

## Goodrum's inside-the-parker sparks Kernels

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 01 August 2013 22:14 -

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BURLINGTON - Cedar Rapids Kernels infielder Cartier Niko Goodrum is a little like the famed Cartier jewelry stores with the way he performs on a diamond.

If you're shopping for an expensive piece of jewelry or a watch, visit one of the Cartier stores that are located in 125 countries around the world. If you're shopping for a versatile ballplayer who can play all four infield positions and bat from either side of the plate, then Cartier Niko Goodrum (better known as Niko) is your man.

"I try to be versatile whatever I do, whether it's writing left-handed or shooting basketballs," said Goodrum, an ambidextrous switch-hitter. "I like being versatile."

That includes being fast enough to run around the bases for an inside-the-park home run.

Goodrum accomplished the rare feat Thursday night to help the Kernels snap a two-game slide with a 3-2 victory over the Burlington Bees before 868 fans at Community Field.

Goodrum lined a shot into right-center as the leadoff batter in the fourth inning. Thinking he might have a chance for a double, he came flying out of the batter's box and headed for second base.

Burlington right fielder Chevy Clarke, a former Kernel, dove for the ball in right-center and got his glove on it, but could not hang on and ball rolled free. Clarke rolled over and accidentally hit the ball with his knee, knocking it toward center field.

"I didn't know what happened. I didn't know if he kicked it or not," said Goodrum. "I just saw it shoot off real bad. Once I hit second base, I just looked at Jake and he was waving me around, so I just kept going."

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Kernels Manager Jake Mauer, coaching at third base, had a clear view of the play and decided to keep Goodrum on the move.

"We're having a hard time scoring runs," he noted. "Niko was running hard out of the box. That was the only reason he had a chance."

Goodrum easily beat the relay, but dove head-first onto the plate anyway. He stayed on the ground for a few seconds, catching his breath from the 120-yard dash. "Yeah, I had to get my legs back under me," he said.

Goodrum's home run, his second of the year, tied the game 1-1. The Kernels scored two more runs in the inning for a 3-1 edge, then held on for the victory.

Goodrum knows about the Cartier jewelry stores, but has never shopped there and doesn't know why his parents gave him the unusual first name.

The Cedar Rapids bullpen did yeoman's work for the victory. With Brett Lee on the disabled list, David Hurlbut made a spot start (his third of the year) and allowed one run in 3 2/3 innings.

Brandon Bixler, a new member of the staff, made his first appearance for the Kernels and went 1 2/3 innings, allowing one run. Madison Boer also pitched 1 2/3 innings, then Brian Gilbert mowed them down in the final two frames to finish the night's entertainment.

Bixler, selected in the 16th round of this year's draft, got the victory. Gilbert, picked in the 7th round this year, got his third save. Two months ago, they were pitching in college. Now they're pitching for a team that has the second-best overall record in the Midwest League.

The Kernels (66-41) and Bees (42-62) finish their four-game series Friday night at 6:30. The Kernels open a four-game home series with Quad Cities on Saturday at 5:05 p.m.

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KERNELS (3): Murphy, lf, 5 0 0 0, Goodrum, 2b, 4 1 1 1, Polanco, ss, 4 0 1 0, Walker, rf, 4 0 0 0, Kepler, 1b, 3 1 0 0, Harrison, dh, 3 1 2 0, Licon, 3b, 4 0 1 1, Quesada, c, 4 0 0 0, Pineda, cf, 4 0 1 0. Totals 35 3 6 2.

BURLINGTON (2): Johnson, 3b, 5 1 2 0, Scioscia, dh, 3 0 0 0, Toribio, pr/dh, 1 0 0 0, Cayones, lf, 3 0 0 0, Hinkle, 1b, 1 0 1 1, Bolaski, 1b, 2 0 0 0, Wright, c, 4 1 2 0, Cannizaro, 2b, 3 0 1 1, Clarke, rf, 4 0 0 0, Good, cf, 3 0 1 0, Rosa, ss, 4 0 0 0. Totals 33 2 7 2.

Kernels      000 300 000 - 3 6 0

Burlington   100 001 000 - 2 7 3

Hurlbut, Bixler (4), Boer (6), Gilbert (8) and Quesada. Love, Blackford (5), Spomer (7) and Wright. W - Bixler (1-0). L - Love (2-5). Sv - Gilbert (3). 2B - Harrison (26). HR - Goodrum (2). SB - Murphy (4), Harrison (1), Pineda (13), Johnson (11), Cayones (4). E - Hinkle (9), Wright (2), Rosa (6). T - 3:03. A - 868.