

## Dayton pitcher escapes serious injury in victory

Written by Jim Ecker  
Thursday, 11 July 2013 22:58 -

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Dayton relief pitcher Tony Amezcuca paid a scary price for his victory over the Cedar Rapids Kernels Thursday night at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

A screaming line drive by Kernels slugger Dalton Hicks struck Amezcuca in the nose and the right side of his face in the sixth inning of Dayton's 13-9 victory, knocking Amezcuca to the ground as teammates and the Dayton trainer rushed to his side.

Fortunately for Amezcuca, it was a glancing blow and did not hit him squarely. But the ball was hit so hard that it ended up in center field as Hicks got a single.

"I didn't see it off the bat," said Amezcuca. "I kind of turned at the last second. It got me on my nose."

The right side of Amezcuca's nose was red and swollen after the game. There was also a puffy red patch under his right eye. He said his nose and part of his face were still numb, more than an hour after it happened.

"I'm fine. I little puffy under the right eye," he said. "It's the first time it's happened to me."

"Fastball outside. He knew it was coming. He got it right on the dot and got me in the head."

Amezcuca was standing about 55 feet from home plate when Hicks, a 6-foot-5, 252-pound left-handed batter, took one of his typically big swings and lined the ball right at the 22-year-old righthander from Bellflower, Calif.

"From my angle it didn't look good. It looked like it got him pretty good," said Hicks. "I saw the ball turn 90 degrees almost and go to center field. But their first baseman said he thought it kind of grazed him. Hopefully he's OK."

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Amezcuca was stunned and nervous when it happened. The crowd of 3,332 fans became very quiet, then applauded when Amezcuca was able to walk to the dugout without help.

Amezcuca was afraid when the ball struck him in the face.

"At first I was," he said. "But I'll be fine. I just have to get back on the mound in a couple of days."

Amezcuca left the game after the incident. He pitched 1 1/3 innings in relief and gave up three runs, but was credited with the victory.

Kernels pitchers were not hit by any line drives, but it was another tough night for the pitching staff. Dayton collected 18 hits in a 12-6 victory over Cedar Rapids Wednesday night, then followed with 11 more hits and two home runs Thursday night.

That gave the Dragons 25 runs against the Kernels in two days, the most runs the Kernels have allowed in consecutive games all season.

Kernels starter Josue Montanez (3-2) gave up 10 runs (nine earned) in four innings. He walked four batters and allowed seven hits. Hudson Boyd pitched the next three innings and Madison Boer tossed the final two frames.

All told, the three Kernels pitchers walked 10 batters in nine innings.

"It's ridiculous. Ten walks," said Cedar Rapids Manager Jake Mauer. "That's just not competing."

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Dayton (39-51) grabbed a 3-0 lead in the top of the first, but the Kernels (53-35) tied it 3-3 in the second inning with the help of a two-run homer by Adam Brett Walker on a rocket to left field.

The Dragons made it 7-3 in the third inning and 11-3 in the fifth inning, but the Kernels pulled within 11-7 in the bottom of the fifth with a two-run homer by J.D. Williams on a 400-foot blast to right-center.

Dayton made it 12-7 in the top of the eighth and Cedar Rapids made it 12-9 in the bottom of the eighth, but drew no closer. The contest took 3 hours, 37 minutes with all the walks and all the scoring.

"We get back in the game and we give it back, get back in the game and give it back," said Mauer. "It's not acceptable. We scored nine runs and we got pounded.

"We've just got to get better. These guys have to find a way to throw the ball over the plate."

Mauer wants his pitchers to challenge the hitters and be aggressive.

"I think they're afraid of contact, early in the count," he said. "You have to go after guys. If they hit it, they hit. If they hit it 0-0 (on an 0-0 count), I can accept that better than 2-0.

"It's unfortunate. You waste a game when you score nine runs."

The starting pitchers have struggled recently, departing early and taxing the bullpen.

"We can't keep running those guys (relief pitchers) out there for three or four innings out of the bullpen," said Mauer. "They're not going to be good in August and September when the playoffs come around. They'll all be spent. We have to figure something out or it's going to be a long

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year."

Cedar Rapids has been using a six-man starting rotation. Mauer expects them to do better with that much rest between starts.

"You've got to go out there and you've got to compete," he said. "It's your day. You just have to do it once a week. That's all we ask.

"If it keeps going the way it is, we're going to have to make changes and get different guys up here."

Dayton and Cedar Rapids are scheduled to finish their three-game series Friday at 6:35 p.m. with Brett Lee (5-4) on the mound for the Kernels.

DAYTON (13): Amaral, cf, 5 2 2 1, Diaz, ss, 5 1 0 0, Winker, lf, 3 2 1 4, Mejias-Brean, 1b, 4 1 3 1, Gelalich, dh, 3 1 0 0, Rahier, 3b, 5 2 3 1, Matthews, rf, 4 1 0 1, Dailey, c, 4 2 1 3, Peterson, 2b, 3 1 1 0. Totals 36 13 11 11.

KERNELS (9): Williams, lf, 5 1 1 2, Goodrum, ss, 6 0 1 0, Polanco, 2b, 6 0 2 0, Hicks, 1b, 4 1 1 0, Harrison, 3b, 2 2 0 0, Walker, dh, 2 1 1 2, Grimes, c, 4 3 2 0, Murphy, rf, 5 1 3 2, Pineda, cf, 3 0 2 2, Kepler, ph/cf, 1 0 0 0. Totals 38 9 13 8.

Dayton    304 040 011 - 13 11 0  
Kernels   030 040 020 - 9 13 3

Guillon, Amezcua (5), Bender (6), McMyne (8) and Dailey. Montanez, Boyd (5), Boer (8) and Grimes. W - Amezcua (3-1). L - Montanez (3-2). 2B - Polanco (23). HR - Winker (11), Dailey (2), Walker (14), Williams (8). E - Murphy (1), Hicks (9), Goodrum (18). T - 3:37. A - 3,332.