

Kernels fall on walk-off homer

Written by Morgan Hawk

Sunday, 12 July 2015 16:02 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 July 2015 16:04

GENEVA, Ill. - Ildemaro Vargas belted a pinch-hit walk-off home run in the bottom of the ninth inning Sunday to give Kane County a 3-1 victory over the Cedar Rapids Kernels before 6,169 fans at Fifth Third Bank Ballpark.

The two-run home run was a line smash that slipped just over the wall in left field. It came with two outs and also scored Henry Castillo, who was at first base. It was the second home run of the season for Vargas.

Brandon Bixler (1-1) allowed the home run and took the loss, allowing two runs, one hit and one walk in two-thirds of an inning. Zac Curtis (3-3) earned the win after tossing a scoreless top of the ninth.

Kane County (51-35) scored first with a run in the fourth inning. Marty Herum led off the frame with a double to field field. A Colin Bray sacrifice bunt advanced Herum to third. Michael Perez followed Bray with a sacrifice fly to center.

Cedar Rapids (52-36) tied the game, 1-1, with a run in the eighth. Sean Miller led off with a single through the right side. Tanner English reached on an error, giving the Kernels runners at first and second. Nick Gordon followed with an RBI single up the middle.

Gordon and Brett Doe led the Kernels with two hits. Gordon extended his hitting streak to 12 games and pushed his on-base streak to 15 games.

Sam Gibbons recorded a no-decision in his seventh start for Cedar Rapids. The right-hander

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yielded one run on seven hits and one walk while striking out three in 5 1/3 innings. Luke Bard tossed 2 2/3 scoreless innings of relief for the Kernels. The right-hander yielded just two hits and struck out two.

Markus Solbach, a former Twins farmhand, started for Kane County. He allowed one run and nine hits in seven innings, striking out four and walking one.

The Kernels conclude the four-game series against Kane County on Monday at noon. Luke Westphal (1-1, 4.50) gets the start for the Kernels.

The Kernels return home for a three-game series that begins Wednesday night against Burlington.

KERNELS (1): English, cf, 3 0 0 0, Gordon, ss, 4 0 2 1, Corcino, dh, 4 0 2 0, Larson, lf, 4 0 0 0, Murphy, rf, 4 0 1 0, Fernandez, 1b, 3 0 1 0, Navarreto, 1b, 1 0 1 0, Doe, c, 3 0 2 0, Valera, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Miller, 2b, 4 1 1 0. Totals 33 1 10 1.

KANE COUNTY (3): Taylor, rf, 4 0 3 0, Reyes, lf, 4 0 1 0, Regis, 2b, 4 0 1 0, Herum, 1b, 4 1 2 0, Bray, cf, 3 0 1 0, Perez, c, 3 0 0 0, Munoz, 3b, 2 0 0 0, Castillo, dh, 4 1 0 0, Cribbs, ss, 3 0 1 0, Vargas, ph, 1 1 1 2. Totals 32 3 10 3.

Kernels ▯ ▯ ▯ 000 000 010 - 1 10 0

Kane County ▯ 000 100 002 - 3 10 1

Gibbons, Bard (6), Bixler (9) and Doe. Solbach, Geyer (8), Curtis (9) and Perez. W - Curtis (3-3). L - Bixler (1-1). 2B - Herum (12). HR - Vargas (2). E - Solbach (1). T - 2:23. A - 6,169.