

## Gordon delivers in pinch for Kernels

Written by S.D. Buhr

Thursday, 06 August 2015 22:28 - Last Updated Thursday, 06 August 2015 22:41

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It only seemed like Kernels shortstop Nick Gordon would get his first night off in more than two weeks Thursday against Dayton.

He was not in the starting lineup, but nearly three hours later Gordon's night-off was cut short when he was called on to pinch-hit with two outs and the Kernels' potential winning run on third base in a 4-4 game.

Gordon worked a full count, then laced a single to left field to drive in Zack Larson with the winning and begin the celebration in a 5-4 victory before 2,935 fans in Veterans Memorial Stadium

Gordon said he had a couple of walk-off hits in high school. "In pro ball, that was really my first real walk-off," he remarked.

Gordon was not surprised to get a chance in a clutch situation.

"They let me know a couple innings before," he said in the happy Kernels clubhouse. "I was swinging around and getting loose and then Tommy (hitting coach Tommy Watkins) told me I was going up.

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"When I got up there, I was ready to hit. I knew that I was going to have to go up there and battle."

Kernels manager Jake Mauer had Gordon in mind for pinch-hitting duties even earlier. Mauer said he considered using Gordon in the eighth inning with the score tied 3-3 and the potential lead run on third base.

In fact, the thought process started long before the game's first pitch.

"I told him this afternoon, 'Hey, you're not playing, but you'd better be ready the seventh, eighth and ninth. You might have a chance,'" Mauer revealed.

Gordon took the first three pitches for balls and it appeared the Dragons were working around him with first base open. Pitcher Brennan Bernardino elected to challenge him, though, and threw the next three pitches across the plate.

Mauer credited Gordon with not being overly anxious in a pressure situation.

"I think two months ago, that would have been probably the case," Mauer said. "But he's had really good at-bats probably the last two or three weeks here. He's really not chasing a whole lot, making pitchers work a little bit more."



For the third straight game, the Dragons got on the board first, scoring a pair of runs in the first

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inning. The Kernels notched one run in each of the first three innings to take a brief lead, but Dayton tied the game in the fifth.

The visitors pulled ahead 4-3 in the top half of the ninth inning with a run off of reliever Michael Theofanopoulos (5-2), setting the stage for the Kernels' ninth-inning dramatics.

Rafael Valera led off the ninth with a single and advanced to second base when Dayton centerfielder Jonathan Reynoso could not come up with the ball cleanly in the outfield.

After Valera moved to third base on Edgar Corcino's ground-out to second base, Zack Larson drove Valera in with a sharp grounder to Dragons shortstop Luis Gonzalez. Gonzalez threw home instead of taking the out at first base, allowing Larson to reach safely as Valera scored the tying run.

Larson stole second base and, following a Brett Doe walk, moved to third base on T.J. White's ground-out, bringing Gordon out to pinch-hit for Alex Real. Gordon nearly had the game-winner on a 3-1 pitch that he pulled just foul down the right-field line, but on the next pitch he lined the ball to the opposite field for a clean single and the victory.

The Kernels took two of three games from the Dragons, giving the Kernels just their third win in 10 tries in rubber games this season.

Cedar Rapids (64-46) will host a three-game series with Bowling Green beginning at 6:35 p.m. Friday.

**DAYTON (4):** Thompson, 2b, 5 1 2 0, Aldazoro, dh, 4 1 0 0, LaValley, 3b, 5 1 3 2, Aquino, rf, 4 0 2 0, Rachal, 1b, 4 0 1 0, Pickens, lf, 5 0 3 1,

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Reynoso, cf, 3 0 1 1, Gonzalez, ss, 4 0 0 0, Tromp, c, 4 1 1 0. Totals 38  
4 13 4.

**KERNELS (5):** English, cf, 4 1 2 0, Valera, ss, 5 1 1 0, Corcino, rf, 4 0 1 0, Larson, lf, 5 2 1 2,  
Doe, 1b, 4 0 0 0, White, 3b, 4 1 2 1, Real, dh, 3  
0 1 1, Gordon, ph, 1 0 1 1, Navarreto, c, 4 0 2 0, Kelly, 2b, 2 0 1 0.  
Totals 36 5 12 5.

**Dayton 200 010 001 - 4 13 1**

**Kernels 111 000 002 - 5 12 0**

Morillo, Kivel (4), Krauss (9), Bernardino (9) and Tromp. Tillery, Theofanopoulos (7) and Navarreto. W - Theofanopoulos (5-2). L - Krauss (2-2). 2B - Thompson (4), Pickens 2 (16), Tromp (5), English (20), White 2 (12), Kelly (13). SB - Larson (15). E - Reynoso (3). T - 2:54. A - 2,935.