

Congratulations to Kernels and their loyal fans

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 22 September 2015 18:46 -



Congratulations to the Cedar Rapids Kernels for nearly winning the Midwest League title. And congratulations to all the fans who supported the Kernels to the very last pitch of the 2015 campaign.

Manager Jake Mauer and his staff did a marvelous job this season, steering a club of light hitters to the final game of the playoffs. The Kernels looked like dead men walking in August, but they came alive in the playoffs and nearly pulled it off before losing a pair of one-run games with the championship within reach.

The Kernels succeeded in the playoffs. And so did their fans.

Cedar Rapids fans did not know until late Sunday afternoon that there would be a fifth and final game at Veterans Memorial Stadium on Monday night. Nonetheless, an impressive crowd of 2,363 showed up and paid attention to every pitch.

Those fans did not come to see the goofy goggles race or to see somebody trying to catch flying fish with a net. They came to see a ballgame and to cheer for the local ballclub.

Nobody was sitting in the luxury suites with their backs to the field, eating and gabbing. Nobody came to see a fireworks display, because there wasn't any. Nobody left early.

These were baseball fans - Kernels fans - and they came to watch the 149th and final game of the season and see if their favorite club could win its first Midwest League title in 21 years.

Congratulations to Kernels and their loyal fans

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 22 September 2015 18:46 -

It didn't happen, but it was a good show and lots of fun, filled with drama and excitement to the very last pitch.

It would have been nice to have 3,000 or 4,000 fans at the ballpark, but those 2,363 made enough noise in the final innings to make up for it.

Remember, this was a weekday night, with school and work the next morning.

Kernels Manager Jake Mauer was gracious as usual after the game, despite the disappointing loss. Local broadcast legend Bob Brooks patted Mauer on the back and told him that he'll be managing the Minnesota Twins some day - and when it happens, said Brooksie, he hopes the Twins give him some good hitters.

Mauer had a good laugh about that one. The Kernels collected only four

hits Monday night and hit just .238 in the playoffs, the primary reason

they finished second behind West Michigan.

Mauer got up Tuesday morning and drove home to Minnesota to be with his

family and to become a member of the Minnesota Twins coaching staff for

the rest of the season as they chase a possible spot in the American

Congratulations to Kernels and their loyal fans

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 22 September 2015 18:46 -

League playoffs. Mauer has led the Kernels to the Midwest League playoffs

for three straight years, but has no idea if he'll be back next year or not.

The Twins will announce their minor league assignments in a few months.

There's also a chance that Mauer could be added to the Twins coaching

staff on a full-time basis for the 2016 campaign, because they think

highly of him in the organization.

Mauer has enjoyed a good run in Cedar Rapids and made lots of friends.

He's also helped develop young ballplayers like Byron Buxton who have

already made it to Minnesota.

Congratulations to Kernels and their loyal fans

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 22 September 2015 18:46 -

"It's been fun. I love being here," Mauer said Monday night. "It's great

for my family. The fans came out and supported us, especially in the

playoffs here. These last three days have been a lot of fun here.

"They were just waiting for something good to happen. A bloop or a

broken-bat single or something to fall in there and we just couldn't do it.

"The boys competed," he said. "We pitched and we caught the ball real well

and did things to keep games close throughout the whole year. We got hot

in the playoffs here. It's just unfortunate our hot streak ran out."

Congratulations to Kernels and their loyal fans

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 22 September 2015 18:46 -

Mauer planned to be in uniform for the Minnesota Twins Tuesday night for

their game against Cleveland at Target Field. He did not know what uniform

number he'd get, but wasn't worried about that.

This is Mauer's first trip to the Major Leagues and he plans to enjoy it.

"That will be exciting and that will be fun," he said. "It will be a neat

atmosphere to be up there. They haven't

had meaningful games in Minnesota in September for a long time.

"I'll be around it and hopefully stay out of the way."