



Bengie Molina Explains

by Brian Stull

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Earlier this week, the St. Louis Cardinals announced that they will again be teaming with La Ke Buena internet radio to provide eight Spanish language broadcasts this season.

And once again on the broadcasts, Bengie Molina will provide the color analysis to go alongside the play by play of Polo Ascencio on Opening Day (April 2), April 4 & 9, May 2-3 and May 29-31.

The former big leaguer and Cardinals assistant hitting coach, Molina has garnered some additional headlines after some recent comments during an MLB Network Radio interview regarding St. Louis keeping younger brother Yadier under contract for the future.

“I didn’t know that me being a Cardinal fan and me wanting to have Yadi in a Cardinals uniform for the last three years, or the next three years or four or whatever was going to cause that much trouble,” explained Molina earlier tonight. “I love it. I’m just loving my opinion. That’s just strictly my opinion.”

Currently, Yadier Molina is under contract this season with a mutual option for 2018. In the MLB Network Radio interview, Bengie expressed his frustration that the Cardinals and his brother had yet to reach a new deal.

“It’s only strictly my opinion,” Molina reiterated. “I never talk to Yadi about negotiations, that’s very private. I want people to know that. That’s very, very private. I don’t even know if they’re in talks or if they have talked or whatever. People need to know that. This is just me as a fan. Me. Me, Bengie Molina as a fan.

“I want Yadi to finish his career in the Cardinals. I love the Cardinals. He loves the Cardinals. Why is it that people are taking it so wrong that I said something like that? I don’t know. Anyway, it’s just my opinion. I don’t want the Cardinals office or Mo or Bill or anybody to take it this way. I don’t want that. I’m just saying from my perspective as a fan—I’m a Cardinal fan, I want Yadi to finish there.

“I don’t understand why it’s taking so long, of course I don’t. That’s their business. Like Mo said, they’re open for business. And that’s exactly what I said on the radio—it is a business. There’s no loyalty in baseball, it’s business. So me as a fan, wants Yadi to stay. That’s all I said.”

The “open for business” reference came from comments by St. Louis Cardinals General Manager John Mozeliak in response to the Molina interview.

“It’s like any other,” Mozeliak told MLB.com. “You try to do what’s best for your organization. There’s a short-term approach and a long-term approach. Yadi has meant a lot to this organization for a long time, and we want to make sure that whatever the outcome of this is, we definitely tried to do what is best for everyone.”

Soon after his interview, Bengie Molina began to receive feedback on his comments—not all of it positive. So he picked up the phone and called his little brother.

“I called him right away and said hey, bro you got five minutes with me,” shared Molina. “I explained the whole thing and he said ‘hey B-Mo, you don’t have to worry, I trust you. I know you know what you’re doing.’ I told him, I’m not putting words in your mouth. I’m not doing that. I’m not trying, all I’m doing is as a Cardinal fan for you to stay. But it’ll take Mo, it’ll take the Cardinals organization to decide that, not me.”

Focused on trying to help their native Puerto Rico win the World Baseball Classic, Yadi responded to his brother by saying “Thanks Bro, but I’m not thinking about that right now,” laughed Bengie.

Last season, Yadi set a new career best of 1218.1 innings caught behind the plate. He turns 35 years old in June, but Bengie is confident Yadi has plenty more left in the tank.

“I don’t see him going down, slowing down,” said Molina. “He’s taking care of himself. He’s in great shape. He’s catching, he’s showing everybody what he can do. Last year, he told me that he threw one time, he threw 1.9. The rest were 1.8 or lower. I mean, c’mon—one time all year, 1.9? Only one time? I threw like 2.1. I threw 2.0. He made me

feel so bad after he told me that. I was like ‘oh crap’. Yeah, the numbers were down because everybody knows that works together. That works with the pitcher being slower, things like that. They have to both work together, I understand that. But the numbers are there. He blocks every ball, he can pitch, he can throw guys out, he calls the game, he can help you out, he’s a leader. C’mon. That’s what I don’t understand.”

Will that be able to continue for another three or four years?

“I’m just assuming because he’s in such great shape that he could play three or four years—maybe five years, who knows,” said Molina. “I’m just guessing on my part because I heard the Cardinals side too. They want Carson Kelly because he has potential.”

That is a bridge the Cardinals are quickly having to cross—as Kelly is one of the top-ranked prospects in baseball. He made his Major League debut last season and is expected to be the everyday catcher at Memphis (AAA) this season. But beyond that, is there room for both catchers on the big league roster?

“I love the kid,” continued Molina. “I saw him when he came in as a third baseman, they made him a catcher. I love the kid. I’m not taking anything away from that kid, but on the business side, Yadi wants to be the best catcher. He wants to be paid normal, like a good catcher. If the Cardinals think Carson Kelly can do what Yadi can, then they will not sign him. It’s very simple. It’s not like we’re covering the sky with the hen, because you won’t be able to. It’s very simple. It’s all in the hands of the Cardinals and see what they can do and what they want to do.”

A two-time Gold Glove winner, Bengie caught until he was 36 years old. Their other brother, Jose, caught over 600 innings when he was 39.

“This is different,” pointed out Bengie. “Yadi is a different player than I was. He means so much for the city, he means so much for the Cardinals. And that’s what I was saying. I wasn’t even trying to stir it up or any problems. Nothing like that—especially not for the Cardinals office, Mo, or anybody. I wasn’t trying to do that. I was just a fan and giving my opinion.”

Entering this season, Yadier Molina is 407 hits shy of 2000 for his career. Asked if his brother has looked at 2000 hits as an important milestone for his legacy or Hall of Fame candidacy, Molina said no.

“The only time we mention Hall of Fame is to say my mom and dad are Hall of Famers,” said Bengie. “That’s it, that’s the only time we talk about it. He’s not even thinking about that. He’s thinking about the next game (WBC) which is today and obviously when he goes back to the Cardinals, he will think about the season.”

That said, Bengie has thought about what his brother has done on the field—both those statistics that do and don’t show up in the boxscore.

“Think about this—and I want the fans to hear this because it’s very important,” said a passionate Molina. “How many sacrifices has he done for the Cardinals? For the team? He has sacrificed so much. Day games after night games. You can ask me, I played the position and I know how hard it is to do that. And he does it like nothing. He wants to wear the jersey, he wants to play, he doesn’t want to take a day off.

“You know how many players I played with that wanted a day off? They loved to have a day off because it’s a day off and they’re getting paid. You know what I mean? He’s right here, that you guys are very fortunate to have, doesn’t want to take a day off. He wants to play. I mean, c’mon. What else does he have to do? But anyway, we’re going back to the Cardinals office and Mo, and everybody has to make a decision. And it could go either way. Like I told you, baseball is never loyal. It will never be loyal to anybody, it’s strictly business.”

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