

Twins GM Ryan likes Kernels, Buxton

Written by S.D. Buhr

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GRAND CHUTE, Wis. - Minnesota Twins General Manager Terry Ryan has been getting his initial first-hand look at the Cedar Rapids Kernels over the past few days as the Kernels have been taking on the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers.

Before Sunday's game, he took time to share his impressions with the Metro Sports Report and talked about the Twins' new relationship with Cedar Rapids and, yes, about possible promotions of Byron Buxton and other Kernels. (Buxton was promoted to Fort Myers of the Florida State League following Sunday's game.)

MSR: While you haven't personally made the trip to Cedar Rapids yet this season, you've certainly had reports from others in the organization. How do the Twins feel the relationship with Cedar Rapids is going?

TERRY RYAN: Yeah, I think the people that are involved in this organization that certainly have been to Cedar Rapids are happy with the relationship. You've got a good club. We've got all the facilities that we were hoping to acquire. I think the reception for our players, not only with the host families, but also the fans and so forth, it's been almost a match made in heaven for both of us.

One of the attractions of coming to Cedar Rapids is, you're in our market, as far as we're concerned. I know not everybody in Cedar Rapids is going to be a Twins fan, but I know there's a sizeable amount and we take that seriously. Certainly we're going to try to expand on that. Between Twinsfest and Winter Caravan and all that type of stuff, to expand our relationship with the Cedar Rapids area and surrounding areas. It's an easy drive both ways, so it's very convenient.

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MSR: Of course, Kernels fans would want to know, what's the future of Byron Buxton with the Kernels? When will he be moving up?

RYAN: He's got a fine future and, as you know, we've always said once a guy dominates a league, and it's getting to that point. This is the first time I've seen him here, of course, in the Midwest League, and I want to see how he's responding and how he's handling breaking balls and what he's doing on the basepaths as far as reading pitchers' moves.

He's a well-rounded player with the correct makeup we're looking for. So, it's getting to that point now where he might need another challenge. You're going to have to stay tuned to that.

NOTE - Buxton was promoted to Fort Myers of the Florida State League following Sunday's game.

MSR: The Kernels finally have another top Twins prospect, Max Kepler, up with the team. He must be coming along better after the spring training injury.

RYAN: Yeah, he's had a bad elbow and it's been frustrating for all of us because we can't figure out what the problem is. Now he's playing and he's playing the outfield. He can play left, center and right. He can play first. He's got a lot of life in his bat, as you've seen the last couple of days. He's scalded a couple of balls here recently.

We'll wait for him to get up to par here, because he's way behind everybody. But I think you're going to like what you see in Kepler as the summer progresses.

MSR: Are there others with the Kernels right now that you really think have had outstanding years to this point?

RYAN: You've got a host of guys on that team that have had outstanding years. The guy at first, (Dalton) Hicks, has been good. I think (Jorge) Polanco's been good. I think (Adam Brett) Walker

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certainly has shown some signs. I think (Travis) Harrison has been good. You've got a handful of guys that if any of those guys was promoted, I don't think anyone in Cedar Rapids would be surprised.