The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Mike Matheny first encountered Stan Musial about two decades ago, watching the Hall of Famer draw a harmonica out of his jacket with an impish grin and captivate yet another crowd.

Whichever way the St. Louis Cardinals decide to remember Stan the Man, whether they wear armbands or a patch on their uniforms, their manager expects his team to adhere to Musial's work ethic. Matheny, who begins his second spring training in charge in about three weeks, believes Musial's passing will serve as perspective and motivation while reminding players that the window of opportunity is short.

"I think everybody around here, young and old, gets how important Mr. Musial was and still is — and will be — to this organization and this community. Just everything he stood for," Matheny said Monday at the end of the three-day Winter Warm-Up fan festival.

"Whether it's something we physically put on our sleeve or not, I'm sure there will be something that will memorialize Mr. Musial."

The 92-year-old Musial, a seven-time National League batting champion and three-time MVP, died on Saturday. A public visitation will be Thursday at the Cathedral Basilica in St. Louis, with a funeral Mass on Saturday.

"I think whether you grow up in St. Louis or not, if you're a fan of baseball you're going to hear Stan Musial's name repeatedly," said third baseman David Freese, who grew up suburban St. Louis. "He's going to be missed, I think everybody knows that.

"What a life he lived."

Matheny's on-field focus has been tested beyond the anguish of a blown a 3-1 NLCS lead against the eventual World Series champion San Francisco Giants last fall. He faces bankruptcy over a series of failed investments that the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported have left him more than $4 million in debt.

Matheny told the newspaper he expects to liquidate all of his investments and real estate holdings, including his dream home, which has 17 rooms on 11 acres. From all accounts, Matheny was able to block out those issues when he put on the uniform.

"You just never know any situation how you're going to react until you get into it, but I was able to show up every day with an incredible ability to just focus and do my job," Matheny said. "Stuff on the outside I was able to compartmentalize and deal with that as I had to.

"It's a story that doesn't have anything to do with woes, it's about some pretty cool things that have happened, but I'm looking forward to moving on."

The Cardinals, meanwhile, hope to sign pitcher Adam Wainwright, entering the final year of his contract, to a new deal. The 31-year-old Wainwright returned in less than a year from reconstructive elbow surgery last season and was 14-13 with a 3.94 ERA, after totaling 39 wins in 2009-10.

"You can be sure we'll try to sign him," chairman Bill DeWitt Jr. said. "Whether we'll be able to, remains to be seen."

Wainwright wore a T-shirt that read "Just Happy to be here. Hope I can help the ballclub."

"If they want to talk about it with my agent, they're more then welcome to," Wainwright said. "I don't respond well when I'm thinking about other stuff on the mound."

The Cardinals have three remaining arbitration-eligible players — closer Jason Motte, left-hander reliever Marc Rzepczynski and Freese. They're closer to deals with the two pitchers than Freese, the 2011 World Series and NL championship series MVP.

The 29-year-old Freese played his first full season last year, batting .293 with 20 homers and 79 RBIs, and is seeking $3.75 million. The Cardinals have offered $2.4 million.

"Publicly I'm not going to get involved with talking about where we're at," Freese said. "It's going to get resolved sooner or later, it kind of has to.

"When I don't know, but obviously we're in the process."

Motte submitted for $5.5 million and was offered $4.5 million and Rzepczynski requested $1.3 million and was offered $900,000.

Outfielder Carlos Beltran, entering the second year of a two-year, $26 million contract, wasn't looking ahead.

"Whatever happens after this year, I don't know," Beltran said. "But I also have to find out what the organization's plans are.

"They don't really have to come to me and explain it to me. It depends on how this year goes, probably."

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