

Kuresa delivers in clutch for Kernels

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 26 July 2015 17:00 - Last Updated Monday, 27 July 2015 16:57



Tyler Kuresa glanced into the Kernels dugout in the bottom of the ninth inning Sunday afternoon to see if Manager Jake Mauer was going to replace him with a pinch-hitter with the bases loaded and one out.

Mauer stuck with Kuresa and everyone was glad he did.

Kuresa hit a single up the middle to snap a 4-4 tie and give Cedar Rapids a 5-4 victory over Beloit before 3,034 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Kuresa is a left-handed hitter and Beloit had a left-handed pitcher on the mound, so Mauer could have played the odds and used a right-handed batter in that situation. But Kuresa already had two hits Sunday and Mauer elected to stay with his 22-year-old first baseman, who has bounced around this season between Cedar Rapids, Fort Myers, Elizabethton and back to Cedar Rapids.

Kuresa was glad Mauer had confidence in him to deliver.

"It made me feel really good, especially with a lefty on the mound," said Kuresa. "He had gotten the best of me the at-bat before, so it felt really good. I'm just glad I could come through."

Jose Torres gave Kuresa a 1-1 fastball that he could hit. It was a sharp single up the middle, driving in Tanner English with the winning run from third base.

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"I'm glad I was the one at the plate," said Kuresa. "I tried to do the best with the opportunity and I got lucky, I guess. When the infield is in, a lot of times if you just hit it hard you're going to get it through."

Kuresa went 3-for-4 Sunday with two RBIs, raising his batting average to .213.

Kuresa began the season with the Kernels, but got off to a slow start and was assigned to Extended Spring Training in Fort Myers, Fla., May 31. He spent about a month in Fort Myers and then played 17 games for Elizabethton in the Rookie Appalachian League before being promoted again to the Kernels July 15.

Nobody likes to be demoted, but Kuresa made the most of the situation.

"I played a lot of baseball down there (in Florida and Tennessee)," he said. "I played every day and I got a lot of at-bats. I don't know if I got better, but I feel more relaxed now that I'm here.

"Luckily I had my fiancée with me, so it (getting demoted) was definitely disappointing, but it was a fun experience for us because we got to go down to Florida and travel around a little bit.

"We kind of treated it like a mini-vacation and I was working at the same time. I think that attitude helped me get back, because I wasn't taking myself so seriously like I was when I was first here."

Kuresa and his fiancée plan to get married Oct. 17.

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English went 3-for-5 Sunday for the Kernels. Zack Larson scored three runs. Rafael Valera went 2-for-4 with a triple and two RBIs.

Beloit scored two runs against Kernels relief pitcher Luke Bard in the top of the ninth to tie the game, 4-4, but Bard became the winning pitcher when the Kernels scored in the bottom of the ninth.

Cedar Rapids (59-42) is idle Monday and opens a new series at Clinton Tuesday night.

BELOIT (4): Bennie, 3b, 5 0 3 0, Gilbert, 2b, 5 1 1 0, Munoz, ss, 4 0 1 0, Kuhn, 1b, 5 1 2 0, Brizuela, dh, 4 1 1 0, Akaua, c, 4 0 3 1, Higley, lf, 5 0 1 1, Harris, cf, 3 0 1 1, Duinkerck, rf, 4 1 1 0. Totals 39 4 14 3.

KERNELS (5): English, cf, 5 1 3 0, Gordon, ss, 4 0 1 1, Corcino, rf, 4 0 0 0, Larson, lf, 2 3 1 0, Kuresa, 1b, 4 0 3 2, Doe, c, 4 0 1 0, Valera, 2b, 4 0 2 0, Diemer, dh, 4 0 0 0, Kelly, 3b, 4 1 1 0. Totals 35 5 12 5.

Beloit □ □ 000 200 002 - 4 14 2

Kernels □ □ 011 101 001 - 5 12 2

Gossett, Gauna (6), Torres (8) and Akau. Westphal, Mildren (6), Bard (9) and Doe. WP - Bard (6-0). LP - Torres (4-4). 2B - Kelly (11), Kuresa (10). 3B - Valera (1). SB - Larson (12). E - Gossett (3), Higley (3), Kuresa (8), Bard (1). T - 3:12. A - 3,034.