

Jorge helps Kernels bite Cougars

Written by S.D. Buhr

Wednesday, 19 August 2015 20:22 - Last Updated Wednesday, 19 August 2015 21:39



With both starting pitchers perched among the top-10 Midwest League hurlers in earned run average, Wednesday night's contest between the Cedar Rapids Kernels and Kane County Cougars had the makings for a pitchers' duel.

Kernels starter Felix Jorge (6-5) held up his end of the deal, limiting the Cougars to just two runs in seven innings while scattering seven hits, but Cedar Rapids chased Kane County starter Ethan Elias before the end of the third inning.

Cedar Rapids ended a four-game losing streak with a 4-2 win before 1,904 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Through mid-July, Jorge was about as dominant as a 21-year-old pitcher can expect to be in the Midwest League, sitting at or near the top of the league in ERA, but the right-hander had looked uncharacteristically human recently, giving up 14 earned runs in his last three starts.

Batters tend to hit a lot of fly balls off Jorge, and the weather conditions Wednesday troubled Kernels Manager Jake Mauer.

"I was a little worried getting to the park today and (the wind was) 500 miles an hour out to right field," Mauer said, adding he knew the Kane County lineup would be loaded with left-handed batters. "But he made his adjustment and he got the ball to sink a little bit. So that was encouraging."

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Jorge coaxed 14 ground-ball outs while striking out just two batters. He also helped himself by picking off a pair of baserunners at first base.

While acknowledging that his young starter did not have his best stuff, Mauer had no complaints about Jorge's performance.

"Finding a way to win without your best stuff, that's the sign of a pretty good pitcher," he said. "Seven innings, two runs. We'll take that any time."

Pitching coach Henry Bonilla cautioned about reading too much into Jorge's recent struggles.

"I think more than anything we were spoiled a little bit that first half, with what he was doing," Bonilla observed. "He was so consistent with each outing that a couple of times when he ran into a couple of runs, we were _____ like, 'Wow, what's going on?'"

"He competed like usual (Wednesday) and I think the important thing today, when he needed to make a pitch he made a pitch."

The Kernels' offense managed just six hits, all singles, but took advantage of two Kane County errors in the third inning, including a throwing error on a potential inning-ending double play that allowed two Kernels to score.

With the help of those Cougar miscues, Cedar Rapids overcame an early 2-1 deficit to take a 4-2 lead. That would be all that Jorge and relievers Jared Wilson and Nick Anderson needed.

No Kernels hitter managed more than one hit, but Rafael Valera worked three walks in addition to his seventh-inning single and scored twice.

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With Tanner English on the Disabled List with an injured thumb, Valera has stepped into English's usual spot at the top of the Kernels' batting order. Mauer likes what he's seeing from the versatile infielder from Venezuela.

"He's kind of taken to it," Mauer said. "He doesn't run great, but he finds a way to get on.

"He's done a real nice job for us there. Probably not your prototypical leadoff guy, but a guy that takes good at-bats and gives you a chance. If he keeps finding a way to score runs, we'll definitely take that."

The Kernels and Kane County complete their series Thursday night at 6:35.

KANE COUNTY (2): Taylor, lf, 3 1 1 1, Vargas, 2b, 4 0 2 0, Castillo, dh, 4 0 2 1, Herum, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Regis, 3b, 4 0 0 0, Bray, cf, 4 0 1 0, Lugo, ss, 4 0 0 0 Perez, c, 2 1 0 0, Reyes, rf, 3 0 2 0.
Totals 32 2 8 2.

KERNELS (4): Valera, 2b, 1 2 1 0, Gordon, ss, 4 1 1 0, Corcino, cf, 3 1 1 1, White, 3b, 2 0 1 1, Real, dh, 4 0 0 1, Larson, lf, 4 0 1 0, Kelly, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Navarreto, c, 3 0 0 0, Diemer, rf, 3 0 1 0.
Totals 27 4 6 3.

Kane County ▯ ▯ 002 000 000 - 2 8 2

Kernels ▯ ▯ ▯ ▯ 103 000 00x - 4 6 0

Elias, Baker (3), Martinez (6), Oliver (8) and Perez. Jorge, Wilson (8), Anderson (9) and Navarreto. W - Jorge (6-5). L - Elias (10-5). S - Anderson (2). 2B - Reyes (15). E - Reyes (5), Vargas (11). T - 2:32. A - 1,904.