



Kelly or Kozma or Both??

by Brian Stull

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The St. Louis Cardinals have reached the midway point of their Grapefruit League schedule and while some questions—like who will win the fifth spot in the rotation, have yet to be answered others are becoming more clear. For instance, the battle for utility player has already seen [Greg Garcia](#) optioned back to Memphis, leaving Dean Anna, Ty Kelly, Pete Kozma, and Scott Moore to continue in the battle for a roster spot.

Kelly and Kozma have stood out in the first thirteen games—both in quality and quantity of play.

Kozma is batting .455 (10-22) with only four strikeouts, thus far making good on his goal to cut down on the swings and misses. He has also garnered [praise from his manager](#) on a regular basis for his defensive play, base running, and overall athleticism. One would be hard pressed to find a better case for a roster spot than Kozma has put forward so far.

Kelly doesn't have the same batting average, .261, but as has been the case his entire professional career, he's been finding a way to get on base and has a .433 OBP. Even more noticeable is the amount of innings he has played—71, tops on the team. The next closest is Jacob Wilson at 57 and then Kozma at 53.

Anna has played 46 innings and is batting .154 (2-13). Moore has a .182 (4-22) average and has logged 47 innings.

Acquired in a [trade with Seattle](#), Kelly is getting a thorough look and at more than just his infield positions of second and third. Of his 71 innings, 35 have been in the corner outfield spots.

He's also spent one inning at first base and is among those getting instruction as the emergency back-up catcher—a position he played regularly in [high school](#).

Kozma has also shown his versatility—also getting time in the outfield to go with duties at shortstop, third, second, and emergency back-up catcher.

The innings in the outfield at least provide consideration that both could make the roster in a combination infield/fifth outfielder utility role.

Based on his free agent signing, it's expected Mark Reynolds has one bench spot already spoken for. Back up catcher is Tony Cruz. Tradition would suggest another infielder and two outfielders to round out the roster. But with Jon Jay expected to make his debut in Grapefruit League action later this week and no signs that he should not be ready for the regular season and the bulk of innings that Matt Holliday and Jason Heyward are capable of, playing time could be difficult for any fourth outfielder.

Peter Bourjos and Randal Grichuk are both strongly in that mix—and pending how recovers from the quad strain Tommy Pham could be a factor.

All three outfielders are capable of playing all three spots, but there is still some organizational preference for Grichuk to see regular at-bats—which could be difficult on the big league roster. Pham, who was drafted in 2006, is not in the same situation but will have to return to health and production to make things interesting.

Bourjos appears to be the incumbent and both player and team have been pleased with the process of returning to his [“new” old swing](#). But with only a 1-23 start to show for it, production could be a bigger factor in this second half of spring if others continue to put up offense.

Which brings the focus back to Kelly, who also offers [switch-hitting](#) for a right-handed heavy bench, and Kozma. They would provide depth on the infield, but allow for the fourth outfielder to receive the available innings while still keeping a glove ready for the outfield if called upon.

A lot can and will likely happen between now and April 5th, but at the turn both have given something to think about.