

## Struggling Kernels drop 4th in row

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 25 May 2013 21:57 - Last Updated Saturday, 25 May 2013 22:04

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Jake Mauer is not the type of manager who likes to yell and scream at his players, but he might have a few stern words for the Kernels when they report for duty Sunday morning.

Cedar Rapids committed three errors Saturday night and lost its fourth straight game, 6-3, before 2,581 fans on a chilly Fireworks Night at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

The Kernels compiled an 18-5 record in April, but the club is only 12-12 in May and not playing well lately.

"We're not playing as clean as we did, without a doubt," said Mauer. "This is the fourth time now in a row that we've given up runs in the first inning."

The Kernels (30-17) are scheduled to host the Bees (17-26) in the second game of the three-game series Sunday at 2:05 p.m., but the Kernels could be headed for rigorous pre-game drills Sunday morning.

"We're going to get out there tomorrow (for practice)," said Mauer. "It's an early game, but we're going to work their ass, I can tell you that."

The Kernels were the toast of the Midwest League in April when they hit .276 as a team and had a staff earned run average of 3.48. Those numbers have dipped significantly in May, with a team batting average of .257 and a team ERA of 4.60 heading into Saturday's defeat.

The Kernels were swept in a three-game series at Beloit Wednesday, Thursday and Friday for their first three-game losing streak of the season. Now it's a four-game skid.

"I don't know if we're not mentally into it or not," said Mauer. "The other teams are getting better, without a doubt."

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"You're going to face adversity throughout the year. We just happened to start out like gangbusters. This is some adversity that these guys haven't had to face yet.

"It's going to be interesting to see how we go about it and how we approach our business. I think that's the biggest thing."

Burlington scored three runs in the top of the first inning against Jose Berrios (3-2) when the Kernels kicked the ball around.

Berrios lasted five innings and left with the Bees holding a 4-0 lead, but only one of those four runs was earned. He allowed nine hits, struck out eight batters and walked one.

Cedar Rapids pulled within 4-3 in the bottom of the eighth with a pair of runs when the Bees committed two errors, but Jhonatan Arias grounded out with the bases loaded to end the threat.

Mauer wanted to pinch-hit for Arias, a .200 hitter, but Niko Goodrum (a .265 hitter) was not available after jamming his thumb Friday night and Mauer did not have another good option.

Burlington scored twice in the top of the ninth for a 6-3 lead on a two-run single by Jonathan Walsh with the bases loaded and two outs.

Cedar Rapids put two runners on base in the bottom of the ninth and brought Dalton Hicks to the plate as the tying run, but Hicks grounded out to end the game.

"We're not seizing the opportunities, we're not making the opportunities," said Mauer, whose club had a string of dramatic come-from-behind victories earlier this season. "We're not being aggressive.

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"We're just kind of hoping something turns out instead of making it happen."

The night was not a total loss for Cedar Rapids. The Beloit Snappers lost both ends of a doubleheader against Kane County and dropped a little further behind the Kernels in the West Division.

"Good," said Mauer. "That made my night."

Cedar Rapids (30-17) has a 2 1/2-game lead over Beloit (28-20) for first place.

Jorge Polanco went 3-for-5 for the Kernels with two doubles, raising his batting average to .319.

Brett Lee (3-2) is scheduled to pitch for Cedar Rapids on Sunday.

BURLINGTON (6): S.Johnson, 3b, 3 2 1 0, K.Johnson, dh, 5 2 2 0, Hinkle, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Walsh, rf, 5 0 1 2, Gowens, lf, 5 1 2 0, Clarke, cf, 4 0 2 1, Ross, ss, 4 1 1 0, Martinez, c, 4 0 0 0, Moesquit, 2b, 4 0 2 1. Totals 38 6 11 4.

KERNELS (3): Buxton, cf, 4 1 1 0, Pimentel, 2b, 5 1 0 0, Polanco, ss, 5 0 3 1, Hicks, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Walker, rf, 4 0 0 0, Harrison, 3b, 2 0 0 0, Grimes, dh, 4 1 1 1, Arias, c, 4 0 1 1, Williams, lf, 3 0 0 0. Totals 35 3 6 3.

Burlington	300 100 002 - 6 11 3
Kernels	000 000 120 - 3 6 3

Crowley, Santos (7), Baker (8), Spomer (8) and Martinez. Berrios, Tomshaw (6), Jones (7),

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Montanez (8) and Arias. W - Crowley (4-1). L - Berrios (3-2). Sv - Spomer (1). 2B - K.Johnson (10), Moesquit (2), Polanco 2 (14). SB - Gowens (5), Clarke (5). E - Santos 2 (3), Moesquit (5), Pimentel 2 (6), Berrios (1). T - 3:00. A - 2,581.