

## Kernels fall quietly to Clinton

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 03 May 2015 17:07 - Last Updated Sunday, 03 May 2015 18:42

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Cedar Rapids Kernels Manager Jake Mauer does not plan to hold any closed-door meetings with his struggling ballclub. No tantrums, no yelling and screaming, no gimmicks.

Something needs to be done, however. The team batting has dipped to .232, near the bottom of the Midwest League, and the Kernels are not scoring enough runs to be successful.

The Kernels had another quiet game Sunday afternoon in a 5-2 loss to Clinton before 1,141 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Cedar Rapids has lost seven of its last nine games and has scored only 16 runs in those nine outings, an average of less than two runs per game.

"The frustrating thing is, guys will show flashes and you think we're on our way and they revert back," said Mauer.

Outfielder Zack Granite, the team's top hitting at .358 in the leadoff spot, was promoted to Fort Myers last week, making things even tougher for the Kernels.

"We're going to miss him, no doubt about it," said Mauer. "But he did everything that he needed to do here. If he hadn't been hurt last year, he probably wouldn't have started here this year.

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"When a guy gets promoted, it creates opportunities," said Mauer. "Some of these guys need to be ready for that opportunity, especially some of these guys that are returning.

"We need them to do a little more, quite frankly. We need them to carry these young guys until they get accustomed to the league and it's not happening."

Mauer thinks the Kernels have to become more patient at the plate, especially with runners on base, instead of just "whacking" away at the first pitch they see.

"That's not hitting. That's what you do in high school and college," he said. "You guess and you try to ambush him. These guys (pitchers) are too good to do that. They're not just going to lay a fastball in there. They're actually going to pitch.

"You have to take a professional at-bat, you have to be a professional hitter. And we don't have a lot of guys that are able to do that yet."

Mauer said the players need to learn how to make adjustments. "The definition of insanity: Keep doing the same thing and expect a different result," he remarked.

The Kernels still have a winning record at 13-11, thanks mostly to the pitching staff and its collective ERA of 2.37, among the very best in the league. Felix Jorge was not as sharp as usual Sunday and allowed three runs in six innings, but that's considered a quality start in pro ball.

The Kernels got 10 hits Sunday, but left 10 runners on base. They hit into two double-plays and struck out eight times. Shortstop Nick Gordon, who leads the Midwest League with 18 RBIs, had the day off after collecting three hits Saturday night.

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"I think the effort has been there. I think they're trying," said Mauer. "I don't think it's lack of effort by any stretch of the matter."

Mauer emphasized that baseball is a performance-based job.

"If you don't perform, you don't have a job," he said. "There's a draft coming in June. They're going to have 30 more players coming in. Not to scare them, but it's the reality."

"If we're slow in making adjustments, Minnesota isn't going to let us keep getting our heads kicked in, I know that."

Cedar Rapids begins a three-game series at Wisconsin Monday night. The next home game is May 11 against Peoria.

**CLINTON (5):** Ward, 2b, 4 1 3 0, Liberato, cf, 5 0 0 0, Morales, rf, 3 1 0 0, DeCarlo, 3b, 5 0 2 2, Mack, lf, 3 0 1 0, Wawoe, ss, 4 1 1 0, Taylor, dh, 3 1 3 0, Brito, 1b, 3 1 1 3, Martin, c, 4 0 0 0. Totals 34 5 11 5.

**KERNELS (2):** English, cf, 3 0 0 0, Kelly, 2b, 5 1 2 0, Larson, rf, 4 0 0 0, Vavra, 1b, 4 1 2 0, Murphy, lf, 4 0 3 0, Fernandez, c, 3 0 1 1, White, 3b, 4 0 1 0, Kuresa, dh, 4 0 0 0, Hinojosa, ss, 4 0 1 0. Totals 35 2 10 1.

**Clinton** □ □ 030 000 200 - 5 11 0

**Kernels** □ □ 000 001 001 - 2 10 2

Peterson, Brown (7), Scott (9) and Martin. Jorge, Clay (7), Theofanopoulos (9) and Fernandez. W - Peterson (4-1). L - Jorge (1-2). 2B - Taylor (4), Ward (3), Vavra (5). 3B - Ward (4), Kelly (1). HR - Brito (1). SB - Ward (2), Morales (5). E - Murphy (1), Fernandez (2). T - 2:36. A - 1,141.