M's acquire Tuivailala to bolster bullpen

SEATTLE (AP) — The Seattle Mariners bolstered their bullpen on Friday by acquiring right-handed reliever Sam Tuivailala from the St. Louis Cardinals in exchange for minor-league pitcher Seth Elledge.

Tuivailala is 3-3 with a 3.69 ERA in 31 appearances for St. Louis this season, his second full season in the big leagues. He'll immediately jump into the playoff race with Seattle holding a one-game lead over Oakland for the second wild card in the American League.

Tuivailala also gives Seattle versatility. He's worked more than one inning in eight of his 31 appearances. He's held right-handed batters to a .230 average and has not allowed a run in 21 of 31 outings. He also helps fulfill general manager Jerry Dipoto's goal of acquiring players that will be controllable for years to come. Tuivailala isn't arbitration eligible until 2020.

"Sam is in the midst of his second consecutive solid big league season, and has pitched in parts of four major league seasons but has barely two years of service time," Dipoto said. "We view this as a move for our present and our future."

Tuivailala will join a bullpen that's been worked extensively in numerous close ball games. Seattle is 27-13 in one-run games this season.

Elledge has quickly risen among the rankings of minor-league prospects in the Mariners organization. Elledge was recently rated as the No. 10 prospect in Seattle's organization and was 5-1 with a 1.17 ERA and nine saves in 31 games for Single-A Modesto.

AP Photo/Jeff Roberson, File

The Seattle Mariners have bolstered their bullpen by adding Sam Tuivailala from the Cardinals, in exchange for minor-league pitcher Seth Elledge. Tuivailala is 3-3 with a 3.69 ERA in 31 appearances for St. Louis this season, his second full season.

MARINERS: Cruz hits 23rd HR, has only 2 in July

Continued from 1B

double with the bases loaded in the second inning to give the Angels their first runs of the game. David Fletcher brought another home in the second on a sacrifice fly.

Mike Zunino hit a fifth-inning home run for the Mariners, his 13th and first since June 29. He spent time on the disabled list over that stretch with a left ankle bone bruise.

Cruz added a solo shot in the seventh, his 23rd. Cruz has just two homers in July.

The Mariners tied the game in the eighth inning on Guillermo Heredia's bloop RBI single to right field. Zunino started the inning with a double that was misplayed by Angels left fielder Justin Upton.

The Angels' three-run second inning started on a leadoff double from Albert Pujols. It was the 3,061st hit of Pujols' career, moving him into sole possession of 24th place ahead of Houston Astros great, Craig Biggio.

AP Photo/Mark J. Terrill

Seattle Mariners' Dee Gordon, left, is tagged by Los Angeles Angels catcher Jose Briceno while trying to steal home during the 10th inning.

SEAHAWKS: Return of Ken Norton Jr has linebackers feeling good

Continued from 1B

defensive line and the type of chaos Michael Bennett and others created on — and sometimes off — the field.

Then there was Wagner and fellow linebacker K.J. Wright. They have been regarded as two of the best in the league at their positions and sometimes have received that level of recognition. But they were often relegated to a secondary role on their own team in terms of recognition even with Wagner being voted first-team All-Pro three times and Wright being a Pro Bowl selection.

"The attention has gone elsewhere, I guess," Wright said. "Nothing will change. We'll still be the bad-ass linebackers on this team. We'll still lead the way. Stuff will still be run in order. We'll still make plays and it'll be fun out there."

Seattle's offseason defensive overhaul saw Bennett, Richard Sherman and Sheldon Richardson find new homes; Cliff Avril and Kam Chancellor step away from the game due to neck injuries, and Earl Thomas hold out in search of a new contract. There are changes everywhere across Seattle's defensive alignment, with the exception of the linebackers.

Wagner has been calling Seattle's defense from the moment he arrived in the NFL and became a starter as a rookie. His partner the entire time has been Wright. With the departures, those voices they've used together for the past six seasons will be even louder.

"Yeah, they had the name, they got a lot of the attention and now the attention may shift to the linebackers," Wagner said. "But we pride ourselves on being the guys that lead this team and that has been my mindset since I stepped in. I had coach Norton teach me the way."

Ken Norton Jr. has returned to Seattle to be the defensive coordinator. He was a mentor for Wagner and Wright as the linebackers coach when both arrived in the NFL. Now he's returned with an even bigger imprint on what Seattle does defensively.

"He's the linebackers guy and he put that responsibility more on us. He calls on me in the meeting room to answer most of the questions, calls on Bobby to answer the questions because he knows that we're all on the same page," Wright said. "He knows that we're the guys that can share our leadership abilities, share our knowledge of the game. He's putting that on us."

There may also be some schematic tweaks that give Wagner and Wright more freedom defensively. Wright said he believes the adjustments will make Seattle more fundamentally sound defensively and the linebackers could be the benefactors.

"I think this defense is hungry," Wright said. "We have a lot to prove. Myself, the secondary with all the guys leaving, the (defensive) line with the guys leaving. It's going to be fun because you've got guys who want to come and show who they are."

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