

Gordon riding 15-game streak for Kernels

Written by Jim Ecker
Thursday, 16 July 2015 22:09 -



Nick Gordon does not have a cool nickname like his father, Tom "Flash" Gordon, but somebody might have to think of something if he keeps playing like this for the Cedar Rapids Kernels.

Gordon hit safely in his 15th straight game Thursday night as the Kernels lost to the Burlington Bees, 5-4, before 2,618 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Gordon's batting average dropped to .222 on May 25, but he's raised the mark to .267 and ranks among the Midwest League leaders in runs scored, stolen bases and hits.

The slender 19-year-old shortstop is maturing as a professional baseball player on a daily basis.

"He's been pretty good now for about two weeks as far as at-bats and slowing himself down," said Kernels Manager Jake Mauer. "He's having himself a pretty solid year.

"It's not .360 like people anticipated, but that's awfully difficult to do."

Gordon was the fifth overall pick in the 2014 draft from Olympia High School in Orlando, Fla., and got a \$3.85 million signing bonus from the Minnesota Twins. Some fans were quick to compare Gordon to Mike Trout and Byron Buxton, two young phenoms who starred for the Kernels in recent years, but that was a stretch.

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Gordon is not in their class yet -- few people are -- but he's made steady progress after hitting .294 at Elizabethton in the Rookie Appalachian League last year when he was 18.

Gordon is hitting .372 with eight RBIs in his last 10 games. He's had two hits in six of those games and has become an offensive weapon for Cedar Rapids.

Gordon does not mind talking about his 15-game hitting streak, which is the longest by a Kernel this season.

"I don't believe in jinxing myself," he said, smiling. "I'm just working hard and hits will come. I'm just trying to hit the ball hard and have good at-bats.

"It's just a mind-set," he said. "It's knowing you can go up there and put the ball in play. The season isn't over, so you have to keep going and keep working hard and the numbers will take care of themselves."

Gordon kept his hitting streak alive with an infield single in the sixth inning. It was just a little dribbler down the first-base line, but he avoided the tag by Burlington first baseman Steven Mateo with a quick move and dove safely into the bag.

"I don't know how he did it," said Mauer. "It must have been an old football move or something. How he got around it and stayed in the lane, I have no idea."

With a move like that, he could become "Nick the Quick."

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"I was trying to get on base, I was trying to start something," he said. "We needed some base-runners. You've got to give 110 percent, every play."

Tom "Flash" Gordon got his nickname during his 21-year career as a pitcher in the Major Leagues. His son is still working on a suitable nickname in the Kernels clubhouse.

"They call me a lot of different things," he said, smiling. "I've got five different nicknames. Hopefully one day I'll get one of my own."

Gordon was tied for sixth in the Midwest League in runs, tied for seventh in stolen bases and tied for 19th in hits when Thursday's game began.

He's also been flashy at times at shortstop, with good range and a strong arm. He's made only 13 errors in 77 games and has turned a number of hits into outs.

"For a young kid, that's pretty good," said Mauer. "He's one of the better shortstops in the league, there's no doubt about it."

The Kernels fell behind 5-2 in the sixth inning Thursday. They scored runs in the seventh and ninth, but fell short by a single tally.

One of the best parts of the game was watching Kernels relief pitcher Cam Booser fire 98 mph fastballs in the ninth inning.

The Kernels (53-38) and Bees (43-47) meet again at 6:35 p.m. Friday at the stadium.

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BURLINGTON (5): Arakawa, 2b, 5 1 2 0, Yacinich, ss, 5 1 1 0, Flair, dh, 5 0 1 0, Allen, rf, 5 0 1 2, Houchins, 3b, 2 2 0 0, Wass, c, 2 1 1 0, Mateo, 1b, 4 0 3 0, Gretzky, lf, 4 0 1 1, Hermosillo, cf, 4 0 0 1. Totals 36 5 10 4.

KERNELS (4): English, cf, 4 0 1 1, Gordon, ss, 4 0 1 1, Corcino, rf, 3 0 0 0, Larson, lf, 4 0 0 0, Murphy, dh, 4 1 1 0, Valera, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Kuresa, 1b, 4 1 1 0, Navarreto, c, 4 1 2 1, Kelly, 2b, 2 1 1 0. Totals 34 4 7 3.

Burlington □ 200 102 000 - 5 10 3

Kernels □ □ □ □ 002 000 101 - 4 □ 7 3

Jewell, Piche (6), Bumgardner (8), Paredes (9) and Wass. Mildren, Wilson (5), Mazza (8), Booser (9) and Navarreto. W - Jewell (5-5). L - Mildren (2-1). S - Paredes (15). SB - Murphy (7). E - Yacinich 2 (15), Valera 2 (5), Kuresa (6). T - 2:35. A - 2,618.