



# Tuivailala Optioned

by Brian Stull

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Following the St. Louis Cardinals 6-1 victory over Washington this afternoon the team announced pitcher Sam Tuivailala had been optioned to Memphis (AAA).

“He’s looked good—his best spring yet, in my opinion,” stated Mike Matheny recently about the reliever.

But as the roster heads towards the final moves, Tuivailala has options allowing him to be sent down. Regardless of the contract realities, the right-hander impressed more than the manager this spring.

“When I go out there, I’m throwing every thing with conviction,” said Tuivailala. “Feel good. I feel like my mechanics are where they’re supposed to be. Timing and everything is going good—been doing a lot of hard work with it, trying to slow the game down. At the same time, trying to feel my body and feel what it’s doing and what it should be doing. And I trust all my pitches right now. It’s fun going out there, attacking guys with all four pitches now that I have confidence in all of so yeah, I definitely think it’s my best.”

In particular, Tuivailala has shown confidence in his curveball which has returned as the top compliment to his fastball.

“It keeps guys off—allows me to use my fastball deeper in the count when they know I have that in my back pocket,” he explained. “Even if they’re on the fastball, I can always flip one in there to get them off-balance, mess up timing. The curveball, two-seam, and I still have my slider that I use so it’s just reading guys swings, learning how to pitch to guys, but so far, it’s been good.”

A cutter had been introduced into his repertoire before, but Tuivailala found those results and efforts weren’t working.

“Last year I think I focused on it so much that I kind of went away from my strengths,” he shared. “Went away from my curveball and fastball—was trying to force something that probably shouldn’t have been forced too much. I was putting so much work on it that I forgot how to throw my fastball and curveball. But this year, it’s different. I just feel really comfortable getting any type of sign at any time in the count. And I’ve thrown everything with conviction and I’m trusting everything.”

Tuivailala appeared in six games this spring and allowed all four of his earned runs in a game against Miami. Other than that 2/3 of an inning, the 24-year old yielded just four hits and struck out 9 batters in his other six innings of work.

“I definitely think it’s all coming together now,” said Tuivailala. “With all the experience—all the ups and downs I’ve come across the last two or three years. Learning a lot, asking a lot of questions—definitely have the right clubhouse to help me out with that. So yeah, it’s definitely come a long way. There’s still things to work on, for sure, but I like how everything’s coming along. I’m confident.”

Over the last three seasons, Tuivailala has appeared in 28 games for the Cardinals and has put up 17 saves the last two years at Memphis (AAA).

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