

Burdi makes wild debut for Kernels

Written by S.D. Buhr
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Cedar Rapids Kernels pitcher Ethan Mildren does not come with the high draft-choice pedigree of some of his teammates, but on Sunday Mildren looked the part of an ace, shutting out the Clinton LumberKings for seven innings.

It was not enough to get the win, however, as Clinton plated seven runs in the top of the ninth inning to claim a 7-4 victory over the Kernels in front of 2,410 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Mildren, the Minnesota Twins' 12th-round selection in the 2013 draft from the University of Pittsburgh, faced 24 batters, just three over the minimum for seven innings, striking out six and yielding just four hits and one walk.

Dallas Gallant worked a perfect eighth inning, striking out a pair, allowing Cedar Rapids to take a 4-0 lead into the ninth.

That's when the wheels fell off.

Nick Burdi, the Twins' 2014 second-round draft pick, had a forgettable debut for the Kernels. Entering to pitch the top of the ninth inning with a 4-0 lead, Burdi walked all four batters he faced. All four - and three more - would eventually come around to score.

Jared Wilson relieved Burdi and gave up a bloop single, a walk and a grand slam that topped

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off the Clinton scoring.

It would be difficult to imagine a tougher way for Burdi to start his professional career. Manager Jake Mauer stated the obvious when asked what he was seeing from Burdi in the ninth inning.

“He couldn’t throw a strike. That’s about as simple as I can say it,” said Mauer. “He didn’t have it today, but he’s going to get another chance, no doubt about it.

“Mildren was phenomenal and Gallant was phenomenal,” he said. “That’s a frustrating one. You play your tail off for eight innings and just can’t find the dish. Seven runs in the ninth. Can’t explain it.”

Burdi, who hit 103 mph on the radar gun at the University of Louisville, received a \$1.2 million bonus to sign with the Twins this month, but he could not throw the ball over the plate and Mildred's superb outing was wasted.

Mildren was philosophical.

“Sometimes things work out like that,” he said. “You pitch well and you lose and sometimes you pitch not too well and your hitters pick you up. It’s going to happen. It’s the way the game goes. It’s a goofy game but it’s something to build on for the next outing.”

The Kernels got their first two runs in the first inning as Clinton starter Edwin Diaz struggled with control problems of his own. He hit two batters while giving up two runs.

Chad Christensen and Bryan Haar teamed up to tally two more Kernels runs in the eighth inning. Christensen tripled and Haar hit his third home run in two days.

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That home run gave the Kernels the 4-0 lead they took into the ill-fated ninth inning.

Clinton and the Kernels will complete their four-game series on Monday with an afternoon game scheduled to start at 12:05.

CLINTON (7): Shank, 3b/1b, 4 1 1 0, Barbosa, dh, 4 1 1 0, Reinheimer, ss, 4 1 0 0, Mack, lf, 3 1 1 0, Seager, 1b, 3 0 2 1, Peguero, pr/3b, 0 1 0 0, Yates, cf, 3 1 0 1, Simpson, rf, 4 0 0 0, Carmichael, c, 4 1 2 4, Kauppila, 2b, 4 0 1 0. Totals 33 7 8 6.

KERNELS (4): Granite, lf, 3 1 0 0, Vielma, ss, 4 1 2 0, Christensen, 1b, 3 1 1 0, Haar, 3b, 4 1 1 2, Kanzler, cf, 3 0 0 1, Swim, c, 3 0 0 1, Williams, dh, 4 0 1 0, Murphy, rf, 4 0 2 0, Walker, 2b, 4 0 1 0. Totals 32 4 8 4.

Clinton 000 000 007 - 7 8 0
Kernels 200 000 020 - 4 8 0

Diaz, Fry (7), Pagan (8), Brooks (9) and Carmichael. Mildren, Gallant (8), Burdi (9), Wilson (9) and Swim. W - Pagan. L - Wilson (2-1). S - Brooks (2). 2B - Carmichael (5), Vielma (11), Murphy (4). 3B - Christensen (4). HR - Carmichael (2), Haar (11). T - 2:34. A - 2,410.