

Christensen excited to make Kernels

Written by S.D. Buhr
Saturday, 29 March 2014 19:25 -



FORT MYERS, Fla. - On Wednesday, Kernels Manager Jake Mauer said of local Cedar Rapids boy and Twins minor league farmhand Chad Christensen, "There's no doubt that he's somebody we'd like to take north with us."

On Saturday, Mauer got his wish as Christensen was among the 25 players listed on the Opening Day roster.

Christensen, a 2009 graduate of Cedar Rapids Washington, is listed on the Kernels roster as an outfielder, but Mauer has indicated he could see time at five different positions in the outfield and infield.

In an interview following a spring training game earlier in the week, Christensen told the MSR that playing in Cedar Rapids "Would be real exciting. I grew up there and everything. It would be a lot of fun to come home."

Some athletes have been known to struggle with playing at the professional level in their hometown, but Christensen does not believe he'll feel any extra pressure from playing in Cedar Rapids.

"No, I'm not so concerned about that," he said. "Just trying to keep focused on the field and separate the baseball from the friends and family. I'll be excited about it."

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Christensen was an all-Big Ten infielder at the University of Nebraska in 2012 and an all-Big Ten outfielder for the Cornhuskers in 2013.

Christensen is joined on the Kernels roster by 10 players who spent time in a Cedar Rapids uniform during the 2013 season, including six pitchers and four position players.

In addition, three Kernels are among the Twins organization's top 30 prospects, according to Baseball America, including the Twins' first-round pick in 2013, Kohl Stewart, ranked fourth among Twins prospects. Pitchers Felix Jorge (#17) and Randy Rosario (#29) join Stewart on the Kernels' pitching staff.

The Kernels pitching staff will also include Ryan Eades, the Twins' second-round draft pick last June out of LSU, and will boast one of the tallest players in professional baseball in 6-foot-10 Aaron Slegers, a righthander out of Indiana University and the Twins' fifth-round pick a year ago.

KERNELS ROSTER

Pitchers (13)

Brandon Bixler, 5-11, LHP, Chuluota, Fla.
Hudson Boyd, 6-2, RHP, Fort Myers, Fla.
Ryan Eades, 6-3, RHP, Slidell, La.
Felix Jorge, 6-2, RHP, Santiago, Dominican Republic
Yorman Landa, 6-0, RHP, Santa Teresa Miranda, Venezuela
Josue Montanez, 6-1, LHP, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico
Alex Muren, 6-3, RHP, Ramona, Calif.
Brandon Peterson, 6-1, RHP, Savage, Minn.
Christian Powell, 6-4, RHP, Greenwood, S.C.
Randy Rosario, 6-0, LHP, Rio San Juan, Dominican Republic
Aaron Slegers, 6-10, RHP, Scottsdale, Ariz.
Kohl Stewart, 6-2, RHP, Tomball, Texas
Miguel Sulbaran, 5-10, LHP, Edo Zula, Venezuela

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Catchers (3)

Bo Altobelli, 6-1, Plano, Texas

Mitch Garver, 6-1, Albuquerque, N.M.

Michael Quesada, 6-1, Folsom, Calif.

Infielders (5)

Bryan Haar, 6-3, San Diego, Calif.

Joel Licon, 5-10, Diamond Bar, Calif.

Tanner Vavra, 5-11, Menomonie, Wis.

Engelb Vielma, 5-11, Maracaibo, Venezuela

Logan Wade, 6-1, Brisbane Queensland, Australia

Outfielders (4)

Chad Christensen, 6-3, Cedar Rapids

Zach Granite, 5-11, Staten Island, N.Y.

Zack Larson, 6-3, Bradenton, Fla.

Jeremias Pineda, 5-11, Hormigo, Dominican Republic