



Padres Press Clips

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Padres say they aren't worried about 100 losses

[Kevin Acee](#)

[Craig Stammen](#) knows the [Padres](#) are better, even if they are worse.

His eyes have seen it, his mind has grasped it, his arm has had to deal with it.

“The amount of games we have a chance to win is significantly higher,” Stammen said recently.

That means something — not in the way of close being a consolation but close meaning they might be closing in on contending.

Stammen measures progress primarily by workload. He and Kirby Yates are the back-end bullpen guys manager Andy Green saves for close games.

“We’ve had to get loose more, be prepared to pitch in a lot more games than last year,” Stammen said. “There were so many games last year where (in the) fifth inning we knew we weren’t pitching that day unless there was a miracle.”

The Padres finished 71-91 in 2017 with a run differential of minus-1.31 runs per game. They lost 36 games by five or more runs.

They are 57-88 this season with a differential of minus-0.96 runs a game. They have lost 23 by five or more.

That is while having rookie pitchers start 57 games and with a rookie throwing at least an inning of relief in 108 games and with letting Franmil Reyes and Franchy Cordero and Manuel Margot and [Wil Myers](#) navigate their various learning curves. And much more.

So it is with that perspective and the knowledge of what this season has been about that Padres players contend they don’t care how 2018 ends up.

“It’s not important at all,” first baseman [Eric Hosmer](#) said. “It’s a losing season. We’re not going to be happier if we lose 99 versus 100 games.”

His answer was to a question asked of several players over the past couple weeks about whether it was important to avoid the ignominious distinction of being 100-game losers.

Because in terms of tangible achievements, that’s all that is left.

After enduring the awfulness of April and the brief tease of late May and early June, the discovery of what [Hunter Renfroe](#) and [Austin Hedges](#) actually are and what Joey Lucchesi and Eric Lauer might be, we are left with one absolutely answerable question.

Will the Padres lose 100 games?

They must win at least six times in their final 17 games to avoid their slice of infamy, a level of ineptitude to which they have not sunk since 1993 (or before 10 of the 29 players on their active roster were born).

Losing 100 games is a level of low that practically requires a special font to write about and a squinty face to talk about.

When referring to such a team, people use a tone of voice reserved for a shocked variety of pity — such as when a hipster looks down on anyone who is not a hipster or a sommelier can hardly believe someone would confuse a 2017 Montoya with a 2014 Lancaster.

For those who deal in the language of tweets and texts, it is basically a “smh” situation. Yeah, so bad it essentially requires condescension.

“That team lost 100 games.” One could use an exclamation point, except it is simply not worth wasting the good punctuation marks on such a dismal deed.

From 2008 through last season, 11 teams finished with 100 or more losses. That means for all the disparity between [MLB](#)’s haves and have-nots, fewer than four

percent of teams were so bad that they couldn't even win 63 games in a season. In three of the past four seasons, no team lost 100 games.

At least two will this year. The Orioles already have 102 losses, and the [Royals](#) are five away from 100 with 20 games to play. The White Sox (87 losses with 19 games to play) and Marlins (86 with 20) join the Padres with a realistic shot.

Dividing the first 136 games into 17-game segments, the Padres won at least six games in six of the eight segments. (They are 4-5 in the past nine games to get to the total of 145 games.)

But whatever.

When you've been the ones losing this much and know what it means, that column on the right side of the standings is just a number.

"The difference between two or three wins isn't really anything," Myers said. "I realize there is a triple digit in one and a double digit in the other. But at the end of the day, there are 10 teams that make the playoffs and 20 that go home. If you're not one of those 10 teams, you're part of the 20 that don't make the playoffs."

They won't be happy to lose 100. They haven't been happy getting to within two losses of 90 so far.

They do acknowledge without hesitation the mark carries a stigma of a particular kind of stink.

"There's losing teams," outfielder [Travis Jankowski](#) said. "And then there are 100-loss teams. So I understand that."

He couldn't stop himself from pondering the reality "100 losses sucks; that's terrible" more than once in a brief conversation.

But then again, the player who talks about winning as much as anyone in the clubhouse, a guy who has basically sat at the knee of manager Andy Green and coach [Skip Schumaker](#) all season and absorbed their teachings on what a winning

player does as if the words were from on high, thinks about the big picture and shrugs.

“If we lose 100 games or we lose 75, if we don’t make the playoffs come Oct. 1, we’re sitting on the couch watching,” Jankowski said. “So another way to look at it is there are losing teams and playoff teams.”

The Padres see what has happened and what is happening.

There is a clear sense they believe they can be better sooner than they dared imagine even two months ago.

This has been a pretty realistic group all along. No delusions here.

Practically speaking, players could acknowledge by July that this season was definitely not about winning so much as growing. That growth has begun to show up for real.

In Renfroe’s .841 OPS since May 30. In Hedges’ .836 OPS since June 25. In Reyes’ 1.022 OPS in the 32 games since his most recent call-up on Aug. 5. In Jose Castillo allowing one of 13 inherited runners to score and striking out 40 batters in 32 innings.

“We’re doing a nice job right now of getting where we need to be,” Hedges said. “I’ve been very impressed with our guys right now. I think that’s what we can expect the rest of September and going into next year.”

Again, this is not about how much they have won recently (they are a mere 15-20 since the start of August) nor how much they might win over the season’s final 2 1/2 weeks.

Improvement and learning has been the aim of the first 145 games, and it is only more so now.

“Yeah,” Jankowski said. “There is a way to measure losing. But at the end of the day if you lose, you lose. I get the 100 losses; it sucks. But if your goal is not to lose 100 games, we’ve got bigger issues than what’s seen. ... We look at it as we’re going to go

out there and iron out some kinks. Rather than having a rough April, a rough May, we get it figured out now.”

There is a price for that focus. Always has been.

“A hundred looks bad,” Stammen said. “I guess there is some pride in not losing 100 games. But honestly, what’s the difference between losing 98 and 100? With what our goal is right now ... it is about growth in the young guys. Losses are going to be part of that.”

Talking with ... Missions manager Phillip Wellman

Jeff Sanders

Phillip Wellman has spent the last two decades in Double-A baseball. His San Antonio Missions lost their best player shortly after the end of the first half, was a last-place team in the second half and was down two games to none when it rallied for three straight wins to push their way into the Texas League Championship Series, which begins Tuesday in Tulsa.

Union-Tribune: Considering the circumstances, is it talent, is it fight, that brings you all the way back to win that first playoff series?

Wellman: I think it was a combination of both of those. We were down two games to none and we were getting beat 8-1 in the third game and we had done something that I hadn't seen in all my years in the game. We gave up four home runs in a row. I think after that inning, whether it was embarrassment or frustration, the light switch came on. Our guys had had enough. We scored a couple runs the next inning and just kept scoring and ended up tying the ballgame and won it. I think giving up those four home runs in a row was a turning point. It brought everyone together. We're not going to get this done waiting on Josh Naylor to carry us or one pitcher to carry us. We were going to have to do this collectively.

U-T: From a momentum standpoint, how concerning was it to have to go to bed Friday night with the winning run on second base?

Wellman: When it started raining – and it rained hard – that was my biggest fear going to be that night. The rain may have stopped our momentum. You could sense it and feel it. Just looking at Corpus, you could kind of sense that they felt they were in trouble. They were basically getting ready to celebrate. When we tied it up and it started raining, I was like, golly. I was just hoping it didn't squelch the momentum. We went out. We played the start of that suspended game at 1 o'clock Saturday

afternoon. At 1:03 I was back in my office writing out the lineup for the next game. It didn't take long and I think both teams had all night to sit and figure out what the strategy was going to be with a man on second and no outs. I'm pretty sure they thought we were going to bunt. They had both their corner infielders in and I had already told Owen Miller that we weren't bunting. We were going to take three pops at it because we had Buddy Reed at second, who was the fastest human being on the field. Sure enough, if Owen Miller didn't drive him in, he would at least get him to third and he did, and Josh Naylor hit a ball just soft enough to second base that Buddy Reed beat the throw home. I think that really set the tone for Game 4 and we got a tremendous pitching performance from Nick Margevicius. That was the first I'd ever seen him pitch.

U-T: And you had Chris Huffman in Game 5. He's been in the rotation. He's been sent to the bullpen when bigger-named prospects came up. What did he show you Sunday?

Wellman: I've never him so focused and locked in. It hadn't been the greatest of years for him. He started in Triple-A. He scuffled, got sent back, was in our bullpen for a while. When we needed a starter, he went back into our rotation. ... Since he's been here, he and Jimmy Jones, our pitching coach, have really beared down and worked on somethings that got Chris Huffman back to pitching the way he had pitched before he got away from somethings. He looked like the Chris Huffman of old. He actually looked better because he was throwing a little harder. I don't know where that came from but (Sunday) night he was topping out at 94 mph, which I'd never seen. I've seen him very good, but I'd never seen him throw that hard.

U-T: Whose job was it to tell Chris Paddock that he was shut down and could not pitch in the playoffs?

Wellman: Mine. He understood. Smart kid. He wasn't happy because he's a fierce competitor and he wants to pitch, but it was in his best interest. He'd already more than doubled his innings in one season coming off Tommy John. ... This is my 19th or 20th year in Double-A. I told him, "Chris, two weeks after the season ends, nobody is going to remember that game. But if you go out in a Double-A baseball game with as bright a future as you have and we blow you out pushing you, I won't be able to sleep

at night.” Understand that this decision was made as an organization with Chris Paddock’s future at heart and he understood. He’s been here the whole time. He’s been a part of the club and he’s vocal and a leader and contributes other ways now.

U-T: What was your impression of him when he joined your club?

Wellman: He’s obviously a very fierce competitor. It’s unbelievable. You can see it watching him pitch. He’s not afraid to let his emotions show. He respects the game, respects his opponents, but he’s got a little fire to him and he’s not afraid to show it. It doesn’t hurt that that throws 94-96 mph with a tremendous change-up and his curveball is starting to come around.

U-T: What did losing Tatis when you did do to the club?

Wellman: We talked about it. We weren’t going to hide from it, because obviously we knew we weren’t going to replace him. You don’t replace a player like that. The approach I took was some of you other guys on the field are going to have to step up. Then River Stevens stepped in admirably at shortstop for Junior and then he got hurt and it ended his season. It was a double whammy. ... That meant guys like Peter Van Gansen and Michael Gettys and some of those other guys had to pull a little more weight. That was my challenge to them.

U-T: What was your impression of how Tatis pulled himself out of his first month of the season?

Wellman: It was impressive but not unexpected. I’ve been in Double-A for a long time. The only guy I really never saw miss a beat coming to Double-A was [Oscar Taveras](#) – God rest his soul. Even the best players I had with the Braves and Cardinals, the best I’ve had here, it takes them a month usually – some of them six weeks – to figure it out. In time, the talent is going to surface and he had an abundance of it. I communicated with daily, “Trust the process.” Every day you’re here is another day of experience. When you look up, it will have been a week and then two weeks and then a month and every at-bat you’re going to get experience and see things you hadn’t seen before. I’m sure in Fort Wayne he wasn’t getting a whole

lot of 2-0 change-ups or first-pitch sliders. He was getting to see that here. Once he started figuring those things out and was staying in the zone, his talent surfaced.

U-T: That first month thing seems to apply to Buddy Reed and Hudson Potts.

Wellman: Same thing. Buddy was leading the Cal League in hitting when he got sent to us. He finished the season at (.179). It's hard for those kids to look at the big picture because they want success right now, but I think what Potts and Buddy Reed garnered from being here is experience and now when they go home and work on things they'll have a better understanding and when their feet hit the Double-A field next year I think they'll be fine because they are both talented.

U-T: Do you get a lot of 19-year-olds throwing 103 mph (Andres Munoz?):

Wellman: I've never seen one in my life until this year. It's unbelievable. It's fun to watch. ... He threw his first pitch Sunday night at 101 mph and topped out at 103. He had an outing week ago to get a save. All 10 fastballs, his bottom velocity was 100. He topped out at 103 and he pitched at 102. I don't know how to explain that. It's just fun to watch and it's so effortless. He's not a max effort guy. He's not grunting out there. It's just a quick arm and the ball explodes out of his hand to the plate. And he's 19. When I was 19, I was trying to figure out where my next class was. It's hard to fathom that this kid is 19 years old, still has braces on his teeth and is throwing 103 mph.

U-T: Two years ago, your Double-A team lost 83 games. From your spot in the organization, what have you witnessed over the last two years?

Wellman: When I took the job they told me there was a little bit of a vacuum. The Double-A club was where the vacuum was. That first half I remember we were 22-48. It was a group of great kids and we played hard. We just weren't that talented. But Sam (Geaney) and A.J. (Preller) and the higher-ups said be patient. It's coming. They weren't lying. You could see in the second half we were much better. We were in contention until about five days left the second half and last year we won the first half and the second half. Going into the playoffs this year, we had six guys left from our original roster. Six that we broke camp with. River got hurt. Tatis got hurt. We released one kid and we sent one kid down. You know where all the rest went? Up. Last time I looked there were six or seven guys in the big leagues that started at

Double-A this year. If you step back and look at the big picture, I think that speaks highly of the scouting department, the player development department, the organization as a whole, that six guys started in Double-A and are in the big leagues now. As we struggled through the month in August, I was reminding myself and the staff that hey we've had a great year. I know it's painful. We were 7-20 in August. But we were playing with three guys every day on the field that had been here all year. We basically had a whole new team. It took them a little while to figure some stuff out. That was my message to them Sunday night after we won the South. I said I hope you've learned something about yourself. When you do it collectively, you can do a lot of things. You can't sit back and wait for Josh Naylor and Austin Allen to carry our offense. There's nine guys in the order. You can't sit back and wait for Chris Paddock to pitch a good game because he's inactive right now. If we do it together and everybody pitches in, we've got a chance. I think they finally bought in and I'm immensely proud. I'm proud of the organization and proud of these players and proud of our scouting department. I'm proud right now.

Inbox: Who will be SD's primary catcher in '19?

Beat reporter AJ Cassavell answers questions from San Diego fans

By AJ Cassavell

SAN DIEGO -- Hedges vs. Mejia.

Since the Padres landed [Francisco Mejia](#) -- MLB Pipeline's [top-ranked catching prospect](#) -- at the non-waiver Trade Deadline, that's been the burning debate on the mind of nearly every Padres fan.

In Mejia and [Austin Hedges](#), San Diego boasts two of the game's best young catchers. And this week's Padres Inbox reflects your interest in the positional battle.

Mejia is off to a red-hot start, and Hedges has made serious strides at the plate while remaining rock-solid defensively. It's hard to find quality catchers in the Major Leagues, but the Padres might now have two of them.

When will we get clarity on the Mejia/Hedges situation?

-- Ryan C.

Depends what you mean by clarity. In all likelihood, we'll have a good idea how the Padres plan to rotate the two early next season. This month, it's an even split. But I wouldn't read too much into the final three weeks -- especially given that Hedges started at catcher in 34 of 41 games during the second half before Mejia's callup.

Next season should be more indicative of the long-term plan. I imagine we'll learn a few things during Spring Training -- namely, whether the Padres plan to use Mejia in the outfield to find a way to get both bats in the lineup. Then, the first month of the 2019 regular season should tell us who gets the bulk of the time behind the plate -- and whether the split's going to be somewhat even.

Of course, that's provided that neither is traded during the offseason.

How long can Mejia and Hedges reasonably coexist on the roster without one of them pushing the other out?

-- @PadresOnABagel

Probably longer than you'd think, even though both are young catchers with high ceilings, and there are only so many at-bats to go around. More than anything, it'll come down to the Padres' plans for Mejia. I get the sense he's going to be used as a corner outfielder, too.

Hedges is on record as saying he wants to play 130-140 games per season -- and that's probably what you'd want your catcher saying in this situation. But it probably won't happen next

year. The likelier scenario might be 100-110 games for Hedges, with Mejia playing 50-60 behind the plate and another 50-60 in the outfield.

If that split can be managed, it might be best for everyone involved. Catching in the big leagues is a difficult job, and a little extra rest wouldn't hurt either of them.

What are the odds that [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#) starts next year on Opening Day?

-- Keith, San Diego

Slim, for a number of reasons -- the most notable being service time. If the Padres wait until mid-April to promote Tatis to the Majors, they'll have control of him through the 2025 season instead of through '24.

But Tatis' case isn't the same as some higher profile service-time debates like Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and [Eloy Jimenez](#). San Diego has good reason to hold Tatis back. He's still never played a game above Double-A, and he's coming off an injury (broken left thumb) that forced him to miss the final two months of the season. There's an argument to be made that he'd benefit from a little more time in the Minors.

The Padres don't have a ready-made option to start at short next year. But it's likelier they use rookie [Javy Guerra](#) and/or sign a veteran stopgap.

When do [Chris Paddack](#), [Logan Allen](#), Tatis and [Josh Naylor](#) arrive?

-- Michael J., Escondido, Calif.

Short answer: 2019.

If I had to guess the order, I'd go with Allen, Tatis, Paddack, Naylor.

Don't be shocked if Allen makes some noise for a rotation spot out of camp. It's doubtful he's one of the Opening Day starting five, but he'll probably be one of the first options up from Triple-A.

Paddack might be eased in a bit more slowly. Naylor, meanwhile, plays first base and left field, and there simply isn't a big league opportunity readily available at those spots.

The Padres' outfield defense is horrendous. Will we see change?

-- Michael J., Escondido, Calif.

The Padres' outfield defense ranks fourth in the Majors in defensive runs saved. It boasts two borderline elite defenders in [Travis Jankowski](#) and [Manuel Margot](#). [Hunter Renfroe](#) has made serious strides as a left fielder (and he has an absolute cannon for an arm). [Franmil Reyes](#) has a long way to go, but [Franchy Cordero](#) will return next season with all the tools to be very good defensively.

It is assuredly not "horrendous." It's actually been quite good.

Farm Fresh: The 2018 Minor League Awards

By Emily Waldon

In a season when more than one major league front office is working to mend broken fences, fan interest in minor league baseball is soaring. With the spike in attention, major league brass must carefully balance the timing of player's individual development, avoiding a rush up the pipeline that might push prospects too quickly.

As the players progress, the value — or lack thereof — of the investment made by each front office clarifies. With the regular minor league season concluded, we decided to have some fun and spotlight some of the players around the league who impressed this year.

Before you begin composing your argument about how I hate your team and its farm system, a few notes. First, this collection of names isn't a concrete Top [insert-large-number-here] list, so cancel the picket line. There are always legitimate arguments to be had about minor league players, because no one can know for sure what they will become. While many of these categories could certainly have been filled by more than one name, keep in mind that my selections acknowledge the player's overall profile, rather than amount of innings pitched or games played this season. And the defensive awards below are meant to highlight defense alone, ignoring a player's offense.

Differing opinions are a common occurrence on the farm. But at the end of the day, we can all agree that we're on the verge of seeing a legitimate wave of talent cross the threshold onto the major-league scene.

Pitcher of the Year: Forrest Whitley

2018 Assignment(s): Double-A Corpus Christi Hooks (Astros)
Ht/Wt: 6-7/195 lbs. **B/T:** R/R **DOB:** September 15, 1997
Season Stats: 26 $\frac{1}{3}$ IP, 3.76 ERA, 15 H, 11 ER, 11 BB, 34 K

Although his 2018 began with [a poor life choice](#), Forrest Whitley has continued to prove the worth of the Astros' \$3,148,000 investment into the former high school arm. Whitley, 20, missed the first 50 games of the 2018 season following a violation of the MLB drug policy, holding him to eight appearances on the year with Double-A Corpus Christi.

The 6-foot-7 right-hander is ranked as the only Top 10 pitcher named to the Top 100 prospect lists with MLB Pipeline and Baseball America and the 2018 Top 131 prospect list from FanGraphs.

With plenty of development time remaining, Whitley's four-pitch mix as a whole sits above-average to plus-plus, led by a lively 97-mph fastball with natural cut. Whitley's lanky frame gives him plenty of downhill plane, and with a natural ability to miss bats, the process of tightening his arsenal should only escalate his value moving into 2019.

Hitter of the Year: Vladimir Guerrero Jr.

2018 Assignment(s): GCL, High A, Double A, Triple A (Blue Jays)

Ht/Wt: 6-1/200 lbs. **B/T:** R/R **DOB:** March 16, 1999

Season Stats: 408 PA, .381/.437/.636, 136 H, 67 R, 29 2B, 20 HR, 78 RBI

I mean... did you expect me to consider someone else?

Far and away the most elite hitter in 2018 at any level, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. has excelled against pitching at every level he's been assigned to.

The only real sign that the 19-year-old is, in fact, human was a trip to the DL in June, followed by a brief rehab assignment before returning to Double-A New Hampshire and eventually ending the year in Buffalo. His ISO hasn't dipped below .222 throughout his career, also dropping his already impressive 13.4 percent strikeout rate from 2017 in High A to 7.8 percent with Triple-A Buffalo.

While his physique still needs to tone up, Guerrero's plate discipline has only gotten better, and with the raw power he possesses, he's still pacing to be one of the most electric hitters in Major League Baseball once he arrives.

Infielder of the Year: Fernando Tatís Jr.

2018 Assignment(s): Double-A San Antonio (Padres)

Ht/Wt: 6-3/185 lbs. **B/T:** R/R **DOB:** January 2, 1999

Season Stats: 394 PA, .286/.355/.507, 101 H, 77 R, 22 2B, 16 HR, 43 RBI

This was a tougher category to conclude on, with multiple names who could qualify, but ultimately it was Fernando Tatis Jr.'s natural fit as a middle infielder that secured my decision.

Part of a collection of teenage phenoms to hit the minor league scene in the last few years, Tatis also carries the bloodlines of a father who created his own legacy in the game.

Fueled by a plus arm at shortstop, Tatis' raw athleticism, coupled with the accuracy of his throws has turned him into a no-doubt defensive asset.

Some evaluators question if he'll stick at shortstop long term, but for now, he's making it very hard to imagine the Padres will move him elsewhere anytime soon.

Outfielder of the Year: Jo Adell

2018 Assignment(s): Class A, High A, Double A (Angels)

Ht/Wt: 6-3/208 lbs. **B/T:** R/R **DOB:** April 8, 1999

Season Stats: 441 PA, .290/.355/.543, 115 H, 83 R, 32 2B, 20 HR, 77 RBI

Step into the outfield and you're greeted with another teenage defensive wizard in Jo Adell.

The 19-year-old boasts obscene degrees of athleticism and since surfacing as the Angels' No. 1 pick in 2017, his athletic antics have been on full display.

A plus-plus runner, Adell, a natural human highlight reel, covers a great deal of ground with little issue, backed by a plus arm and advanced reads off the bat. Adell's 6-foot-3, 208-pound frame is well-proportioned enough to let him stay light on his feet, with enough twitch to dart back and forth on his already-impressive routes.

There is some talk of Adell shifting to a corner post in the future, but as his profile has shown early on, don't be surprised if he wills his way into staying in a center-field role.

On the Rise: Dylan Cease

2018 Assignment(s): High A, Double A (White Sox)

Ht/Wt: 6-2/190 lbs. **B/T:** R/R **DOB:** December 28, 1995

Season Stats: 124 IP, 2.40 ERA, 82 H, 33 ER, 50 BB, 160 K

In an exchange that sent four Cubs' prospects to the other side of town for José Quintana, the value of the trade looks to benefit the White Sox in the long term and the work of Dylan Cease in 2018 only seemed to solidify that belief.

Rated the No. 5 prospect in the White Sox farm by MLB Pipeline, Cease, 22, is a Tommy John success story by every stretch after undergoing the procedure in high school.

Of his three offerings, Cease's heater touches 98 mph with little effort, complimented with a crippling 12-6 curve that leaves hitters baffled as a 1-2 punch. The 6-foot-2 right-hander showed more confidence in his changeup this year than before, although still needing some refinement which should come with time.

Cease fanned 12 hitters twice this season, adding an 11 strikeout performance and 10 of his 23 outings going without an earned run allowed.

Top Farm System: San Diego Padres

While combing through the Top 100 prospect lists, it's clear that the pieces have started falling into place for San Diego Padres general manager A.J. Preller and his staff with eight names selected by Baseball America and seven by MLB Pipeline.

Under the leadership of international scouting director Chris Kemp, the Padres have expanded their territory into Mexico, securing teenage behemoth Tirso Ornelas and taking a gamble on an underweight right-hander by the name of Luis Patiño who has developed into a Top 100 prospect nearly overnight in 2018.

With Luis Urías getting a taste in San Diego and the likes of Fernando Tatis Jr. not far behind, Preller and his team now shift their focus to streamlining their collection, as young as it may be, to strengthen the Padres’ foundation for the future.