

Mildren stars in return to Kernels

Written by S.D. Buhr

Wednesday, 17 June 2015 21:50 -



Ethan Mildren made 13 starts for the Cedar Rapids Kernels a year ago before earning a promotion to Class High-A Fort Myers in July. On Wednesday, Mildren found himself back on the mound for the Kernels after coming off the Disabled List for Fort Myers and being assigned to Cedar Rapids earlier in the day.

On the mound, he looked like a man intent on making his stay in Cedar Rapids a short one.

In his return to Veterans Memorial Stadium, the tall right-hander struck out eight Burlington Bees and surrendered just two hits in 5 2/3 innings of shutout work as Cedar Rapids topped the Burlington Bees, 2-0, before 2,811 fans.

Mildren, who had struggled this season to a record of 1-4 with a 5.45 ERA for Fort Myers before hitting the Disabled List in late May with a left hamstring issue, said he was not disappointed to get the word he was headed back here.

"I was in a little funk down there," Mildren allowed after the win, "but I worked with some things, fought through it and I'm just glad to be somewhere pitching, whether it be down there or up here."

Mildren got the word a few days ago that he'd be headed north to Cedar Rapids.

"I was at the point down there where I was just happy to be pitching in some real games, some real competition, so it didn't matter," he said.

"I know how things work out sometimes with the roster. Some guys come off the DL and they need to get them going. I understand I just need to pitch

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my way back down to (Fort Myers).

"I just try to go out there every game and try to pitch my game, whether it keeps me here or gets me there. I'm going to go out with the same intensity and same focus, no matter where I'm at."

After cruising through five innings, Mildren got two quick outs in the sixth inning and then walked a pair of Bees before surrendering the hill to Kernels reliever Randy LeBlanc. LeBlanc threw one pitch, coaxing a slow roller that third baseman T.J. White converted into the third out of the inning.

LeBlanc went on to complete 2 1/3 innings, striking out three while giving up two hits and one walk.

Cameron Booser allowed some ninth inning drama, giving up a two-out double and a walk, but slammed the door shut with a 98 mph fastball for strike three to Burlington's Ryan Seiz for the save.

The Kernels scored both of their runs in the first inning.

Zack Larson and Alex Real reached base on consecutive two-out infield singles both players were driven across the plate by Edgar Corcino's double into the right-field corner.

Mildren, LeBlanc and Booser made the early lead stand up.

The Kernels generated eight hits, but five of those hits did not get out of the Burlington infield. Nick Gordon had three hits in four at-bats, including an eighth inning double. Real collected a pair of singles.

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Cedar Rapids batters had just one hit in six opportunities with runners on second or third base and skipper Jake Mauer expressed some impatience with his hitters after the game.

"We haven't swung the bats good for about three or four weeks," Mauer observed. "We have a difficult time with runners in scoring position.

"Corcino had a big at-bat for us (in the first inning), then we had a situation in the fourth inning with a runner on third and less than two outs, but couldn't get it done.

"We put too many balls in play early in the count, pitches they want us to swing at, not pitches that we should be swinging at. It's something we need to get better at."

The Kernels will go for a sweep of their three-game series with the Bees at 6:35 Thursday night.

BULRINGTON (0): Yacinich, ss, 4 0 1 0, Hermosillo, cf, 2 0 0 0, Daniel, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Delgado, rf, 4 0 0 0, Houchins, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Adams, lf, 4 0 1 0, Wass, c, 4 0 2 0, Seiz, 1b, 3 0 1 0, Salcedo, pr, 0 0 0 0, Gretzky, dh, 3 0 0 0. Totals 31 0 5 0.

KERNELS (2): English, cf, 4 0 1 0, Gordon, ss, 4 0 2 0, Larson, lf, 3 1 1 0, Real, dh, 3 1 2 0, Corcino, rf, 3 0 1 2, Fernandez, 1b, 2 0 0 0, White, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Navarroto, c, 3 0 0 0, Kelly, 2b, 3 0 0 0. Totals 28 2 8 2.

Burlington 000 000 000 - 0 5 1
Kernels 200 000 00x - 2 8 0

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Bolaski, Wesely (7), Kopra (8) and Wass. Mildren, LeBlanc (6), Booser (9) and Navarreto. W - Mildren (1-0). L - Bolaski (4-6). S - Booser (7). 2B - Wass (7), Corcino (4), Gordon (7). SB - Hermosillo E - Delgado (5). T - 2:15. A - 2,811.