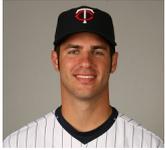


## Hot ticket! Joe Mauer joining Kernels

Written by Jim Ecker

Friday, 01 August 2014 18:02 -

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People tell Cedar Rapids Kernels Manager Jake Mauer all the time that he's a spitting image of his younger brother Joe, a former American League MVP with the Minnesota Twins and a six-time all-star.

Now baseball fans here will get to see for themselves when Joe Mauer joins the Kernels next week on an injury rehab assignment. If all goes well, Mauer will play Tuesday night against Wisconsin.

"I'm ecstatic," said Kernels General Manager Doug Nelson, who anticipates a sellout of more than 5,500 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium. "When we decided to make the Twins our affiliate, this is one of the situations we were hoping would occur."

Mauer will practice and take batting practice with the Kernels Monday afternoon. If there are no complications, he will play for the Kernels Tuesday night in their Midwest League game at 6:35 p.m.

As an extra bonus, Minnesota Twins pitcher Ricky Nolasco is scheduled to pitch for the Kernels Tuesday night on an injury rehab assignment of his own.

The Kernels will be selling tickets at the stadium Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days. In addition, fans can purchase tickets online at [www.kernels.com](http://www.kernels.com) or by calling 896-7560 during business hours.

Mauer has not played for the Twins since July 1 and has been on the 15-day disabled list with a right oblique strain. He is a career .320 hitter and has a contract that pays him \$23 million per year through 2018.

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Mauer, an all-star catcher during his career, moved to first base this season after suffering a concussion last year. He is strictly a first baseman now.

Jake Mauer visited with his brother at the all-star game in Minneapolis last month. At the time, he jokingly told Joe he wasn't sure he could fit him into the Kernels lineup because he already had a good first baseman in Chad Christensen.

Jake Mauer downplayed the possibility in recent weeks about Joe making an appearance here, thinking it more likely his brother would play for Minnesota's team in Fort Myers, Fla., where the Twins have their spring training headquarters and sophisticated medical facilities.

The Kernels will be home Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights against Wisconsin, then will host Kane County Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday if the Twins want Mauer to play additional games in Cedar Rapids.

The Kernels will open the gates at Veterans Memorial Stadium at 3 p.m. Monday so fans can watch Mauer practice with the team and taking batting practice, even though he is not scheduled to play Monday night.

The Kernels will open the gates again at 3 p.m. Tuesday so fans can watch pre-game workouts again, with Mauer scheduled to play that night.

Mauer is hitting .271 with two homers and 28 RBIs in 76 games this season. He has 107 homers and 662 RBIs in 11 campaigns since joining the Twins in 2004.

Jake Mauer, 35, played on the same team with his brother with Quad Cities in the Midwest League in 2002. The Mauers are from the Minneapolis area and are a big name in Minnesota.

Nelson said the Kernels were anticipating a crowd of approximately 2,000 fans for Tuesday's game against Wisconsin. Now it's a hot ticket.

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"It should be a sellout," he said. "I would anticipate we probably will be pushing 5,500 to 5,600 once we start selling Standing Room Only tickets."

The Kernels have enjoyed sellout crowds before, but never with a Major League MVP and all-star on the field. "This is uncharted territory for us," said Nelson.

Minnesota pitcher Mike Pelfrey made an injury rehab appearance with the Kernels last year. This will be the second time the Twins have sent players to Cedar Rapids since the new affiliation went into effect last season.

Nolasco signed a four-year, \$49-million contract as a free agent with the Twins during the offseason. He has a 5-7 record and 5.90 ERA and is trying to recover from a strained elbow.