

## Mauer picks pitchers for playoffs

Written by S.D. Buhr

Saturday, 05 September 2015 21:16 - Last Updated Saturday, 05 September 2015 21:23

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A crowd of 2,509 showed up for the final night of post-game fireworks for the Cedar Rapids Kernels at Veterans Memorial Stadium Saturday and saw the home team top the Clinton LumberKings, 9-3, in the opener of the final series for both teams.

The real fireworks for the Kernels, however, begin on Wednesday night when they host the Quad Cities River Bandits in the first game of the Midwest League playoffs.

The River Bandits and Kernels have known they were playoff bound since they finished first and second, respectively, in the first half of the MWL season in June. That has allowed Kernels Manager Jake Mauer and his coaching staff to spend the final week of the season preparing for their postseason series with Quad Cities.

Mauer named his starting pitching rotation Saturday.

“(Felix) Jorge will go game 1 and then Gibby (Sam Gibbons) will go game 2,” Mauer revealed. If a third game is necessary on Friday, Mauer said Saturday night’s winning pitcher Keaton Steele (7-4) will get the call.

“We really haven’t decided on a fourth yet,” Mauer added. “We’ve got (Randy) LeBlanc and (Randy) Rosario and some options. We’ll kind of feel how they throw these next couple nights and lock one down.”

Of course, the best-case scenario for Mauer and the Kernels would be a two-game sweep of the River Bandits, as unlikely as that might seem, given Quad Cities has the league’s best season-long record.

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“Hopefully, Steele will throw game 1 of the second series, then we’ll be in real good shape. That would be ideal,” Mauer agreed.

Steele likely did nothing Saturday night to cause second thoughts in the mind of his manager. The righthander worked six inning against Clinton, giving up three runs on eight hits while striking out four.

In past years, the Kernels have entered postseason play handicapped in the pitching department by starting pitchers who had reached season-long innings limits imposed by their parent organization, the Minnesota Twins. Mauer indicated that will not be an issue this season.

“No, we’ve got the green light to go ahead and try to win this thing,” the skipper confirmed.

The rotation may be set for the first round of the playoffs, but the manager indicated that's not the case with the rest of the Kernels lineup.

“I wouldn’t say we’re locked in,” he remarked. “There’s probably three or four spots we’ve got to figure out still. To be honest with you, it’s going to be whoever’s hot these last three or four days, who we feel gives us the best chance, and it may not be the same lineup game 1, game 2. Game 3 might be different, too.

“Some guys have separated themselves and some guys haven’t. So we’ve got those guys who haven’t separated themselves all kind of muddled in the same spot.”

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Edgar Corcino, Alex Real and Chris Paul did their best to put their names in the manager's "hot" column Saturday, recording a pair of hits each.

Real added three RBIs, as did T.J. White.

Yorman Landa and Jared Wilson combined for three shutout innings of bullpen work for the Kernels.

Cedar Rapids and Clinton play game two of their series Sunday at 2:05 p.m.

CLINTON (3): Hebert, lf, 4 2 2 0, Cousino, cf, 3 0 1 0, Leyland, 1b, 4 0 2 0, Reynolds, dh, 4 0 1 2, Morales, rf, 4 0 0 0, DeCarlo, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Peguero, 2b, 3 0 0 0, Taylor, c, 4 0 2 0 Mariscal, ss, 4 1 1 0. Totals 33 3 9 2.

KERNELS (9): Miller, ss, 4 1 0 0, Valera, 2b, 3 2 0 0, Corcino, rf, 3 2 2 0, White, 3b, 3 1 1 3, Real, dh, 4 1 2 3, Wade, cf, 3 0 0 0, Paul, 1b, 3 1 2 1, Navarroto, c, 4 0 0 0, Diemer, lf, 4 1 1 0. Totals 31 9 8 7.

Clinton 102 000 000 - 3 9 0  
Kernels 302 013 00x - 9 8 0

Schiraldi, Peterson (5), Morales (6), Vieria (8) and Taylor. Steele, Landa (7), Wilson (9) and Navarroto. 2B - White (22), Paul (2), Real (11) Corcino (16). 3B - Paul (1). T - 2:41. A - 2,509.