

## Healthy Booser working on his command

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 07 July 2015 21:04 -

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First he had knee surgery. Then a broken back. Then Tommy John Surgery.

Cedar Rapids Knicks relief pitcher Cam Booser had a hard time staying healthy during his sports career in high school and college.

Booser, 23, has spent a long time out of action.

"Three years altogether," he said Monday. "This is my first year staying healthy all season."

Booser pitched three innings Monday afternoon in an 8-1 loss to Beloit in a Midwest League game before 3,734 fans at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

He tossed two scoreless frames in the seventh and eighth innings, then had a spotty ninth inning when the Snappers scored three runs (two earned). He struck out four batters, but walked three and allowed two hits.

Booser went straight to the video machine in the Knicks clubhouse after the game, studying how he pitched to see if he could spot any problems.

Booser has enjoyed a good year for the Knicks, for the most part. He has a 1-2 record, 2.63 ERA and eight saves and was named to the Midwest League All-Star team for the first half of the season.

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He's allowed only 21 hits in 37.2 innings with 53 strikeouts, thanks to a mid-90's fastball and a good breaking pitch. Opposing batters are hitting approximately .160 against him, which is excellent.

The only bugaboo on the stat sheet are the 31 walks he's allowed, nearly one per inning.

"It's frustrating," Booser said about the occasional lack of control, "but it's a learning experience."

Booser, who is from Tacoma, Wash., hurt his knee playing football in high school and needed surgery. He broke his back in a power-lifting accident in high school, then needed Tommy John surgery on his left elbow after pitching for Oregon State in 2011 and missed an entire year.

He transferred to Central Arizona Community College and signed with the Minnesota Twins as a free agent in 2013. He's 6-foot-4, 225 pounds and throws hard.

"He's got a great arm, great size," said Kernels Manager Jake Mauer. "He's a guy who looks like relievers look like. If we can get his command to where it needs to be, he can be really terrific."

Booser made a string of one-inning appearances for the Kernels earlier in the season, but he's gone two or three innings in recent games as the Kernels increase his workload.

"We're trying to give him a little more work here, as far as extending him, getting him more experience," said Mauer. "Nobody hits him. It's the walks that bite him. That's going to be his key."

"A lot of guys who throw hard, especially when they're younger, have that problem. They walk too many guys. It's making it hard on yourself."

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Even though Booser is 23, he has not spent a lot of time on the mound.

"He's really inexperienced, as far as pitching," said Mauer. "He's been hurt, missed a lot of time.

"I'm really glad to see him healthy, and really glad to see him get more than three outs, which we know he can. I think the more he's out there on the mound, the better his command is going to be.

"He's a guy who's an intriguing prospect, because pitching-wise he's so young," said Mauer. "When you've got an arm like that, age doesn't really mean a whole lot.

"He's been cut on quite a bit. It takes mental toughness to persevere through a lot of that stuff."

Kernels starter Luke Westphal (1-1) struck out seven batters in four innings, but Beloit scored three runs against the left-hander in the first inning for a fast start. Luke Bard was touched for two runs in two innings, then Booser allowed three runs in the ninth.

The Kernels collected only six hits, including two apiece by Tanner English and Brett Doe.

"We didn't pitch it very well, we didn't swing the bats," said Mauer. "Not very impressive today."

The series between Cedar Rapids (49-34) and Beloit (32-51) shifts to Beloit, Wis., for games Wednesday night and Thursday night.

**BELOIT (8):** Harris, cf, 5 0 1 1, Gilbert, 2b, 5 1 1 0, Munoz, ss, 3 2 1 1, Pimentel, 1b, 5 2 2 0, Bennie, lf, 3 0 0 0, Brizuela, 3b, 3 0 1 3, Akau, dh, 3 1 0 0, Kuhn, rf, 3 1 2 1, Raga, c, 3 1 0 0.

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Totals 33 8 8 6.

**KERNELS (1):** English, cf, 4 0 2 1, Valera, ss, 4 0 0 0, Corcino, rf, 4 0 1 0, Larson, lf, 4 0 0 0, Doe, dh, 4 0 2 0, Real, c, 3 0 0 0, Fernandez, 1b, 4 1 1 0, White, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Kelly, 2b, 3 0 0 0.  
Totals 33 1 6 1.

**Beloit**    300 002 003 - 8 8 1  
**Kernels**    000 010 000 - 1 6 1

Graves, Navas (6), Gauna (9) and Raga. Westphal, Bard (5), Booser (7) and Real. W - Graves (7-3). L - Westphal (1-1). 2B - Kuhn (14), English 2 (12), Corcino (10). SB- Munoz (9), Doe (4), Fernandez (1). E - Brizuela (14), Booser (2). T - 2:53. A - 3,734.