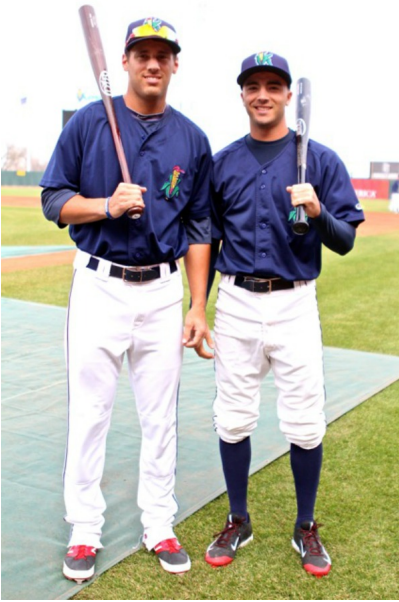


Granite, Larson healthy and ready to go

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 08 April 2015 19:55 -



Zack Granite and Zack Larson are both promising young outfielders with the Cedar Rapids Kernels, but they both got hurt while playing here last year and missed a good chunk of the season.

They are back for the 2015 season, healthy and raring to go.

Granite, 22, played in only 21 games last year. Larson, 21, appeared in 41 contests. They spent more time on the Disabled List than in the lineup during the 140-game campaign.

It was basically a lost year and missed opportunity, but they can't worry about that now.

"I feel great," Granite said Tuesday. "I hurt my shoulder early in the season, and then I came back and I tore my quad. It was a really down year for me last year, but I had a really good off-season.

"I'm 100 percent healthy, so I'm excited to start the year."

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The Kernels open the season Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at Kane County for a three-game series. The home opener is Sunday at 4:05 p.m. against Beloit at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Larson tore his hamstring during the eighth inning of a game on a cold night with the Kernels last season. He's learned the importance of stretching during the course of a game and is ready to attack the new year.

"It feels good to be back and healthy," he said.

Granite practiced in left field for the Kernels on Tuesday and Wednesday, while Larson was in right field. There are only four outfielders on the roster, so there should be plenty of playing time for everyone.

Max Murphy and Tanner English, who also spent time in Cedar Rapids last year, are also back with the club, so all four fly-chasers are familiar with the ballpark.

Granite, listed at 5-foot-11 and 167 pounds, hit .291 for the Kernels last season with two doubles, two triples and two RBIs. The Minnesota Twins selected him in the 14th round of the 2013 draft from Seton Hall University. He is from Staten Island, N.Y.

Larson, 6-3, 190, hit .265 with one home run, 11 doubles and 20 RBIs last season. The Twins picked him in the 20th round in 2012 from his high school in Bradenton, Fla.

Ten members of the Kernels' 25-man roster spent time in Cedar Rapids last year and all of the players have advanced through the early stages of the Minnesota farm system. They know each other and seem to like each other.

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"It brings a lot of leadership with all the guys coming back," said Larson. "They know what to expect, what to do."

The Midwest League season runs from April into September. It's a long season, filled with ups and downs, and it's unfortunately filled with injuries along the way.

Granite and Larson hope to avoid the injury bug this time.

"I'm going to go out and play," said Granite, a hard-nosed competitor. "Hopefully it's not hailing like it was last year."