

Buxton coming to town with Kernels

Written by Metro Sports Report

Monday, 01 April 2013 11:13 - Last Updated Monday, 01 April 2013 20:01

The 25-man roster for the 2013 Cedar Rapids Kernels features six of the Twins' Top 30 Prospects, according to Baseball America, and includes 2012 first-round selection Byron Buxton, a talented outfielder with speed.

In addition to Buxton as the Twins' No.2 Top Prospect, the roster also includes lefthanded pitcher Mason Melotakis (No.13 top prospect), shortstop Jorge Polanco (No.14), third baseman Travis Harrison (No.17), righthanded pitcher Tyler Jones (No.23) and infielder Niko Goodrum (No.26).

The Kernels' pitching staff features four hurlers who spent the whole 2012 season in the Midwest League at Beloit (Tim Atherton, Steven Gruver, David Hurlbut and Tyler Jones), plus three others (Melotakis, Taylor Rogers and Matt Tomshaw) who spent at least part of 2012 with the Snappers when Beloit was affiliated with Minnesota.

A strong core from the 2012 Appalachian League champions, Elizabethton, are on the roster including 2011 compensation round pick Hudson Boyd and 2012 fifth-round round pick Tyler Duffey.

Four position players return to the MWL for the 2013 season, including catchers Tyler Grimes and Jairo Rodriguez, infielder Drew Leachman and outfielder J.D. Williams.

The other members from the 2012 Elizabethton club are catcher Jhonatan Arias, infielders D.J. Hicks and Candido Pimentel, and outfielders Romy Jimenez and Adam Brett Walker.

The first opportunity to meet the 2013 Kernels is on Wednesday as part of "Meet the Kernels Night" at the stadium at 5:30 p.m.

The Kernels open the season on Thursday at 6:35 p.m. against the Beloit Snappers with the gates opening at 4:30 p.m.

Buxton coming to town with Kernels

Written by Metro Sports Report

Monday, 01 April 2013 11:13 - Last Updated Monday, 01 April 2013 20:01

PITCHERS

Tim Atherton

Bats/Throws (B/T): R/R

Date of Birth (DOB): Nov. 7, 1989

Hometown: Kempsey, Australia

How obtained: Signed in 2011 as International Free Agent

Signing bonus: N/A

2012: Beloit Snappers (1-2, 3.10 ERA)

Scouting report: Signed as a teenage outfielder by the Twins in 2008 but parted ways with them shortly thereafter. Re-signed as a pitcher in 2011. Mixes a 90 mph fastball with a very slow mid-60s curveball and an effective changeup to keep hitters off-balance.

Hudson Boyd

B/T: R/R

DOB: Oct. 18, 1992

Hometown: Fort Myers, Fla.

How obtained: 2011 supplemental first round pick out of Bishop Verot HS, in Fort Myers, Fla.

Signing bonus: \$1 million

2012: Elizabethton (2-5, 2.95 ERA)

Scouting report: Boyd is a big guy that can hit 95-97 mph on his fastball. Some thought he might profile as a hard-throwing relief pitcher, but it appears the Twins want to give him every opportunity to prove he can be a starter. He'll want to miss more bats and walk fewer hitters this summer than he did in his first year with the Twins to stay on the fast track up the organizational ladder.

Tyler Duffey

B/T: R/R

DOB: Dec. 27, 1990

Hometown: Houston

How obtained: 2012 5th round draft choice out of Rice University

Signing bonus: \$267,100

2012: Elizabethton Twins (2-0, 2 saves, 1.42 ERA) and Beloit Snappers (playoffs)

Scouting report: Duffey was overwhelmingly dominant for Elizabethton after signing with the Twins last year and that earned him the opportunity to move up to Beloit for the Snappers' playoff series, where he earned the Win in Beloit's sole victory over Clinton in that series.

Duffey's fastball isn't as dominating as some of his peers in the organization, but he missed a lot of bats while striking out 27 hitters in just 19 innings. He was a closer in college, but could get opportunities to start some games this summer.

Steven Gruver

B/T: L/L

DOB: June 30, 1989

Hometown: Austintown, Ohio

Buxton coming to town with Kernels

Written by Metro Sports Report

Monday, 01 April 2013 11:13 - Last Updated Monday, 01 April 2013 20:01

How obtained: 2011 seventh round draft pick out of the University of Tennessee

Signing bonus: \$125,000

2012: Beloit Snappers (7-8, 3.61 ERA)

Scouting report: Gruver split his time with the Snappers in 2012 between working out of the bullpen and starting games. Statistically, he was considerably more successful out of the pen, holding hitters to a .229 batting average and recording a 2.00 ERA in 27 relief innings. As a starter, his ERA was over 4.00 and batters hit almost .300 off of him. His fastball gets in to the low 90s and is complemented by two solid offspeed pitches, a changeup and slow curveball.

David Hurlbut

B/T: L/L

DOB: Nov. 24, 1989

Hometown: Concord, Calif.

How obtained: 2011 28th round draft pick out of Cal State-Fullerton

2012: Beloit Snappers (6-6, 1 save, 2.76 ERA)

Scouting report: Hurlbut worked out of the Snappers bullpen part of the 2012 season and then joined their rotation midway through the year. He doesn't throw particularly hard, but has an excellent curveball and a solid changeup.

Tyler Jones

B/T: R/R

DOB: Sept. 5, 1989

Hometown: Milwaukee

How obtained: 2011 11th round draft pick out of Louisiana State University

2012: Beloit Snappers (5-5, 4.67 ERA)

Scouting report: Jones throws two different fastballs and can reach the mid 90s with them. He had an excellent strikeout rate for Beloit in 2012, but also gave up more than one hit per inning of work.

Brett Lee

B/T: L/L

DOB: Sept. 20, 1990

Hometown: Pensacola, Fla.

How obtained: 2011 10th round draft pick out of St. Petersburg (Fla.) College

Signing bonus: \$150,000

2012: Elizabethton Twins (4-0, 2.68 ERA)

Scouting report: Lee started four of the 16 games he appeared in for Elizabethton, so it appears he could see duty in both roles for the Kernels, as well. He does not have overpowering velocity but has a good slider that he controls well.

Chris Mazza

B/T: R/R

DOB: Oct. 17, 1989

Hometown: Clayton, Calif.

How obtained: 2011 27th round draft pick out of Menlo College (Calif.)

2012: GCL Twins (2-1, 1 save, 0.60 ERA) and Elizabethton Twins (3-1, 3.45 ERA)

Buxton coming to town with Kernels

Written by Metro Sports Report

Monday, 01 April 2013 11:13 - Last Updated Monday, 01 April 2013 20:01

Scouting report: Mazza showed almost as much potential with the bat as with his arm in college, but the Twins wisely drafted him as a pitcher. Mazza dominated hitters in the GCL and fared well in Elizabethton, as well. His fastball doesn't overpower hitters but has very good movement.

Mason Melotakis

B/T: R/L

DOB: June 28, 1991

Hometown: Grapevine, Texas

How obtained: 2012 second round draft pick out of Northwestern State (La.) University

Signing bonus: \$750,000

2012: Elizabethton Twins (1-1, 1.35 ERA) and Beloit Snappers (3-1, 1 save, 2.08 ERA)

Scouting report: Melotakis pumps his fastball to the plate consistently in the mid 90s and his deceptive, high-effort delivery can cause problems for hitters, at least the first time they face him. He's one of several hard throwing collegiate relief pitchers the Twins drafted in 2012 and, like many of the others, he may get an opportunity to start games in 2012. There's every reason to believe, however, that Melotakis' future ... and his quickest route to the Big Leagues ... is as a power lefty out of the bullpen.

Taylor Rogers

B/T: L/L

DOB: Dec. 17, 1990

Hometown: Littleton, Colo.

How obtained: 2012 11th round draft pick out of the University of Kentucky

Signing bonus: \$100,000

2012: Elizabethton Twins (2-1, 1.80 ERA) and Beloit Snappers (2-2, 2.70 ERA)

Scouting report: The lanky Rogers does not have overpowering velocity with his fastball but his secondary pitches, a slider and a changeup, were effective in his first partial year of professional baseball. He threw more than 150 innings between his college season and his pro assignments, so he certainly appears to be durable and he's likely to get an opportunity to show the Twins he can continue to strike out more than a hitter per inning in a starting role in 2013.

Manuel Soliman

B/T: R/R

DOB: Aug. 11, 1989

Hometown: La Romana, Dominican Republic

How obtained: Signed as International Free Agent in 2007

2012: Fort Myers Miracle (0-1, 5.40 ERA)

Scouting report: Soliman was converted from an infielder to a pitcher in 2009 and worked his way up to high-A Fort Myers to start 2012. However, after just five games, he was shut down and had labrum surgery last June. When healthy, Soliman had a strong arm that generated a low 90s fastball and was showing potential with his curveball.

Matt Tomshaw

B/T: L/L

DOB: Dec. 18, 1988

Buxton coming to town with Kernels

Written by Metro Sports Report

Monday, 01 April 2013 11:13 - Last Updated Monday, 01 April 2013 20:01

Hometown: Kingston, NY

How obtained: 2011 42nd round draft pick out of Jacksonville University

2012: GCL Twins (0-0, 0.00 ERA) and Beloit Snappers (4-6, 3.02 ERA)

Scouting report: Tomshaw is not an overpowering pitcher but the lefty gets outs. He was one of the more reliable starting pitchers for the Snappers in 2012. He doesn't walk many hitters and that's a trait that the Twins organization places a lot of value on.

POSITION PLAYERS

Jhonatan Arias

Position: Catcher

B/T: R/R

DOB: Feb. 18, 1989

Hometown: Bani, Dominican Republic

How obtained: Signed as International Free Agent in 2007

2012: Elizabethton Twins (.301, 1 HR, 11 RBI)

Scouting report: This will be Arias' second trip to the Midwest League. He was a member of the Beloit Snappers in 2011, but after struggling there, he returned to Elizabethton last season. He did hit better in 2012 and he has been considered a strong defensive catcher, with a particularly strong and accurate throwing arm.

Byron Buxton

Position: Outfielder

B/T: R/R

DOB: Dec. 18, 1993

Hometown: Baxley, Ga.

How obtained: 2012 first round draft pick out of Appling County HS, Baxley, Ga.

Signing bonus: \$6 million

2012: GCL Twins (.216, 4 HR, 14 RBI) and Elizabethton Twins (.286, 1 HR, 6 RBI)

Scouting report: Buxton was the second player chosen overall in the 2012 draft and was widely considered the best athlete available in the draft. The proverbial "five tool" player, Buxton is expected to hit for average, hit for power, demonstrate speed, play excellent defense in centerfield and possess a strong arm (as a prep pitcher, he threw in the high 90s). Baseball America named him the "top prospect" in both the Gulf Coast League and the Appalachian League in 2012.

Niko Goodrum

Position: Infielder

B/T: B/R

DOB: Feb. 28, 1992

Hometown: Fayetteville, Ga.

How obtained: 2010 second round draft pick out of Fayette County HS (Fayetteville, Ga.)

Signing bonus: \$514,800

2012: Elizabethton Twins (.242, 4 HR, 38 RBI)

Scouting report: Goodrum spent his second season at Elizabethton in 2012 in the hope that his defense at shortstop would improve over his 2011 results. It did. However, his offensive stats

Buxton coming to town with Kernels

Written by Metro Sports Report

Monday, 01 April 2013 11:13 - Last Updated Monday, 01 April 2013 20:01

regressed a little bit. He's showing better power, so there is still plenty of offensive potential in Goodrum and as a former second round draft choice, the Twins are likely to continue to show patience as they wait for that potential to be realized.

Tyler Grimes

Position: Catcher/Infielder

B/T: R/R

DOB: July 3, 1990

Hometown: Andale, Kan.

HOW obtained: 2011 fifth round draft choice out of Wichita State University

Signing bonus: \$132,500

2012: Beloit Snappers (.202, 7 HR, 30 RBI)

Scouting report: Grimes played the middle infield for the Snappers in 2012, but went to Fall Instructionals to learn the catcher position. He has yet to show consistency with the bat but is showing some power and if his strong arm can make the transition to catcher, he could improve his value to the Twins organization and the Kernels.

Travis Harrison

Position: Third base

B/T: R/R

DOB: Oct. 17, 1992

Hometown: Tustin, Calif.

How obtained: 2011 supplemental first round draft choice out of Tustin (Calif.) HS

Signing bonus: \$1.05 million

2012: Elizabethton Twins (.301, 5 HR, 27 RBI)

Scouting report: Harrison was drafted for his potential as a power hitter and he has not disappointed in that regard, but he also has good bat speed and a level swing that should help him maintain a high batting average, as well. The question that remains is whether he'll be able to stick at third base defensively. If he can, his value as a prospect increases significantly.

Dalton (D.J.) Hicks

Position: First base

B/T: L/R

DOB: April 2, 1993

Hometown: Altamonte Springs, Fla.

How obtained: 2012 17th round draft pick out of the University of Central Florida

2012: Elizabethton Twins (.270, 4 HR, 25 RBI)

Scouting report: Hicks profiles as a prototypical first base prospect, with the potential to hit for average as well as power, as he demonstrated by hitting a walk-off grand slam home run to give the Elizabethton Twins the Appalachian League Championship in 2012.

Romy Jimenez

Position: Outfielder

B/T: R/R

DOB: May 14, 1991

Hometown: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Buxton coming to town with Kernels

Written by Metro Sports Report

Monday, 01 April 2013 11:13 - Last Updated Monday, 01 April 2013 20:01

How obtained: Signed as International Free Agent in 2009

2012: Elizabethton Twins (.347, 8 HR, 35 RBI)

Scouting report: Jimenez has hit for average every season since signing with the Twins, but it wasn't until 2012 that he hit more than one home run in a season, so it's encouraging that he's now showing more than a little power. He's battled some injuries in each of the past two seasons, however, so there is some question as to whether that has negatively affected his speed.

Drew Leachman

Position: Outfielder

B/T: R/R

DOB: April 21, 1989

Hometown: Mobile, Ala.

How obtained: 2011 37th round draft pick out of Birmingham-Southern College

2012: Beloit Snappers (.272, 5 HR, 46 RBI)

Scouting report: Leachman showed considerable improvement in 2012 over his Rookie League performance in 2011, both in terms of making good contact with the ball and hitting with more power. He even stole 10 bases for the Snappers. Leachman was drafted as an outfielder and has played most of his games there, but also manned first base for Beloit frequently and could see more work at that position for the Kernels.

Candido Pimentel

Position: Outfielder/infielder

B/T: B/R

DOB: July 19, 1990

Hometown: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

How obtained: Signed as an International Free Agent in 2009

Signing bonus: \$575,000

2012: Elizabethton Twins (.330, 1 HR, 22 RBI)

Scouting report: Pimentel was viewed as one of the top prospects signed out of the Dominican Republic in 2009 and has shown an ability to make contact with the ball and get on base. He has a powerful swing, but thus far has demonstrated streaky power numbers. He has good speed, however, and has put up solid stolen base numbers every year. Signed as an outfielder, Pimentel played 26 games at second base last season, so he's likely to see time in both the outfield and infield for the Kernels.

Jorge Polanco

Position: Infielder

B/T: B/R

DOB: July 9, 1993

Hometown: San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic

How obtained: Signed as an International Free Agent in 2009

Signing bonus: \$750,000

2012: Elizabethton Twins (.318, 5 HR, 27 RBI)

Scouting report: Polanco has always been viewed as a middle infielder with better than average defensive skills and 2012 saw his offensive performance begin to catch up to his potential. He

Buxton coming to town with Kernels

Written by Metro Sports Report

Monday, 01 April 2013 11:13 - Last Updated Monday, 01 April 2013 20:01

hit over .300 for the first time as a professional and started showing more power, as well.

Jairo Rodriguez

Position: Catcher

B/T: R/R

DOB: Aug. 24, 1988

Hometown: Acarigua, Venezuela

How obtained: Signed as International Free Agent in 2007

2012: Beloit Snappers (.265, 2 HR, 20 RBI)

Scouting report: Rodriguez is older than most Midwest League players and has been more productive behind the plate than he has with the bat. However, in 2012, he did improve considerably at the plate, while the rate at which he threw out attempted base stealers dropped slightly.

Adam Brett Walker

Position: Outfielder

B/T: R/R

DOB: Oct. 18, 1991

Hometown: Milwaukee

How obtained: 2012 third round draft pick out of Jacksonville University

Signing bonus: \$490,400

2012: Elizabethton Twins (.250, 14 HR, 45 RBI)

Scouting report: Walker projects as an all-or-nothing power-hitting corner outfielder, who may take a while to develop plate discipline and strike out too often, as a result. But when he makes contact, the ball can go a very long way. He has the speed to stay in the outfield but doesn't have the strongest throwing arm. That, combined with all of the other high-ceiling outfielders in the Twins organization, results in speculation that his best defensive position long-term may be first base.

Ja'Damion (J.D.) Williams

Position: Outfielder

B/T: B/R

DOB: Nov. 20, 1990

Hometown: Odessa, Fla.

How obtained: 2010 10th round draft pick out of Brooks-DeBartolo Collegiate HS (Tampa, Fla.)

Signing bonus: \$125,000

2012: Beloit Snappers (.234, 6 HR, 39 RBI)

Scouting report: After hitting .324 for Elizabethton in 2011, Williams' batting average dropped 90 points in his first year of full-season professional baseball at Beloit in 2012, though he did show some power. Williams also stole 23 bases for the Snappers in 32 attempts. If he can cut down on his strikeouts, that speed will be even more valuable for Williams, as well as the Kernels.

(Profiles compiled by S.D. Buhr. Statistics source: Baseball-Reference.com. Scouting reports drawn largely from information provided in The Minnesota Twins Prospect Handbook-2013, by

Buxton coming to town with Kernels

Written by Metro Sports Report

Monday, 01 April 2013 11:13 - Last Updated Monday, 01 April 2013 20:01

Seth Stohs with Jeremy Nygaard and Cody Christie. □ *Link:* www.lulu.com)