



Diaz Displaying Adjustments

by Brian Stull

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<http://www.stlbaseballweekly.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/16-5-6-Seg-3-Diaz-Bell-Wong.mp3>

In the box score, it's marked down as a 6-3 and looks just like any other play from the shortstop to first baseman, but in the 1st inning of Tuesday's 8-1 victory, Aledmys Diaz made one of the best defensive plays of his young career with the St. Louis Cardinals.

Ranging far to his right on a ground ball off the bat of the Angels' Daniel Nava, Diaz took the bounce chest high and then gave a slight push from his back foot as he delivered the cross body throw with his momentum carrying him the opposite way.

"He's worked really hard all year," said bench coach David Bell recently. "Just getting into a rhythm and making more plays is the biggest thing, but he's made some really good adjustments on his own. It's always about your feet, but kind of the way it's showing up is he's found a little bit better arm slot that he's more comfortable with.

"For an infielder, that's the most important thing because you make so many throws from different angles. Every play's different—if you have a consistent spot to go to with your arm slot, that's huge."

Diaz has regularly been taking extra infield practice with Bell and first base coach Bill Mueller.

“Everybody can catch the ball,” continued Bell. “The difficult part about playing especially third base and shortstop is the throw. If you can put yourself in good position with your feet and then have an arm slot to go to, it simplifies everything.”

That’s the adjustment Diaz has made the biggest improvement on the last couple of weeks, which in turn has slowed the game down for him.

“That’s what happens,” agreed Bell. “If you’re concerned about that throw, everything speeds up because that’s the most difficult part of the play.”

The Cardinals lead the Major Leagues with 27 errors–Diaz has six of them and Kolten Wong has four at second base.

“Kolten’s made adjustments in the past, he’ll continue to make them,” said Bell. “For him, it’s also about simplifying. He’s a thinker. He thinks about the technique a lot and I think what he’s done the last week or two as well–and it’s going to start showing up, is he’s simplified it as well. Especially at second base, just catch it. Catch the ball and throw the ball.

“He has phenomenal athletic ability. His fundamentals are solid–he has a great base, he has great feet and I think he was getting a little too technical with the way he was trying to actually catch the ball. Just catch it and throw it and I think that’s what he’s been able to do the last couple of games.”

“They’re both on their way–they’re going to be fine, more than fine.”

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