



Garcia Ready to Compete

by Brian Stull

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<http://www.stlbaseballweekly.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2-20-15-Jaime-Garcia-edit.mp3>

(Jupiter, FL) There is a lot of time between now and the end of Spring Training, but on Friday, his first bullpen session went exactly as Jaime Garcia had planned.

“It went really well, threw a lot,” said the left-hander, who is coming back from thoracic outlet syndrome surgery.

Garcia had hoped to “get after it” with his throwing in November before shutting things down for the off-season. That did not happen.

“I was not able to do those things because it was a really tough rehab process—tougher than I thought it was going to be,” he explained. “But here I am, ready to go for whatever they need me.”

Whatever the St. Louis Cardinals need is a bit of a question regarding Garcia. The rotation is already composed of Adam Wainwright, Michael Wacha, Lance Lynn, John Lackey, and Carlos Martinez competing with Marco Gonzales competing for the fifth spot. But workloads and prior injuries are at least considerations as the team moves forward. So is what a healthy Garcia can provide.

“We’ve made it very clear to him and everybody else, he’s just out here competing,” stated Manager Mike Matheny. “He’s a guy that has never been a doubt for any of us, his stuff. He’s gonna have to show durability and I don’t know if there’s enough time through Spring Training to actually show that. He says he’s ready to go right now, the medical team’s given us clearance so he’s just another pitcher out there looking to make a spot on our club. We’ll give him a good look and see how it fits for us.”

Could that fit be in the bullpen? Not likely.

“Historically, I would say no,” said General Manager John Mozeliak, although qualifying it was only the beginning of Spring Training. “He was brought up as a starter.

“I feel like when you’re coming back from the types of injuries that he has had to deal with, thinking about getting him up and down in a bullpen-type role does not seem the most logical.”

“That’s a little ahead for right now,” agreed Garcia. “I’ve been a starting pitcher my whole career, since I was a little kid. I’ve never done anything different. I prepared myself this off-season to be a starting pitcher, just that what I’ve always done. If it comes down to where they’re trying to go a different direction at the end of Spring Training or in the middle, we’ll sit down and talk about it. As far as I know and what I did this off-season, I prepared to be a starting pitcher. I’m ready to be a starting pitcher and that’s what I’m going to go out there and compete and try to win a spot.”

Garcia has won 42 games but made only 97 starts over the last six seasons due to injury.

“He seems very optimistic, which I think is great news for us,” said Mozeliak. “When you think about the depth we have in our rotation and what we’re trying to accomplish, having someone like him competing for a spot when you think back a month ago, we really weren’t talking about his name. So, if he’s really feeling great and ready to compete for that, I think it’s great news for us.”

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