

Burdi hit 103 on gun at Louisville

Written by Jim Ecker

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Local baseball fans should expect to see some serious gas when Nick Burdi pitches for the Cedar Rapids Kernels in the next few days.

Burdi, a 6-foot-5 right-hander, has been popping the radar for quite some time now.

"It was 95-96 in high school," he said Friday after arriving in Cedar Rapids, "and at Louisville I got up to 102-103 this season, but mostly sitting 97 to 99."

That is serious heat, which is why the Minnesota Twins made him the 46th overall pick in the 2014 draft and gave him \$1,218,800 to sign on the dotted line.

Kernels Manager Jake Mauer was anxious to get his first look at Burdi in a bullpen session Friday afternoon.

"I've seen him pitch on TV a little bit," said Mauer. "Obviously it looks like he's got a pretty good fastball. He's a big kid. It looks like he's got the potential for a pretty good slider.

"We're excited to have him here, no doubt about it."

Burdi was named a first team All-American by the American Baseball Coaches Association following an extraordinary season as the closer at Louisville. He compiled a 3-1 record and 0.49 ERA with 18 saves as his team reached the College World Series for the second straight year.

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Louisville lost to Texas and Vanderbilt at the World Series and was quickly eliminated. Burdi pitched in both games in non-save situations.

"Everyone is thrilled to be out there, and then you go 0-and-2 and it's a letdown almost," he said. "But at the end of the day that team is always going to be special to me."

Burdi got to spend about 10 days at home in Downers Grove, Ill., before driving to Cedar Rapids and reporting for work Friday. He lifted weights and threw bullpen sessions at home before joining the Kernels.

"I'm as ready as can be to come out here and pitch," he said.

Burdi was a starter in high school, but that changed when he got to Louisville as a freshman.

"Things didn't really work (as a starter) and they put me in the bullpen," he said. "That's where things really took off."

Mauer did not think Burdi would pitch Friday night against Clinton. More likely, the bonus baby would make his pro debut Saturday night or Sunday afternoon as a relief pitcher.

"That would be ideal, pitching tomorrow or Sunday," said Burdi. "Get out there as soon as possible."

Burdi pitched in a Perfect Game event at Veterans Memorial Stadium when he was in high school, so he's taken the mound here before.

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It's been an exciting spring and early summer for Burdi with his good work at Louisville, the draft and the College World Series.

"It's an exciting time, but at the end of the day I'm here and I'm playing for the Cedar Rapids Kernels," he said. "I'm excited about the opportunity and I hope to make the most of it. I'm ready to work and ready to be a Twin."