



# Catcher's Eye for Matheny

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<http://www.stlbaseballweekly.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/3-4-15-Matheny-on-catching-Tuivailala.mp3>

(Jupiter, FL) St. Louis Cardinals Manager Mike Matheny had previously qualified that Wednesday would be a day off for his team—with the exception of those players who needed to throw or receive some treatment. So while much of the complex was quiet, Jon Jay finished up taking some swings in the cage as a few pitchers loosened up to throw a bullpen.

Then as John Gast, Marco Gonzales, and Tyler Lyons stepped onto the mound a familiar face got behind the plate.

“There’s no glory day stuff going on here, it’s by necessity,” explained Matheny of having six pitchers and only two catchers around.

“I just love being out here, this is my favorite time of year without question,” admitted the manager. “To be able to help too. The longer these guys would be out here, now we can get them out and get them home. I do enjoy it, but it’s not just passing time, I feel like there’s something I can see myself.

“I wanted to catch those two guys on purpose (Gonzales, Tuivailala) and just kind of see what you see through a catcher’s eyes. Because even standing behind you sometimes miss some things—whether how the ball has the late movement or there’s just a sense some times as to a guy struggling to get a pitch to a certain spot.”

That catcher’s perspective resulted in a subtle change of moving Sam Tuivailala a couple of inches to the left edge of the pitching rubber.

“The mistakes he’s making, he’s making on the middle to the inside half to a right-hander,” explained Matheny and noting that the young reliever would need to avoid that in the situations he will come into. “Sometimes just moving him on the rubber a little bit changes how he approaches the plate and how he sees the strike zone. He didn’t miss a fastball after he moved over there. That’s a great day for him.”

Tuivailala spent a great deal of time [in the Fall League](#) working on his breaking pitches—and the results are noticeable.

“Today’s a big league breaking ball—and a big league changeup,” complimented Matheny. “Changeup, which is such a great tool for him to have to be able to throw against left-handed hitters. Same arm-slot, same arm-speed and it’s at least 10mph off his heater which is still hard. That’s a difference maker for him. Both changeup and the curveball are radically different then what he had a year ago. It’s just going to be execution—throwing it in the zone, being able to pound the strike zone when he needs to.”

Gonzales focused mainly on his cutter, but also worked in the sinker and curveball.

“He’s got three new pitches he didn’t have a year ago,” pointed out the skipper. “He’s got such a touch with all of his pitchers—and a brand new pitch even with the curveball. He’s moving it back door and able to have good bite on the back door pitch. That’s not easy for a young player to learn out of nowhere. And that cutter—I think is going to be the biggest difference for him.”

“He learned some great lessons the other day—Holliday just about took his hat off twice. They were cutters, but they weren’t well-executed cutters. And just Matt being able to stop afterwards and talk to him about the effectiveness of where that pitch needs to be—that’s a great learning lesson for Marco.”

## **BEANING FALL OUT**

—It’s been nearly 17 years since Matheny took a [90+mph fastball to the face](#)—and didn’t go down—but he is still feeling the effects, having to undergo dental treatment yesterday. “That was a bad day—as soon as he stuck that needle in me it was a much better day, I almost kissed him,” laughed Matheny, who will have to return next week to finish the procedure.

Matheny has had almost all of his teeth on the left side replaced or worked on as a result of the incident and now is finding a need to repeat the process.

“I thought that one was fixed already, but apparently I have to go round 2 with all of them.”

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