

Kernels fall in sleeper to Bandits

Written by Jim Ecker

Wednesday, 20 August 2014 21:52 - Last Updated Wednesday, 20 August 2014 22:07



The Cedar Rapids Kernels have won 30 of their last 40 games and are undoubtedly headed to the Midwest League playoffs, but Manager Jake Mauer does not want to see his club develop any bad habits coming down the stretch.

The Kernels saw their eight-game winning streak come to end Wednesday night in a 5-2 snoozer to the Quad Cities River Bandits before 1,673 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

The Kernels hold a commanding lead over their competitors for a playoff spot with 12 games left in the regular season, so Mauer did not need to hold any closed-door meetings or chew anybody out after his guys committed three errors and a few other mistakes.

Cedar Rapids opens a three-game commuter series at Burlington Thursday night, followed by another three-game commuter series at the Quad Cities.

That means six straight days of getting on the bus, playing games, coming right home and doing it again the next day without spending any nights in hotel rooms.

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Mauer will be curious to see how his team plays at Burlington Wednesday night before making any judgments.

"We'll see how tomorrow goes," he remarked. "You always want to see how you respond. You don't want that one game to turn it the other way.

"We'll see how they come out tomorrow and start these six-day commuters, which aren't going to be much fun."

The Kernels own an eight-game lead over Peoria, a nine-game lead over Quad Cities and a 10-game lead over Clinton for the final playoff spot in the second half of the season, so it would take a major collapse for any of those clubs to catch them with only a dozen games remaining.

Even so, Mauer is not ready to pop any champagne corks at this point.

"Twelve games to play, that's still - for me - a big number," he said. "A lot of things can happen, especially with an A-Ball team. A lot of goofy things can happen in a short amount of time."

There was an early sign of trouble in the second inning when Alex Swim tagged up at third base on a fly ball to right-center, took a few steps toward home, thought he left third base too soon, went back to third base and started again.

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By then it was too late and he was thrown out at home for a double play.

"That was probably a pretty good sign of what the rest of the night would be like right there," said Mauer.

Mauer thought Swim tagged up properly and should have kept going. Swim felt bad about the mistake, one of the few he's made since joining the Kernels this summer.

Overall, it was a sluggish performance for Cedar Rapids as the Kernels fell to 67-61 overall and 36-22 for the second half of the campaign. Kane County won its 10th straight game Wednesday and took a two-game lead over the Kernels for first place in the Western Division.

"Very flat. Not very crisp or very sharp," said Mauer, summing up the night's activities. "We had chances. We had runners in scoring position."

The Kernels will play nine of their final 12 regular-season games on the road with trips to Burlington, Quad Cities and Clinton. The only home games will be with Kane County Aug. 27-29. The playoffs start Sept. 3.

QUAD CITIES (5): Boyd, cf, 4 0 2 1, Fernandez, dh, 5 0 2 2, Wik, 2b, 3 0 1 0, McDonald, 1b, 5 0 0 0, Davis, 3b, 5 0 0 0, Bottger, lf, 4 2 2 0, Holberton, c, 4 0 1 0, Parker, ss, 3 1 1 1, Ramsay, rf, 4 2 2 1. Totals 37 5 11 5.

KERNELS (2): Hinojosa, 3b, 4 0 2 0, Vielma, ss, 4 0 2 1, Christensen, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Garver, dh, 2 1 0 0, Swim, rf, 3 0 0 0, Murphy, cf, 4 0 1 1, Williams, lf, 4 0 0 0, Quesada, c, 3 1 1 0, Vavra, 2b, 3 0 0 0. Totals 31 2 6 2.

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Quad Cities 020 003 000 - 5 12 2

Kernels 010 010 000 - 2 6 3

Lee, Scribner (6) and Holberton. Gonsalves, Boyd (6), Mazza (7), Gilbert (9) and Quesada. W - Lee (7-6). L - Boyd (4-3). S - Scribner (1). 2B - Parker (3), Murphy (6), Quesada (12). 3B - Ramsay (10). SB - Garver (7), Vielma (10). E - Davis (4), Parker (5), Gonsalves (1), Vielma (16), Williams (3). T - 3:08. A - 1,673.