

Kernels sting Bees for 7th win in row

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 27 June 2013 21:42 -

The Cedar Rapids Kernels have not spent any time moping about Byron Buxton's promotion to the Florida State League this week.

They've spent all their time winning.

The Kernels won their seventh straight game Thursday night with a 9-0 romp past the Burlington Bees before 2,445 fans in a Midwest League game at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Christian Powell and Tyler Jones combined on the one-hit shutout as Cedar Rapids climbed 19 games over .500 at 47-28, its high-water mark of the campaign.

Buxton was promoted to the Fort Myers Miracle Sunday night after tearing up the Midwest League, but the Kernels are 3-0 without their star center fielder and looking good.

"We obviously wish him the best and wish we had him," said slugging first baseman Dalton Hicks. "Wonderful player, one of a kind, on and off the field. But, things happen. Good for him."

D.J. Williams batted in the leadoff spot in place of Buxton Thursday and did a good Buxton impersonation by going 3 for 5 with two triples and three runs scored. Williams usually hit in the No.9 hole when Buxton was here, but he's got the speed and ability to bat at the top of the order and get things started.

"We definitely miss Buck. What he did in the leadoff spot was unreal," said Williams, who raised his batting average to .278 and is hitting more than .370 in his last 10 games.

"It doesn't bother me where I hit in the lineup. Either way, you have to look for a pitch and try to drive it. I don't care if I'm at 1, 9, 8 or 7. It doesn't matter to me, but I definitely don't mind batting leadoff."

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Hicks drove in two runs and has 73 RBIs in 73 games, a phenomenal pace. John Tanner set the Cedar Rapids franchise record with 121 RBIs in 1949. Hicks needs 49 RBIs in the final 63 regular-season games to break the record.

"That's a lot of RBIs," Hicks said. "I don't worry about it. That's too far in the future."

Hicks was asked a trick question: Would he rather stay in Cedar Rapids and break the RBI record, or would he rather be promoted and take his RBI bat to Fort Myers?

"I'll keep trying to get RBIs," he said diplomatically, dodging the question with a smile.

Minnesota Twins farm director Brad Steil is in town for the second time this season. Nobody got promoted the last time Steil was here, but he's probably looking at several Kernels to see if they're ready.

Eight Kernels have been promoted to Fort Myers this season, with more likely as the season goes along.

Hicks, a 6-foot-5, 252-pound first baseman who is hitting a healthy .310, is not worried about promotions. He just wants to keep producing runs and had lots of opportunities Thursday with Williams, Niko Goodrum and Jorge Polanco on base most of the night.

"That's been my role my whole life. You just have to get them in," said Hicks, who is hitting a remarkable .450 (49 for 109) with runners in scoring position.

"You kind of slow the game down," he explained. "I just have to make contact. As long as they get on, it gives me a chance. I can't get RBIs by myself."

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Powell, who joined the Kernels June 5 from extended spring training, took a no-hitter into the sixth inning before being touched for a one-out single by Chevy Clarke. Powell (2-1, 3.13 ERA) left after the sixth inning with four strikeouts, five walks and just the one hit.

"I felt good," he said. "I guess I got a little tired there at the end."

The Kernels turned three double plays to keep Powell out of trouble.

Polanco walloped a three-run homer onto the porch in left field in the second inning to give the Kernels a 4-0 lead. He finished 3-for-4 with four RBIs and raised his batting average to .308.

Powell and Polanco conducted phone interviews with MLB.com after the game to discuss their big outings. Powell, an eighth-round draft pick in 2012, told the Metro Sports Report that he likes pitching for a team that scores so many runs.

"It's a good feeling, knowing you can probably go out and give up a few runs," he said, "and even if it's late in the game they're going to come back and they're going to score some runs for you, either in bunches or one by one."

The Kernels scored three runs in the second inning, three more runs in the fourth inning and two more in the fifth.

Jones retired every batter he faced in the last three innings to collect a three-inning save.

Cedar Rapids and Burlington meet again Friday night at 6:35 at Perfect Game Field.

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BURLINGTON (0): Toribio, 2b, 2 0 0 0, Soto, ss, 3 0 0 0, Ray, lf, 4 0 0 0, Hinkle, 1b, 2 0 0 0, Bolaski, dh, 3 0 0 0, Martinez, c, 3 0 0 0, Moesquit, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Clarke, cf, 2 0 1 0, Cayones, rf, 3 0 0 0. Totals 25 0 1 0.

KERNELS (9): Williams, lf, 5 3 3 0, Goodrum, ss, 1 3 1 0, Polanco, 2b, 4 2 3 4, Hicks, 1b, 5 0 2 2, Grimes, c, 5 0 1 2, Kepler, rf, 4 0 1 1, Quesada, dh, 4 0 0 0, Licon, 3b, 4 0 1 0, Pineda, cf, 3 1 0 0. Totals 35 9 12 9.

Burlington 000 000 000 - 0 1 0
Kernels 130 320 00x - 9 12 0

DeLoach, Newcomb (4), Diaz (7) and Martinez. Powell, Jones (7) and Grimes. W - Powell (2-1). L - DeLoach (1-1). S - Jones (5). 2B - Hicks (25). 3B - Williams 2 (5). HR - Polanco 3. SB - Pineda (7). T - 2:31. A - 2,445.