

## Walker's hit lifts Kernels in 9th

Written by S.D. Buhr

Thursday, 15 August 2013 21:13 - Last Updated Thursday, 15 August 2013 21:46

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For the second straight night, the Cedar Rapids Kernels showed their flare for the dramatic, beating the Beloit Snappers 6-5 on a walk-off double by Adam Brett Walker.

The crowd of 2,714 at Veterans Memorial Stadium saw Walker lace a line drive to centerfield that got past the diving effort of Beloit's Dayton Alexander. Niko Goodrum scampered home from second base with the game-winning run.

"I was looking for a fastball over the plate, something up," explained Walker after the game. "I got a pitch out over the plate and was able to hit it in to center. Just tried to get a base hit and it won a ballgame."

Walker, who leads the minor leagues in RBIs with 104, had several earlier opportunities to put the Kernels on the board. He went to the plate three times in the first eight innings with runners in scoring position, leaving the runners where they stood in each instance.

"He tried to do too much, early," Kernels hitting coach Tommy Watkins said. "He takes pride in driving those runs in. When we'd get a runner in scoring position, he was just trying extra hard instead of letting it happen."

Walker tried just the right amount in the ninth inning. "He took that breaking ball early, that first pitch, then they left him something up over the plate and he hit it," said Watkins.

Walker made a winning pitcher out of Brian Gilbert (1-1). Gilbert, the last of three relief pitchers used by the Kernels, combined with Tim Shibuya and Brandon Bixler to throw five hitless innings of shutout relief for the Kernels.

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"They all kept it close and gave us a chance," Cedar Rapids pitching coach Gary Lucas said of his bullpen. "Gilbert attacks, goes right after them. That's a nice thing to have as a closer. He has no fear."

The newest Kernel, Miguel Sulbaran, got the start for Cedar Rapids.

Sulbaran, obtained this week by the Twins organization in a trade with the Dodgers, worked four innings and gave up five runs, four earned, on seven hits. He struck out one Snapper and walked a pair.

Lucas thought his new pitcher was understandably a bit excited in his Kernels debut.

"He was amped up a little bit and up in the zone," Lucas explained. "Get this one out of the way and we can work on some things this week and see what the real kid is as he calms down a little bit."

Trailing 5-0 after Sulbaran's four innings on the mound, the Kernels scored a run in the home half of the fourth inning. Jorge Polanco led off the inning with a stand-up triple to the right-center field gap and scored on a Max Kepler RBI ground ball.

Kernels infielder Joel Licon extended his hitting streak to 13 straight games with a leadoff double down the right-field line to open the Cedar Rapids fifth inning, but was left stranded at third base.

It was the sixth inning when the Kernels did most of their damage.

Goodrum singled to lead off the inning and moved to second on a wild pitch. Polanco followed with a single, putting runners at the corners.

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Kepler followed with a sharp one-hop ground ball to Snappers shortstop Daniel Robertson, but Robertson's throw to second base was off the mark and the potential inning-ending double-play instead allowed Goodrum to score and left the Kernels with two runners on base.

Travis Harrison moved both runners up with a ground ball to first base, bringing Licon to the plate with two outs.

This time, Licon didn't rely on anyone else to drive him in. He greeted relief pitcher Austin House with a three-run home run to left-center field, tying the game at five runs apiece.

That's where the score stood entering the bottom of the ninth inning.

Jonathan Murphy led off the ninth with a single and Goodrum was hit by a pitch to put Kernels at first and second with no outs.

Polanco's attempted sacrifice bunt was fielded by Snappers pitcher Tyler Vail (5-5) and Vail's throw to third base erased Murphy. That left Goodrum and Polanco on base and set up Walker's game-winning heroics.

The teams wrap up their three-game series Friday night at 6:35.

BELOIT (5): Shipman, lf, 4 1 10, Robertson, ss, 5 1 1 0, Nunez, 3b, 4 0 0 1, Bostick, 2b, 4 2 2 1, Mathews, dh, 4 0 1 1, Wooten, rf, 3 0 1 1, Olson, 1b, 3 0 0 0, Delgado, c, 3 0 1 0, Alexander, cf, 4 1 0 0. Totals 34 5 7 4.

KERNELS (6): Murphy, cf, 5 0 2 0, Goodrum, ss, 4 2 2 0, Polanco, 2b, 4 2 2 0, Walker, rf, 5 0 1 1, Kepler, 1b, 4 1 1 2, Harrison, dh, 3 0 0 0, Licon, 3b, 4 1 2 3, Altobelli, c, 2 0 1 0, Pineda, lf, 4 0 0 0. Totals 35 6 11 6.

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Beloit 013 100 000 - 5 7 1

Kernels 000 104 001 - 6 11 2

(One out when winning run scored)

Covey, House (6), Vail (8) and Delgado. Sulbaran, Shibuya (5), Bixler (6), Gilbert (8) and Altobelli. W-Gilbert (1-1). L-Vail (5-5). 2B-Bostick 2 (23). Mathews (25), Licon (11), Walker (28). 3B-Polanco (10). HR-Licon (1). SB-Goodrum (18). S-Harrison. SF-Wooten. E-Robertson (12), Pineda (6), Goodrum (24). T-2:44. A-2,714.