

## Navarroto looks OK for playoffs

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 07 September 2015 17:31 -

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Cedar Rapids Kernels Manager Jake Mauer had one of those "Oh, no!" looks in the sixth inning Monday after Brian Navarroto got hit by a pitch on his left hand and was sitting in the dirt by home plate in pain.

The Midwest League playoffs begin Wednesday night and for awhile Mauer thought he might be without the services of his best catcher when the Kernels host the Quad Cities River Bandits in Game 1.

Navarroto is not in the clear yet, but X-rays were negative and the 21-year-old catcher from Puerto Rico does not have any fractures in his hand.

"It's kind of painful right now, but I don't have anything broken," he remarked.

Navarroto said he plans to play Wednesday night.

The Kernels lost to Clinton, 6-2, Monday in the final game of the regular season at Veterans Memorial Stadium. It was a meaningless game in terms of the standings, although Clinton managed to avoid setting a franchise record for losses by winning the contest.

The biggest news of the day was Navarroto, who is only a .217 hitter but a superior force behind the plate. Mauer was relieved when Kernels trainer Curtis Simondet told him there were no broken bones.

"Thank goodness," the skipper said. "That was the last thing we needed to happen in that game."

Navarroto was in good spirits after the game and confident he'll be ready for the playoffs, but Mauer wants to see how Navarroto feels on Tuesday and Wednesday before making a final

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decision.

"We'll see what he looks like tomorrow," said Mauer. "If that thing balloons up and he's got the Frankenstein hand going, we'll go another route.

"If it's too swollen and he can't squeeze his hand or close his glove, we'd have to get somebody here."

Navarreto was hit between the middle finger and ring finger on his left hand. The fastball by Clinton pitcher Hawtin Buchanan left a small cut on Navarreto's hand.

Navarreto, a tough customer, sat in the dirt for several minutes while Simondet examined the hand. "Oh, yeah, it was a lot of pain," Navarreto confirmed.

The Kernels have two other catchers on the club with Brett Doe and Alex Real, but Mauer feels most comfortable with Navarreto behind the plate. Doe replaced Navarreto in the game Monday as a pinch-runner and catcher as Navarreto left for treatment.

If Navarreto cannot play for an extended period of time, the Kernels could replace him on the 25-man roster with another catcher. The playoff roster must be submitted to the league office by Wednesday morning.

Kernels shortstop Nick Gordon was a late scratch from the starting lineup Monday due to a jammed wrist, but Mauer said it was a precautionary move on the eve of the playoffs.

"He could have played," the skipper said. "More of a nuisance thing. It was smarter not to use him."

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Middle infielders Sean Miller and Rafael Valero both went 3-for-5 at the top of the batting order Monday for the Kernels, but the next four batters in the lineup went only 2-for-18 and did not take advantage of their opportunities.

"It was disappointing today," said Mauer. "Runners in scoring position. We had some chances there early to open the game up, if we just get a hit here or there."

Kernels starter Sam Clay went 4 1/3 innings, allowing two runs on four hits and five walks. Zack Tillery pitched well in relief for 1 2/3 innings, but Randy Rosario was touched for five hits and four runs as the game slipped away in the eighth inning.

Cedar Rapids and Quad Cities have met eight times in the Midwest League playoffs since 1976, with Quad Cities winning six times. Ironically, Mauer played for Quad Cities in 2002 when it lost to the Kernels in the playoffs in two straight games.

"Cedar Rapids knocked us out," he recalled. "They were good."

Quad Cities compiled the best record in the Midwest League this season. "Quad Cities has a nice club," said Mauer. "You don't win 88 games being lucky."

Games 2 and 3 in the best-of-3 series are scheduled for Davenport on Thursday and Friday.

**CLINTON (6):** Fields, lf, 1 0 1 0, Hebert, ph/lf, 4 0 1 0, Cousino, cf, 4 0 0 1, Leyland, 1b, 5 1 2 1, Reynolds, dh, 5 1 2 1, Morales, rf, 5 1 1 0, DeCarlo, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Peguero, 2b, 2 2 0 0, Taylor, c, 3 1 2 2, Mariscal, ss, 3 0 1 0. Totals 35 6 10 5.

**KERNELS (2):** Miller, ss, 5 1 3 0, Valera, 2b, 5 0 3 0, Corcino, rf, 5 0 1 0, White, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Real, dh, 2 1 0 0, Wade, cf, 4 0 0 0, Murphy, lf, 4 0 1 0, Paul 1b, 4 0 2 1, Navarreto, c, 2 0 0 0, Doe, pr/c, 1 0 0 0. Totals 35 2 10 1.

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**Clinton** ☐ ☐ **000 110 040 - 6 10 1**

**Kernels** ☐ ☐ **110 000 000 - 2 10 1**

Herb, Buchanan (6), Dominguez (7) and Taylor. Clay, Tillery (5), Rosario (7) and Navarreto, Doe (7). W - Dominguez (2-3). L - Rosario (2-6). 2B - Taylor (15), Paul (3), Valera 2 (10). 3B - Taylor. HR - Leyland (1), Reynolds (5). E - DeCarlo (23), Paul (1). T - 2:56. A - 2,255.