

## Bizarre ending to Kernels' 6th straight win

Written by S.D. Buhr

Saturday, 27 April 2013 21:36 -

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For the first 3 1/2 hours of Saturday night's game with the Great Lakes Loons, Travis Harrison sat and watched, much like the 2,063 fans who paid the price of admission.

But in the bottom of the 11th inning, with the game tied and the bases loaded, he came to the plate as a pinch hitter for designated hitter Tyler Grimes and set off a bizarre finish to what ultimately was ruled an 8-7 win for the Kernels.

Harrison launched a fastball from Loons pitcher Arismenda Ozoria in to the picnic area beyond the left-field wall for an apparent walk-off grand slam.

But appearances can be deceiving.

Harrison's teammates mobbed him as he attempted to round the bases and the mob scene continued all the way into the Kernels dugout.

Back on the field, though, Great Lakes Manager Razor Shines was having a discussion with umpires Clint Vondrak and Nate Tomlinson.

In the end, the umpires ruled Niko Goodrum had scored the winning run and that Harrison had successfully reached first base but that he and the other two baserunners, Dalton Hicks and Adam Brett Walker, had abandoned their efforts to advance more bases.

That means Harrison's shot goes down as a walk off RBI single and the Kernels scored just one run to win 8-7.

"Ya know, if that's how they see it, I understand it because there are 25 people all excited and on the field," Kernels Manager Jake Mauer said after the late ruling was explained to him. "You couldn't tell who touched what or who touched who. You would like the kid to get the home run

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and the grand slam and everything, ya know, but I guess in hindsight, he did the job he was supposed to do. Hit the ball to the outfield. Learning experience for everybody."

For his part, Harrison got the pitch he was looking for and then just did the best he could to get around the bases.

"I didn't know what to do. I was running, I hit second and got tackled," he said. "So I slowly worked my way around the bases."

Harrison's game-winning hit wasn't the only drama, however.

Adam Brett Walker was hitless in three at-bats with only a fourth inning walk to show for his evening when he came to the plate with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning and the Kernels trailing, 7-4. Walker lifted a fly ball toward left-center field that carried just beyond the wall for a home run that tied the game, 7-7, and sent it into extra innings.

It was Walker's fifth home run in his last four games and his fourth of the three-game series against Great Lakes. He belted two homers and drove in seven runs Friday night in a 16-7 win.

Until Walker's blast most of the excitement had been generated by Loons shortstop Corey Seager, the Dodgers' first-round draft pick in last year's amateur draft. Seager had a pair of two-run home runs and a double, making him primarily responsible for the Loons' late lead.

But with one out and one man on base in the ninth, Seager booted a potential game-ending double play ball off Hicks' bat, giving Walker his opportunity to be the Kernels' first hero of the evening.

At the end of the night, Mauer was not only satisfied with the result, but pleased with his team's effort.

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"The biggest thing is they didn't quit," he said. "They competed. Down early, stayed with it, chipped away. That's what you want to see in your team, they compete, play the whole game."

Harrison had started the first 19 games of the season. Mauer said he decided to use him as a pinch hitter because "He was staying warm. It's not technically a day off. I told (Harrison) in the seventh inning, 'I'm not going to use you unless the game's on the line and we have a chance to win it.' He said, 'I'm ready for whatever.' He was ready for that first pitch."

Harrison agreed with his manager.

"Fastball right down the middle," he said. "I was up there looking for that pitch and they gave it to me and I couldn't have hit it any better."

Kernels pitchers racked up 16 strikeouts. The most impressive performance on the mound came from reliever Tim Atherton, who worked 3 1/3 innings without giving up a run or a hit, while striking out five batters. David Hurlbut came in to get the final Great Lakes hitter of the night and got credit for the win.

Starting pitcher Mason Melotakis wasn't at his best, getting nicked for four runs, all earned, in five innings of work, but he did strike out seven Loons. Manuel Soliman relieved Melotakis in the sixth and worked 2 1/3 innings, allowing three runs.

The Kernels, who have won six straight games, swept the series with the Loons. They begin a three-game series with the Lansing Lugnuts on Sunday. Game time is 2:05 p.m.

GREAT LAKES (7): Smith, dh, 5 1 2 0, Stover, lf, 4 0 0 0, Valdez, 1b, 1 0 0 0, Ogle, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Holland, pr-lf, 1 1 0 0, Hoenecke, 3b, 5 1 1 1, Seager, ss, 5 3 3 4, Rathjen, rf, 3 1 0 0, Capellan, c, 2 0 0 1, Valentin, 2b, 5 0 1 0, Baldwin, cf, 2 0 0 0, Cash, p, 0 0 0 0, Cotton, p, 0 0 0 0, Griggs, p, 0 0 0 0, Ozoria, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 36 7 7 6.

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KERNELS (8): Buxton, cf, 4 1 1 2, Goodrum, ss, 4 2 2 0, Polanco, 2b, 5 0 1 1, Hicks, 1b, 6 1 1 0, Walker, rf, 4 2 1 3, Grimes, dh, 5 1 1 1, Harrison, ph, 1 0 1 1, Pimentel, 3b, 4 0 2 0, Rodriguez, c, 2 0 0 0, Jimenez, ph, 1 0 0 0, Arias, c, 0 0 0 0, Williams, lf, 2 1 0 0, Melotakis, p, 0 0 0 0, Soliman, p, 0 0 0 0, Atherton, p, 0 0 0 0, Hurlbut, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 38 8 10 8.

Great Lakes 301 001 020 00 - 7 7 1

Kernels 100 201 003 01 - 8 10 0

(One out when winning run scored)

Cash, Cotton (4), Griggs (9), Ozoria (10) and Capellan. Melotakis, Soliman (6), Atherton (8), Hurlbut (11) and Rodriguez, Arias (11). 2B - Smith (5), Seager (1), Polanco (6), Grimes (1), Buxton (5). HR - Seager 2 (3), Walker (6). SB - Baldwin 3 (6), Rathjen (8), Pimentel (4). S - Rodriguez, Polanco. SF - Capellan, Buxton. E - Seager (3). T - 3:32. A - 2,063.