

Kernels staff hurt as storm hits stadium

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 30 June 2014 15:30 - Last Updated Monday, 30 June 2014 15:54



A violent storm ripped through Veterans Memorial Stadium Monday afternoon, injuring Kernels staff members who vainly tried to roll the tarp onto the field in the midst of strong wind and heavy rains.

Several members of the grounds crew got trapped under the runaway tarp as it blew out of control and got tangled in the outfield. The long tube that normally holds the tarp rolled over at least one Kernels staff member before he/she could escape the dangerous situation.

Scott Wilson, the Kernels' assistant general manager, suffered a dislocated shoulder in the mayhem. Doug Nelson, the Kernels' general manager, suffered a bruised shoulder and lost his glasses somewhere in the outfield.

Staff members - including full-time employees, part-time employees and interns - routinely help the regular grounds crew with the tarp because it takes dozens of people to handle the massive covering. Kernels players are not allowed to help with the tarp, according to baseball rules, and were not injured.

Several other Kernels staff members were injured in the mishap.

The umpires delayed the game and called for the tarp at approximately 2:45 p.m., but there was not enough time to get the tarp installed before the storm hit and the trouble began.

Kernels management knew the storm was coming from radar reports and kept the umpires

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informed, but they thought they had more time to cover the field.

"We thought we had until 3:05," Nelson said after being treated in the Kernels training room. "We thought we had a short window of time to get the tarp on."

Chad Christensen tied the game for the Kernels, 3-3, with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning with an RBI single. Warning sirens could then be heard at the ballpark and after a brief consultation, the umpires waved the players off the field before the 10th inning could begin.

The game was suspended and will be finished when the Kernels visit Clinton for a four-game series July 11-14. Clinton is not scheduled to visit Cedar Rapids again this year, so the 3-3 tie will be decided at Clinton.

Nelson did not know the identity of the individual who was caught under the tarp and had the giant tube roll over him or her.

"I'm not sure, because I was underneath the tarp," he said. "I know Scott Wilson, our assistant general manager, has a dislocated shoulder and we had some bloody noses underneath the tarp.

"The wind caught the tarp and sucked a whole bunch of us underneath it."

The grounds crew managed to cover the pitching mound, home plate area and both bullpen mounds, but the main tarp was a tangled mess in the outfield after the grounds crew and helpers abandoned the hopeless attempt to cover the field.

The tube rolled all the way to the warning track in right field. The infield dirt was covered with several inches of water in spots and there was no hope of resuming the game.

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Curtis Simondet, the Kernels trainer, was able to pop Wilson's dislocated shoulder back into place, according to Nelson.

Nelson appeared to be in some discomfort with his bruised left shoulder.

"I think it's just going to be sore," he said. "I think I'm all right. I've had dislocated elbows before when I used to be a wrestler.

"It's scary when you're under the tarp," said Nelson. "I was yelling several expletives that I shouldn't be yelling."