

Walker drives in 7; Kernels roll to 13-8 win

Written by Don Taylor

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Adam Brett Walker belted two home runs and drove in seven runs to power the Cedar Rapids Kernels to a 13-8 win over the Great Lakes Loons Friday night at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

The Kernels have scored 29 runs in the first two games of the series against Great Lakes. They scored 16 in a win Thursday.

The Kernels scored three in the first inning Friday on Walker's three-run home run and they never looked back. Walker led the way with three hits that included a grand slam in the fourth inning.

"It was a pretty good day. I think that's the most RBIs I have had in a game," said Walker, who also homered Thursday. His five homers lead the Kernels. "I have been concentrating on slowing the game down and not trying to do too much. Individually, it's my job to try and drive the ball from gap to gap and that is what I focus on."

J.D. Williams added a two-run homer in the Kernels' six-run fourth inning. Jorge Polanco contributed three hits and scored three runs. Travis Harrison, Candido Pimentel and Jhonatan Arias each chipped in a pair of hits as part of a 14-hit attack.

Hudson Boyd began the game on the mound for the Kernels, but struggled with his control. Steve Gruver (2-0) came on in the top of the fifth and provided some much needed pitching stability and picked up the win. David Hurlbut finished the game off for the Kernels in the ninth and struck out two.

"We are a pretty tight-knit group and we are having fun hitting the ball right now. Walker had an especially good night tonight," said Kernels Manager Jake Mauer. "Our pitching isn't where we want it to be yet, but it is really early in the year and the weather dictates a kind of hit-and-miss rotation right now."

"It was nice to see Gruver come in and calm things down tonight and get the win."

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Pat Stover, Jesmuel Valentin and James Baldwin - the seven, eight and nine hitters in the Great Lakes lineup - accounted for nine of the Loons' 12 hits.

The Kernels host Great Lakes Loons again Saturday at 5:05 p.m.

GREAT LAKES (8): Holland, 2b, 3 1 0 0, Rathjen, rf, 4 0 0 0, Smith, dh, 4 0 0 0, Hoenecke, 3b, 4 0 0 1, Ricardo, c, 5 1 2 0, Valdez, 1b, 5 1 1 0, Stover, lf, 5 1 3 1, Valentin, ss, 5 2 3 2, Baldwin, cf, 4 2 3 2, Bird, p, 0 0 0 0, Meza, p, 0 0 0 0, Gonzalez, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 39 8 12 6.

KERNELS (13): Buxton, cf, 3 2 0 1, Goodrum, ss, 5 1 0 0, Polanco, dh, 4 3 3 0, Hicks, 1b, 3 2 1 1, Walker, rf, 4 2 3 7, Harrison, 3b, 5 1 2 1, Pimentel, 2b, 4 1 2 1, Arias, c, 5 0 2 0, Williams, lf, 2 1 1 2, Boyd, p, 0 0 0 0, Gruver, p, 0 0 0 0, Mazza, p, 0 0 0 0, Hurlbut, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 35 13 14 13.

Great Lakes 002 200 400 - 8 12 1

Kernels 302 610 01x - 13 14 1

Bird, Meza (4), Gonzalez (6) and Ricardo. Boyd, Gruver (5), Mazza (7), Hurlbut (9) and Arias. W - Gruver (2-0). L - Bird (0-1). 2B - Valdez (2), Stover 2 (3), Valentin (1), Ricardo (1), Polanco (5). 3B - Valentin (1), Baldwin (1). HR - Walker 2 (5), Williams (3). SB - Baldwin 2 (3), Holland (10), Valentin (1), Buxton (8). SF - Williams. E - Gonzalez (1), Pimentel (1). T - 3:01. A - 2,063.