

Kernels finish sweep of Kane County

Written by Metro Sports Report

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GENEVA, Ill. - The Cedar Rapids Kernels made it a little exciting in the bottom of the ninth inning Saturday afternoon, but they wriggled out of trouble and topped Kane County 5-3 to sweep the opening three-game series before 2,643 fans at Fifth Third Bank Ballpark.

The Kernels will put their 3-0 record on the line Sunday at 4:05 p.m. in the home opener against Beloit at Veterans Memorial Stadium for the start of a six-game homestand.

Cedar Rapids had a 5-1 lead with two outs in the bottom of the ninth Saturday, but two straight infield errors helped Kane County score two unearned runs and brought the winning run to the plate for the Cougars with two runners on base.

Kernels relief pitcher Trevor Hildenberger took matters into his own hands at that point and collected a strikeout to end the game and end the suspense.

Stephen Gonsalves pitched six strong innings for the Kernels. He struck out nine batters and allowed only one run on five hits. Gonsalves did not walk anyone and did not face more than four batters in any inning.

The Kernels got three strong outings from their starting pitchers in the series from Mat Batts, John Curtiss and Gonsalves. Michael Cederoth will try to keep the streak going Sunday against Beloit.

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Zack Granite reached base four times in the leadoff spot for Cedar Rapids with two hits and two walks. He also scored two runs. J.J. Fernandez had two doubles for the Kernels and Nick Gordon drove in two runs.

Randy LeBlanc pitched two shutout innings in relief for the Kernels before giving the ball to Hildenberger in the ninth inning. The three Kernels pitchers combined for 12 strikeouts.

The Kernels will host Beloit Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. Peoria will be here Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

KERNELS (5): Granite, cf, 3 2 2 0, Gordon, ss, 4 0 0 2, Larson, rf, 5 0 1 1, Vavra, dh, 3 1 1 0, Fernandez, c, 4 1 2 1, Murphy, lf, 4 0 0 0, Kuresa, 1b, 3 1 1 1, White, 3b, 4 0 1 0, Kelly, 2b, 3 0 1 0. Totals 33 5 9 5.

KANE COUNTY (3): Taylor, cf, 5 0 1 0, Alcantara, ss, 5 0 1 1, Herum, 1b, 5 1 3 1, McQuail, dh, 4 0 0 0, Heyman, lf, 4 0 1 0, Ozuna, 2b, 4 1 1 0, Kalamar, rf, 4 0 1 0, Queliz, c, 3 0 1 0, Trahan, ph, 1 0 0 0, Regis, 3b, 4 1 0 0. Totals 39 3 9 2.

Cedar Rapids 112 100 000 - 5 9 3
Kane County 100 000 002 - 3 9 1

Gonsalves, LeBlanc (7), Hildenberger (9) and Fernandez. Mejia, Jeter (6), Geyer (8), Ramirez (9) and Queliz. W - Gonsalves (1-0). L - Mejia (0-1).

2B - Vavra (1), Fernandez 2 (3), Granite (1), Taylor (1), Queliz (1), Ozuna (3). 3B - White (1). HR - Herum (1). E - Gonsalves (1), Kelly (1), White (2), Alcantara (2). T - 2:37. A - 2,643.