

Hinojosa, bullpen lift Kernels by Bees

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 21 August 2014 21:17 - Last Updated Friday, 22 August 2014 07:01



BURLINGTON - The Cedar Rapids Kernels chanted "M-V-P!, M-V-P!" and slapped Jonatan Hinojosa on the back after they rallied to trim Burlington, 6-5, Thursday night before 1,119 fans at Community Field in Burlington.

Hinojosa lined a three-run triple into the right-field corner in the seventh inning to tie the game, 5-5, and then scored the go-ahead run on a passed ball.

"I like to hit when I've got men on base," said Hinojosa. "I got a chance to get an RBI for the team. I don't worry with men on base. "I was waiting for the fastball and I hit it."

The victory moved Cedar Rapids a step closer to clinching a spot in the Midwest League playoffs with 11 games left in the regular season. The Kernels have won 9 of their last 10 games, in no small part to Hinojosa's arrival from Elizabethton in the Appalachian League last week.

"He's brought some energy, there's no doubt about it," said Manager Jake Mauer. "That was huge. Bases loaded triple. How cow. Brought us back."

Hinojosa is hitting a lusty .390 with three triples and 11 RBIs in 11 games since re-joining the club as their new third baseman.

The Dominican Dandy has certainly been one of the club's MVP's since he arrived in town, but Hinojosa would have to share the award with a whole bunch of people for Cedar Rapids.

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At the very top of the list is the lights-out bullpen, which has made the Kernels nearly unbeatable when they have the lead in the late innings.

Cedar Rapids has a 48-3 record this season when it has the lead after seven innings and the Kernels have a phenomenal 51-1 mark when they own the lead after eight innings.

Jake Reed collected his third save with a perfect ninth inning, extending his scoreless streak to a team-high 18.2 innings. Brandon Bixler, Dallas Gallant and Reed tossed 4.1 shutout innings in relief of starter Lewis Thorpe.

Different players have been used in the closer's role this season and all of them have excelled.

The Kernels trailed 5-2 after five innings and it appeared they might lose their second straight game after falling to Quad Cities Wednesday night at home.

"At first it looked a lot like yesterday," said Mauer. "Real flat. Nothing. At-bats were bad."

Max Murphy got things started in the seventh inning with a single. Logan Wade walked and Zack Larson struck out, putting runners on first and second with one out. Ryan Walker singled sharply to left field to load the bases, bringing Hinojosa to the plate.

"Fastball. Inside," he said with a big smile, describing his bases-clearing triple.

Hinojosa also had an RBI single in the fifth inning.

Gallant pitched a spotless eighth inning with two strikeouts, then Reed tossed a spotless ninth

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with one strikeout. Bixler (7-4) got the victory with 1.2 strong frames.

"Pretty good," said Mauer.

Mauer was anxious to see how his club would respond on the road after a listless performance at home Wednesday. He liked the end result, which lifted Cedar Rapids to 68-61 overall and 37-22 for the second half of the season.

"That one was big, in my opinion, because we were very quiet for five innings," he said. "They didn't quit. And that's the biggest thing. That's a good one to get."

Alex Swim made a sliding catch of a line drive in right field to end the game.

The Kernels and Bees, likely first-round opponents in the playoffs, meet again Friday night at Community Field.

KERNELS (6): Hinojosa, 3b, 5 1 2 4, Vielma, ss, 4 0 1 0, Christensen, 1b, 4 0 0 0, Garver, c, 3 0 2 0, Swim, rf, 4 0 1 0, Murphy, cf, 3 1 1 0, Wade, dh, 2 2 0 0, Larson, lf, 4 0 0 0, Walker, 2b, 4 2 2 1. Totals 33 6 9 5.

BURLINGTON (5): Way, cf, 4 1 2 1, Eaves, 2b, 4 1 1 0, Houchins, 3b, 3 1 0 1, Aguilera, 1b, 4 0 1 1, Bayardi, rf, 4 1 1 0, Gretzky, lf, 4 1 1 0, McGee, c, 4 0 0 0, Dionicio, dh, 3 0 1 0, Salcedo, ss, 4 0 0 0. Totals 34 5 7 3.

Kernels 000 020 400 - 6 9 2
Burlington 120 020 000 - 5 7 0

Thorpe, Bixler (5), Gallant (7), Reed (9) and Garver. Alcantara, Much (6), Swanson (9) and

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McGee. W - Bixler (7-4). L - Muck (1-3). S - Reed (3). 2B - Garver (29), Eaves (35), Aguilera (20), Dionicio (3). 3B - Hinojosa (3), Way (2). E - Christensen (7), Hinojosa (4). T - 3:04. A - 1,119.