

Berrios hurls Kernels to 6th straight win

Written by S.D. Buhr

Wednesday, 26 June 2013 20:12 - Last Updated Wednesday, 26 June 2013 21:12

The Cedar Rapids Kernels upped their perfect second half record to 6-0 Wednesday night as they topped the Burlington Bees, 5-2. A crowd of 2,233 fans witnessed the victory at Veterans Memorial Stadium, including the winners of the Kernels' [2 millionth fan promotion](#), the Steven Reick family of Solon.

The Reicks won a prize package valued at \$3,000 from the Kernels.

For his start against the Bees, Jose Berrios (5-3) broke out a new pair of stirrups that were navy with three white stripes, "for good luck," according to Berrios after the game. Whether the credit goes to his lucky socks or his \$1.55 million arm, Berrios overpowered the Bees hitters for seven innings, striking out nine and giving up just five hits.

Asked if he'll keep wearing the lucky socks, Berrios quickly answered with a smile, "Every day."

The 19-year old Kernels pitcher also acknowledged he was throwing well. "I threw it down, (and got) more ground balls. I stayed down to the batters."

Berrios, who didn't make his first start for the Kernels until April 22, leads the Kernels pitching staff with 65 strikeouts.

Kernels Manager Jake Mauer said he liked what he saw from Berrios.

"He was aggressive with his fastball and that I think was key," Mauer said. "Challenged hitters. (Catcher Michael) Quesada did a nice job keeping him at task."

Mauer acknowledged that Berrios struggled in a couple of innings, but as the manager said, "(Berrios) was able to make pitches and limit the damage. That's been the key I think for the last

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three or four days, if our starters got in trouble, it's only been a run or two compared to the six or seven that was happening the last week of that first half."

Alex Muren finished up in relief and faced just six hitters in his two innings of work. He picked up his first save.

Center fielder Max Kepler hit his second home run in as many games, pulling a deep line drive over the right field wall in the fourth inning to put the Kernels up 2-1.

Jorge Polanco added hit 21st double of the season in the fifth inning, driving in J.D. Williams and Michael Quesada, both of whom singled ahead of Polanco.

Kernels first baseman Dalton Hicks pushed his Midwest League leading RBI total to 71 on the year with a single that drove in Niko Goodrum in the first inning. That hit gave the Kernels a 1-0 lead. He also added an RBI double to cap off the Kernels' three-run fifth inning, driving in Polanco and pushing the Kernels lead to 5-1.

Hicks' 71 RBI to this point is the most of any hitter in the Minnesota Twins organization.

Asked afterward if he could explain his success at driving in runners, the Kernels' big first baseman credited his teammates hitting ahead of him in the batting order. "I've got a lot of good hitters in front of me. If they're not there, I can't get 'em in."

Berrios gave up a solo home run to Andrew Ray in the sixth inning which ended the scoring. It was Ray's fifth homer in as many games and 11th of the season.

The Kernels and Bees face off again Thursday night at 6:35 at Perfect Game Field.

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BURLINGTON (2): Toribio, ss, 4 0 3 0, Ross, 2b, 4 0 0 1, Ray, lf, 4 1 1 1, Hinkle, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Bolaski, dh, 4 0 0 0, Bemboom, c, 3 0 0 0, Moesquit, 3b, 3 0 1 0, Clarke, cf, 3 1 1 0, Cayones, rf, 2 0 0 0. Totals 31 2 6 2.

KERNELS (5): Goodrum, ss, 4 1 1 0, Polanco, 2b, 4 1 1 2, Hicks, 1b, 4 0 2 2, Harrison, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Kepler, cf, 3 1 1 1, Walker, rf, 4 0 0 0, Williams, lf, 3 1 1 0, Quesada, c, 3 1 1 0, Licon, dh, 2 0 0 0. Totals 30 5 7 5.

Burlington 001 001 000 - 2 6 0

Kernels 100 130 00x - 5 7 0

Lowery, Bedrosian (5), Spomer (8) and Bemboom. Berrios, Muren (8) and Quesada. W-Berrios (5-3). L-Lowery (3-4). Sv-Muren (1). 2B-Goodrum (15), Polanco (21), Hicks (24). HR-Ray (11), Kepler (2). SB-Toribio (16). T-2:19. A-2,233.