

Welker, Erlin Promoted To Majors

Written by Staff Reports

Tuesday, 11 June 2013 06:29

Former Hickory Crawdads pitcher Duke Welker of the 2008 team was promoted to the Pittsburgh Pirates on Wednesday. The promotion makes him the 118th former player to receive a callup to the big leagues and the fifth this season.

The native of Woodinville, WA was drafted by the Pirates in the second round of the 2007 amateur draft out of the University of Arkansas. After starting well in his first two starts with Hickory, Welker injured an ankle that cost him a month of the season. He struggled at times upon his return as he went 4-13 with a 5.51 ERA in 24 starts for the Crawdads. In 116 innings, Welker struck out 72, walked 48 and gave up 81 runs (71 earned) on 142 hits.

Welker repeated class Low A in 2009 at West Virginia where he made the transition to the bullpen. He returned to the Power in 2010 before a promotion to High A-Bradenton. Continuing to climb the Pirates' organization ladder, Welker finally reached the AAA affiliate at Indianapolis in 2012. This season with the Indians, Welker was unscored upon in ten relief appearances spanning 16 innings, in which he fanned 20 and allowed only 11 base runners.

Pitcher Robbie Erlin, a member of the 2010 squad, became the 117th former Hickory Crawdads player to make it to the major leagues when the San Diego Padres promoted him from AAA-Tucson.

The native of Northern California was drafted in the third round in 2009 by the Texas Rangers out of Scotts Valley (CA) High. After eight bullpen appearances to begin the 2010 season, Erlin literally had a perfect introduction into the Crawdads rotation. In his first start on May 18 in the first game of a doubleheader at Kannapolis, Erlin pitched five perfect innings against the Intimidators and struck out nine batters before being lifted due to pitch-count limitations. For the 2010 season, Erlin went 6-3 with a save and a 2.12 ERA in 28 games, 17 starts. He became the first Crawdads pitcher to lead the South Atlantic League in ERA. His 0.92 WHIP (89 hits, 17 walks in 114.2 innings) that season led all full-season clubs and set a Crawdads club record. Erlin was named the SAL pitcher of the week on 6/28/10 and was tabbed as a mid-season SAL all-star.

He split the season with High A-Myrtle Beach and AA- Frisco in the Rangers system before a mid-season trade sent Erlin and former Crawdads pitcher Joe Wieland ('09-'10) to the Padres system for reliever Mike Adams. The two went on to win the Texas League championship with AA- San Antonio.

Fighting through an arm injury, Erlin spent last season with the Missions and he received a promotion to AAA- Tucson to begin this season. So far with the AAA- Padres, Erlin is 2-0 with a 4.73 ERA.

NOTES: Monday night's doubleheader at Hagerstown was rained out. The Crawdads lead the Suns by one-half game for first place in the first half standings in the North Division of the South Atlantic League. The two teams will play back-to-back doubleheaders beginning tonight at 6:05 p.m.; they wrap up the series with a twinbill Wednesday night.