season Thursday night with a three-game series at Kane County. The home opener is Sunday at 4 p.m. against Beloit.

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The roster includes 13 pitches, six infielders, four outfielders and two catchers.

KERNELS ROSTER

Pitchers

No. 31 Mat Batts, 5-11, 190, LHP
No. 25 Cameron Booser, 6-3, 225, LHP
No. 30 Michael Cederoth, 6-6, 195, RHP
No. 11 Samuel Clay, 6-2, 190, LHP
No. 45 John Curtiss, 6-4, 200, RHP
No. 47 Stephen Gonsalves, 6-5, 190, LHP
No. 35 Trevor Hildenberger, 6-2, 200, RHP
No. 17 C.K. Irby, 6-1, 200, RHP
No. 7 Felix Jorge, 6-2, 170, RHP
No. 15 Randy LeBlanc, 6-4, 185, RHP
No. 43 Michael Theofanopoulos, 6-1, 185, LHP
No. 46 Zach Tillery, 6-3, 210, RHP
No. 20 Jared Wilson, 6-4, 210, RHP

Catchers

No. 32 Jorge Fernandez, 6-3, 188
No. 21 Brian Navarreto , 6-4, 220

Infielders

No. 5 Nick Gordon, 6-0, 185
No. 4 Jonatan Hinojosa, 5-11, 150
No. 9 Pat Kelly, 5-10, 165
No. 22 Tyler Kuresa, 6-3, 190
No. 33 Trey Vavra, 6-2, 185
No. 16 T.J. White, 5-11, 218

Outfielders

No. 2 Tanner English, 5-10, 160

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No. 1 Zach Granite, 6-1, 175

No. 24 Zach Larson, 6-2, 185

No. 13 Max Murphy, 5-11, 195