

Robertson readies for Olympics with Rockers

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HIGH POINT — On the way to Tokyo, David Robertson picked up a pitching win in Truist Point stadium Tuesday night.

Preparing to play in the Olympics as a member of the U.S. team, the former Major League All-Star and World Series winner tossed a shutout inning as the Rockers defeated Gastonia 7-2 in the second of two seven-inning games and rebounded from a flat 8-1 loss in the first.

Robertson was in the first day of a three-day stint with the Rockers and will be joined Wednesday by another Olympic team member and former Major Leaguer, Edwin Jackson, who is also scheduled for a three-day stint.

"It was a lot of fun," Robertson said, "It was a great atmosphere and everyone has been really nice, welcomed me in and called me rookie. I enjoyed it. I hadn't been able to get on

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the mound in a game for a little while, so it was nice to get in one here."

Robertson is scheduled to make his last appearance Thursday, while Jackson is slated to make his first that day, according to Rockers manager Jamie Keefe.

The outings with the Rockers were among those arranged by USA Baseball to give players not on active rosters a chance to go against live hitting in addition to their workouts at the Olympic team's training at USA Baseball's headquarters in Cary. Players not on the 40-man rosters of MLB teams are eligible for the Olympics.

Most of those on the Olympic team are in the minor leagues, but Robertson and Jackson, who threw a no-hitter for the Diamondbacks, are among the few who are not.

"When they told me I could come in and throw and mix in here, it was the perfect opportunity for me," Robertson said.

Robertson, who is commuting from Cary, was the first out of the bullpen in relief of John Hennessey, who wasn't eligible for the win because he went just two innings instead of the necessary four.

Throwing seven strikes in 12 pitches, Robertson retired the side in order on a grounder to first, a popup into foul territory down the left field line and a strikeout that earned fans a free cup of coffee from a local coffee shop.

Over 12 Major League seasons, Robertson served as a relief pitcher for the Yankees, White Sox and Phillies. In 661 appearances, he has a 53-33 record and was the winner in Game 2 of the 2009 World Series while pitching for the Yankees.

Working his way back from Tommy John surgery 11 months ago, Robertson said, he had opportunities to play Major League baseball this season but wasn't fully committed and chose to try out for the Olympic team instead. He previously played for the U.S. internationally in the World Baseball Classic.

"I was a little rusty," Robertson said. "I've got to get a few more pitches in the strike zone. I was good enough to get it done tonight, but I'd like to be a little more polished by the time I get to Japan."

One thing he admitted to not liking is the electronic system used by the Atlantic League to call balls and strikes.

"I might get myself in trouble, but I don't know why they are

doing it," Robertson said. "Baseball already has umpires."

The Rockers (19-23) looked like a totally different team in the win than they did in the first-game loss that was their sixth in seven games. They scored two runs in the first, two runs in the third, two runs in the fifth and one in the sixth. Hennessey, Robertson, Daniel James, Brian Clark and John Fasola combined to throw six scoreless innings before Gastonia (18-22) scored twice in the seventh.

Stephen Cardullo was 2 for 3 with three runs scored. Michael Russell was 3 for 4 with two runs scored. Jerry Downs was 1 for 3 with a run and a RBI. Jared Mitchell was 2 for 3 with two RBIs. Adam Taylor was 2 for 3 with a RBI and pinch hitter C.J. Farias was 1 for 1 with a RBI.

"It was a good bounce back," Keefe said. "If you can't get guys on base you can't do it. In the second game, we swung the bat well. It was nice to get some good swings and square some balls up, the guys reacted well. It was good."

The Rockers and Honey Hunters played the third game of their four game series Wednesday.

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