



Padres Press Clips

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Padres officials meet with Bryce Harper

[Kevin Acee](#)

The [Padres](#) have decided the tepid waters of the free agent market are right for jumping in headfirst.

General Partner Peter Seidler, General Manager A.J. Preller and manager Andy Green met with free agent [Bryce Harper](#) on Thursday night in Las Vegas and expressed their interest in the six-time All-Star outfielder.

Sources earlier in the day characterized the foray as something of extended due diligence. But a source familiar with what happened Thursday night said the Padres were extremely prepared and seemed sincere about wooing the 26-year-old Harper.

It still is not known how good the Padres' chances are to sign the player who will likely command a deal worth around \$30 million a year.

The team also recently commenced pursuit of free agent third baseman Manny Machado, who will likely sign for nearly as much as Harper.

Where Machado, who is also 26, plays the spot of the Padres' greatest positional need, Harper plays right field, the position at which the Padres are deepest.

One of the draws to Harper, in addition to his prodigious talent, is what some in the organization believe is his advantage in marketability as the face of the franchise.

There is no doubt both players, unsigned with less than two weeks until pitchers and catchers report for spring training, represent a rare opportunity to land one of the game's top players in the middle of their expected prime.

The players at the top of this year's free agent class are for a second straight offseason not finding the aggressive courting for their services that was expected. The stagnation lured the Padres into the pursuit for Machado and Harper.

Their first real contact with Machado's agent was a little more than a week ago.

They had done a certain amount of investigation on both players as a matter of preparation, but until recently they had virtually no thoughts of actually getting in on the bidding.

Whether they actually do make a bid for either remains to be seen, and several people both inside and outside the organization believe the Padres remain longshots to land either one.

The White Sox, Phillies and Nationals (his team of the past six seasons) are reportedly the leading contenders for Harper.

The Phillies and White Sox are also believed to be leaders in the Machado chase.

However, the Padres have at least signaled they can't be counted out.

Last year, the team signed [Eric Hosmer](#) the day before their full squad was due to report to spring training.

Hosmer and Harper are both represented by agent Scott Boras, whose relationship with the Padres has improved drastically in recent years under the current ownership group. Boras also represents some of the organization's top minor league prospects.

The Padres' offseason plans have taken some turns the last couple months, which cannot be considered all that unexpected. Members of the front office have long explained their personnel plans have multiple subsets and contingencies. And every time course is altered, new subsets and contingencies come into focus.

The team expected to be active this winter, particularly in the trade market. In the course of talks with other teams, however, the Padres shifted to an expectation they would keep most of their young core at least through the first couple months of the season.

While they have not stopped talking with other teams, they shifted to the free agent market in search of a third baseman. Their interest centers on Machado, [Mike Moustakas](#) and [Marwin Gonzalez](#). Boras represent Moustakas and Gonzalez as well.

Should the Padres acquire Harper, it would almost certainly necessitate a renewed effort to move Hunter Renfroe or Franmil Reyes, who play the corner outfield spots. It could also be the impetus for a trade of Wil Myers, who is moving back to the outfield from third base this season.

Grass greener on other side of Petco Park's Supercross weekend

Jeff Sanders

There was a time, before his kids were grown, when Matt Balough would have made sure to have a seat at Petco Park for Saturday's high-flying Supercross. These days, the Padres' 56-year-old head groundskeeper is simply biding his time until a parade of trucks begins carting out more than 22 million pounds of dirt dumped on top of his precious Bermuda grass field.

That's when his job begins anew.

"It's a long, tedious process," said Balough, who is entering his sixth season as the Padres' director of field operations. "Once the dirt comes up, we'll work for two straight months without a day off, roughly 10 to 12 hours a day, to get the field ready for opening day."

The "we" is Balough and a staff of five full-time groundskeepers. The process is preparing some 100,000 square feet of grass — replaced at a cost of \$160,000, which is included in the revenue stream provided by the Feld Entertainment-run Monster Jam and Supercross events — for the 2019 season.

Understanding the work involved requires a dissection of what went into transforming Petco Park's diamond into an off-road wonderland for three weekends of playing in the dirt.

Not long after Padres FanFest wrapped up on Jan. 12, some 350 truckloads of material were spread across Petco Park's playing surfaces.

First, a quarter-inch plastic product was placed over the infield dirt and warning track. More plastic sheeting was spread over the grass that will be replaced after Supercross.

Then, six to eight inches of gravel road base was spread over the entire playing surface to help protect the root zone, followed by 5,000 yards of clay for the track's layout.

In addition to bringing in an extra 30 truckloads of dirt this week for the Supercross course, Feld's 20-person construction crew has been racing against the clock to build dozens of jumps and erect the starting gate, finish line, podium and the team manager, scoring and observation towers before the worst of the inclement weather arrives for Saturday's rain-or-shine event.

"Mother nature," Feld track construction manager Pete Henderson said, "is your worst enemy when you're playing outdoors."

Balough's concern, of course is the root zone below the top soil that Feld will pay to replace.

He's directed the breakdown of the course after Saturday's event to start from the first base line and move toward right field, allowing his staff to work behind the Feld crew to begin preparing the ground for new top soil before the last truckloads of Supercross dirt is hauled away, likely Tuesday or Wednesday.

The hope is that Balough and his staff are laying the new sod by Feb. 15. Opening day is March 28.

"The sooner you get it in," Balough said, "the faster it starts to root."

Balough would know.

This is the fifth transition he's overseen since Petco Park began hosting motorsports events. Before landing with the Padres, he'd worked 13 years for the city at Qualcomm, which had long been a host of the monster truck and dirt bike races that Balough took his kids to all those years ago.

Yes, the idea of ripping his grass out each winter is a bit unnerving.

Starting anew each spring — as opposed to every three to four years, as was the case before bringing motorsports to Petco Park — is also refreshing.

“In a perfect world, we’d like to keep the grass all year without having to rebuild,” Balough said. “But it is nice having a new playing surface every year.”

The Padres, already in on Manny Machado and J.T. Realmuto, are meeting with Bryce Harper

By [Dennis Lin](#)

It is hours away from February and the Padres are acting on multiple opportunities to improve. Those opportunities did not seem as readily available early this offseason, but while the free-agent market [continues to weather polar conditions](#), San Diego is positioning itself as a potential oasis.

The Padres are scheduled to meet later Thursday with outfielder Bryce Harper in his hometown of Las Vegas, sources told *The Athletic's* Ken Rosenthal. Just two weeks before spring training, Harper and top third baseman Manny Machado remain unsigned in what was once predicted to be a frenzied bidding war.

To date, the markets for both players have appeared lukewarm. The Padres grew intrigued by the possibilities with Machado two weeks ago, when reports of lower-than-expected offers surfaced. Machado's agent, Dan Lozano, subsequently issued a strong public denial, but the Padres nonetheless made contact with the representative.

Club officials have expressed interest in arranging a face-to-face meeting with Machado, possibly in Miami. As of Wednesday, however, sources said there had been no indication regarding Machado's willingness to take such a meeting. The two sides have discussed preliminary numbers, but an offer from the Padres is contingent on a sitdown.

Machado makes more positional sense for the Padres, who have a glut of outfielders and no proven third baseman, but the team has conducted extensive background work on Harper as well. Some officials believe the latter is more likely to outperform whatever contract he receives, and clubs generally believe Harper, the sport's most marketable personality, has more to offer away from the field.

One source said the Padres have heard positive reviews from other teams' conversations with Harper, which encouraged them to pursue their own

meeting, at least as a matter of due diligence. Thursday's traveling contingent includes Padres general partner Peter Seidler.

According to sources, San Diego also remains in trade discussions for another star player, Miami's J.T. Realmuto. While the price tag on the catcher has been prohibitive for much of the offseason, there have been signs that it has come down in recent days. The Padres' interest is dependent on Realmuto's openness to signing an extension — he is eligible for free agency after 2020 — but the Marlins are not allowing teams a window to negotiate with Realmuto's agent, Jeff Berry.

Still, the Padres believe that, if a trade agreement came to fruition, they could sell the catcher on the direction of their franchise; in addition to financial flexibility, the organization boasts the No. 1 farm system in baseball.

Other teams have stayed involved on both Realmuto and the top two free agents. Presumably, given the relative lack of overall interest, suitors with greater resources than the Padres also have entered the picture for Machado and Harper.

Yet, hours away from February, two weeks before pitchers-and-catchers, multiple opportunities have materialized. Within the Padres organization this week, there has been growing optimism that at least one of the three major targets could be in a San Diego uniform by spring.

Inbox: Is Machado better fit for SD than Harper?

Beat reporter AJ Cassavell fields offseason questions from fans

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com [@AJCassavell](#)

SAN DIEGO -- Whew. It's certainly been a busy few days since [the most recent Padres Inbox](#) was released a week ago.

In that time, it's become clear that the Padres are looking into the offseason's two biggest free agents. (Heck, [Manny Machado](#) and [Bryce Harper](#) might be two of the biggest free agents ever.) [Their interest in Machado](#) is real. And [they met with Harper](#) in Las Vegas on Thursday night.

San Diego is also in talks with the Marlins for [J.T. Realmuto](#), the trade market's biggest available name. Lots to cover here. Let's jump right into your questions.

Why sign Harper when we already have an outfield logjam? Isn't it better to sign Machado, because we don't have a third baseman?

-- Kevin, San Diego

This isn't New York. The Padres don't have [Aaron Judge](#) and [Giancarlo Stanton](#) taking up playing time in the outfield corners. They have [Wil Myers](#), [Hunter Renfroe](#), [Franmil Reyes](#) and [Franchy Cordero](#). Those are good young players with potential. But certainly not enough to preclude the signing of a franchise-altering talent.

Yes, technically Machado is a better fit. Third base is the biggest long-term hole in San Diego's offense, and if Machado fills it, that's a huge statement. But the Padres also aren't merely one piece away from contention. They're still waiting on the arrival of some [top prospects](#) and the development of some young hitters.

If the Padres end up signing Machado, their long-term plans are probably a bit more straightforward than if they signed Harper. But if they were to sign Harper, they'd have a glut of young outfield pieces to trade from, along with an incredibly deep farm system. Executive vice president and GM A.J. Preller has other ways to acquire a third baseman.

If San Diego's decision-makers can get Harper or Machado within their price range, they'd happily take either, and figure things out from there.

Is there a universe where the Padres sign both Harper and Machado?

-- @Pumpkinking1224

It's a big universe. But, no.

**What's the plan after they sign Harper? What's the plan after they sign Machado?
Separate questions, since it would realistically be one or the other.
-- Andy B.**

As mentioned above, it's pretty straightforward if the Padres sign Machado. He'll play third, rounding out an infield with [Eric Hosmer](#) at first and top prospects Fernando Tatis and [Luis Urias](#) up the middle. San Diego is pretty deep at catcher and in the outfield, though the club will keep an eye out for another impact bat. (Realmuto, anyone?) In the meantime, Preller will turn his focus toward improving the rotation.

If the Padres sign Harper, things get trickier. He'd be playing every day, so they would probably need to commit to one player from among Myers, Renfroe and Reyes, while looking to trade the other two. Cordero and [Manuel Margot](#) could platoon in center.

Perhaps San Diego could package one or two of those outfielders in a deal to acquire a third baseman. That'd be Preller's first order of business. Maybe the Padres would use another to help land a starting pitcher. Of course, in any trade proposal, they could easily complement their big league pieces with prospects from the sport's deepest farm system.

**With [Austin Hedges](#) and [Francisco Mejia](#) in our system currently, why is there such strong interest in Realmuto? Have the Padres given up on Hedges?
-- Kevin, San Diego**

I have a hard time seeing "interest in Realmuto" as a knock on Hedges or Mejia. The Padres still regard their two young catchers very highly. Hedges is an elite defender and has begun to establish himself a bit at the plate. Mejia's potential is sky high, even if there are questions about his defense and plate discipline.

But Realmuto is [the best catcher](#) in the sport right now, and he's 27. If you can get the best guy, you get the best guy. San Diego has been tight-lipped regarding its negotiations with Miami, but that's clearly the reasoning.

Of course, Realmuto only has two years remaining on his contract. The Padres wouldn't trade for him if they didn't think an extension was possible. In order to land Realmuto, they'd have to give up at least one of those young catchers (probably Mejia). Then, if the extension comes to fruition, San Diego would have a very appealing trade piece (probably Hedges).

**Do you think [Logan Allen](#) breaks camp with the Major League team?
-- Josh, Escondido, Calif.**

The further we get into the offseason without a meaningful rotation addition, the likelier it gets.

Allen, the team's No. 8 prospect, is still on the outside looking in. He's been excellent at every level of the Minor Leagues. But Allen has only made five starts at Triple-A (albeit with a 1.63 ERA).

It seems like Allen is going to get every chance to win a spot this spring. The Padres fast-tracked [Joey Lucchesi](#) last year. They might do the same with Allen, the 21-year-old left-hander who arrived three offseasons ago in the [Craig Kimbrel](#) deal.

Sources: Padres meet with Harper in Vegas

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com [@AJCassavell](#)

SAN DIEGO -- The Padres' quiet offseason is quiet no more.

San Diego brass -- including managing partner Peter Seidler and general manager A.J. Preller -- met with superstar free agent [Bryce Harper](#) on Thursday night in Las Vegas, sources told MLB.com. MLB Network insider Ken Rosenthal was first to report on the meeting.

The news comes on the heels of a busy week in which the Padres expressed legitimate interest in signing free-agent third baseman/shortstop [Manny Machado](#), and [they've been linked](#) with Marlins catcher [J.T. Realmuto](#), the top player available on the trade market.

San Diego has a bit of a logjam in its corner outfield, where [Wil Myers](#), [Franmil Reyes](#), [Hunter Renfroe](#) and [Franchy Cordero](#) are slated to compete for time. Harper, though, is undoubtedly one of the game's best hitters, and he'd walk straight into the middle of the Padres' order for most of the next decade.

A deal with Harper wouldn't come cheap. His contract would easily surpass [Eric Hosmer's](#) franchise-record eight year, \$144 million deal from last offseason -- perhaps even doubling it. According to MLB.com's Jon Paul Morosi, the Padres are among four active suitors for Harper, joining the Phillies, Nationals and White Sox. Another undisclosed team "remains involved on the periphery," Morosi said.

In seven seasons with the Nationals, Harper posted a .279/.388/.512 slash line with 184 homers. He's been an All-Star in six of those seasons, and he won the National League Rookie of the Year Award in 2012 and NL MVP in 2015. He struggled a bit in 2018, yet still posted an .889 OPS, which would've far surpassed the team-leading .838 Reyes posted in 87 games and Renfroe's .805 in 117 games.

Thus, it's not hard to find a fit for Harper. The Padres' offense should already improve with the arrivals of top prospects [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#) and [Luis Urias](#) in the middle of the infield. But there's a clear need for some middle-of-the-order thump, and Harper would provide exactly that.

One source suggested that if the Padres were to sign Harper, they'd actively look to trade a couple of their outfielders in an attempt to find pitching and/or third-base help. They've also been linked extensively to Realmuto, arguably the game's best catcher, and the surplus of young outfielders could help in that pursuit.

On the surface, Machado seems the better fit, given the club's glaring hole at third base. But some in the organization feel that with a superstar of Harper's magnitude, "fit" isn't an issue. With [the sport's top-ranked farm system](#) -- and perhaps a few other big league-caliber outfielders -- the Padres probably have enough pieces to address their rotation and third-base deficiencies via trade.

That said, San Diego's interest in Machado remains very real, and Thursday's scheduled meeting with Harper shouldn't be taken as an indication that Harper is the Padres' top priority over Machado.

Around the Horn: Padres' youthful rotation

By A.J. Cassavell MLB.com [@AJCassavell](#)

With Spring Training on the horizon, MLB.com is taking an in-depth look at the 2019 Padres, breaking the team down position by position. Today, we preview the San Diego starting pitchers.

SAN DIEGO -- There's a lot of potential for the Padres to field a very good pitching staff in a year or two. They boast the best farm system in baseball, littered with elite pitching talent at every level, and seven of their arms rank among MLB Pipeline's [Top 100 prospects](#). That's more *pitchers* on the Top 100 list than 28 other teams have *players* in total.

It's extremely important that the Padres nurture and develop that group properly. Because right now, "potential" is much more abundant in the San Diego rotation than proven production.

A season ago, the Friars posted the highest ERA among starters in the National League, at 5.09. Among the current Opening Day rotation options, [Luis Perdomo](#) has made the most career starts with 59. No one in the group has reached 20 career wins yet.

It puts the Padres in an odd state of limbo, caught between two distinctly different stages in their trajectory as an organization. Their rotation has been undeniably rocky over the past three seasons. It could be very good over the next few.

But what do the Padres do in the interim? And how can they speed up the transition to a contending-caliber pitching staff?

The Padres' front office has grappled with those questions for the past year. Should San Diego trade from its farm for a proven Major League starter? Should it pony up big money for an ace who can offer help instantly?

So far, the answer has been, "No." The Padres' only offseason addition was [Garrett Richards](#), who likely won't pitch this season as he returns from Tommy John surgery. As things stand, only [Joey Lucchesi](#) and [Eric Lauer](#) can be penciled into the Opening Day starting five.

After them, it's a mishmash of unheralded prospects and long-relief types. It's certainly still possible that the Padres add a starter to the mix before Spring Training. But as things stand, the options are relatively thin:

In the rotation: Lauer, Lucchesi

In the mix: [Robbie Erlin](#), [Bryan Mitchell](#), Perdomo, [Matt Strahm](#), [Jacob Nix](#), [Brett Kennedy](#), [Logan Allen](#), [Cal Quantrill](#)

Top 30 prospects -- No. 2 MacKenzie Gore, No. 5 [Chris Paddack](#), No. 6 Adrian Morejon, No. 7 Michel Baez, No. 8 Allen, No. 9 Luis Patino, No. 10 Ryan Weathers, No. 11 Cal Quantrill, No. 12 [Anderson Espinoza](#), No. 14 Nix, No. 21 Reggie Lawson, No. 26 Dylan Coleman, No. 29 [Pedro Avila](#)

Best-case scenario

Much of the Padres' best-case scenario regarding the rotation won't play out at the big league level. It's vitally important to the organization's future that the current group of prospects produces at least a few frontline starters. In the best-case scenario, Gore, Patino and Paddack continue on that path, and a few others, like Baez and Morejon, make strides as well.

At the big league level, Lauer and Lucchesi establish themselves as undeniable Major League rotation pieces. Strahm, meanwhile, transitions seamlessly from reliever to starter, and by midseason [Dinelson Lamet](#) returns from Tommy John surgery and maintains his impressive ability to miss bats.

It's not an elite rotation. But it holds its own while prospects like Paddack, Allen and Quantrill get their first taste of the big leagues as well.

Worst-case scenario

It's worth remembering just how promising Lamet's rookie season really was. His 28.7 percent strikeout rate was the highest single-season mark for a regular starting pitcher in Padres history. In the worst-case scenario, Lamet's timetable for a return is slowed, and he struggles to find his form when he gets back on the mound.

Meanwhile, the back end of the San Diego rotation is exposed. Mitchell, Perdomo, Nix and Kennedy have all been prone to hard contact, and the trend continues. The Padres spend the season shuffling starters back and forth between Triple-A and the Majors, while slumping to an ERA that again ranks toward the bottom of the Majors.

A reasonable prediction

It's fair to expect this rotation to struggle, especially at the start of the season. Lauer and Lucchesi are up and down. Strahm and Erlin are better suited for relief roles. Perdomo and Mitchell continue to flounder.

But the group steadily improves as the year goes by. Lamet returns and posts even better numbers than he did in 2017. Allen arrives and starts to establish himself as a clear piece of the future staff. Even Paddack gets into the mix during the final month or two.

By the end of the season, the rotation's numbers aren't great. But the Padres are set up nicely for 2020, with Richards poised to join the group. During the offseason, general manager A.J. Preller decides it's time to splurge on a big-name starting pitcher to headline a suddenly promising young rotation.

Each team's best non-Top 100 prospect

By Jim Callis, Jonathan Mayo and Mike Rosenbaum MLB.com

Last Saturday night, MLB Pipeline unveiled our list of the [Top 100 Prospects](#) for 2019 in conjunction with a special shown on MLB Network and MLB.com. The list's release capped a two-week stretch during which we analyzed the Top 10 prospects at each position.

Next up will be the rollout of our annual team Top 30 lists, beginning Monday, Feb. 18, with the American League East, and continuing with a different division each day before a more gradual reveal of our Top 10 farm systems.

To help hold fans over in the interim, we're bridging the gap between our Top 100 and organizational Top 30 lists this week with a look at each club's next best top prospect who didn't make the Top 100.

Padres: [Josh Naylor](#), OF/1B

The 2015 first-rounder turned in his best offensive season to date in '18, slashing .297/.383/.447 with a career-high 17 homers as a 21-year-old in Double-A. Those numbers were somewhat padded by a torrid April (.379/.450/.674, 7 HR), and he cooled off during the second half, but, overall, it was a very encouraging performance by a player who will need to hit for both average and power to hold down a corner spot in the Majors.

Ranking The Top MLB Shortstop Prospects, Breakout Stars Entering 2019

By [Kyle Glaser](#) on January 31, 2019

The graduations of Gleyber Torres, Willy Adames and, to a degree, J.P. Crawford take a little bit of wind out of the minor league shortstop crop. Still, shortstop remains the main position of strength for minor league prospects.

In all 16 shortstops made the [BA Top 100 Prospects](#) to open 2019, the most of any position. That includes five of the top 15, headlined by Padres wunderkind Fernando Tatis Jr., and a deep group that stretches all the way to the end of the list. Just outside the Top 100 are a half-dozen more shortstops who had a case to be on the BA Top 100, and many of them will rise on shortly.

While many of the top shortstop prospects may eventually move off the position—you can find scouts that believe Tatis, Wander Franco and Bo Bichette all will end up moving off of shortstop at some point—their bats are potent enough for them to be impactful no matter where they play. That impact, combined with the depth of the group, makes shortstop once again one of the best positions for prospects in the minors.

Rating: 4 of 5 stars

[Previous 2019 position rankings:](#)

- [Catcher](#)
 - [First Base](#)
 - [Second Base](#)
 - [Third Base](#)
1. [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#), Padres
 2. [Wander Franco](#), Rays
 3. [Bo Bichette](#), Blue Jays
 4. [Royce Lewis](#), Twins
 5. [Brendan Rodgers](#), Rockies
 6. [Andres Gimenez](#), Mets
 7. [Gavin Lux](#), Dodgers
 8. [Carter Kieboom](#), Nationals
 9. [Jazz Chisholm](#), D-backs
 10. [Luis Garcia](#), Nationals
 11. [Oneil Cruz](#), Pirates
 12. [Garrett Hampson](#), Rockies
 13. [Luis Garcia](#), Phillies
 14. [Kevin Smith](#), Blue Jays
 15. [Isaac Paredes](#), Tigers
 16. [Ronny Mauricio](#), Mets
 17. [Nico Hoerner](#), Cubs

18. [Wander Javier](#), Twins
19. [Marco Luciano](#), Giants
20. [Tyler Freeman](#), Indians
21. [Anderson Tejeda](#), Rangers
22. [Luis Rengifo](#), Angels
23. [Cole Tucker](#), Pirates
24. [Nicky Lopez](#), Royals
25. [Brayan Rocchio](#), Indians
26. [Kevin Newman](#), Pirates
27. [Brice Turang](#), Brewers
28. [Xavier Edwards](#), Padres
29. [Mauricio Dubon](#), Brewers
30. [Shervyen Newton](#), Mets
31. [Yu Chang](#), Indians
32. [Willi Castro](#), Tigers
33. [Lucius Fox](#), Rays
34. [Wenceel Perez](#), Tigers
35. [Freudis Nova](#), Astros
36. [Geraldo Perdomo](#), D-backs
37. [Jorge Mateo](#), Athletics
38. [Nick Gordon](#), Twins
39. [Jose Devers](#), Marlins
40. Noelvi Marte, Mariners
41. [Jeremiah Jackson](#), Angels
42. [Miguel Hiraldo](#), Blue Jays
43. [Tommy Edman](#), Cardinals
44. [Owen Miller](#), Padres
45. [Jeremy Eierman](#), Athletics

Bryce Harper meets with San Diego Padres, sources say

12:18 AM

Jeff Passan, ESPN

The [San Diego Padres](#) met with free-agent outfielder Bryce Harper on Thursday in Las Vegas, sources familiar with the meeting told ESPN, officially adding a suitor to a list of teams that now numbers four and could expand as spring training approaches.

The emergence of San Diego as a possible destination for Harper dovetailed with a number of other potential moves by the Padres, sources said, including the pursuit of the other available free-agent star, Manny Machado, and a potential trade for [Miami Marlins](#) catcher [J.T. Realmuto](#). Harper's allure to the Padres is clear: Despite a glut in the corner-outfield spots, the addition of a star-level talent clearly would improve an on-the-come team.

Just how soon the Padres will be ready to win is an important factor as Harper considers how San Diego rates with three other teams still considering signing him: the [Philadelphia Phillies](#), [Chicago White Sox](#) and [Washington Nationals](#), the latter of which he spent the first seven years of his career. The other main factor: just how much the Padres are willing to spend to sign Harper.

Their late entry into the Harper and Machado derbies came on the heels of an industry-wide sense that the markets for the 26-year-olds were tepid. San Diego went 66-96 last season, and its free-agent acquisitions this winter -- the injured [Garrett Richards](#) and 36-year-old second baseman [Ian Kinsler](#) -- don't foretell a grand leap. Still, the Padres' greatest selling points are their seeming payroll flexibility and their loaded farm system, which includes shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr., the No. 1 prospect in [Keith Law's top 100](#).

Padres officials traveling to Harper's hometown signified a serious enough interest not to discount them. Whether they'll satisfy the long-term deal Harper seeks or propose a shorter-term, higher-salary contract could provide a roadmap for the entry of others into the bidding for Harper. With pitchers and catchers reporting to spring training in less than two weeks, the Harper and Machado markets might finally be starting to move and offer a conclusion to the most drawn-out story of the winter.

MLB Rumors: Padres Interested in Gio Gonzalez Amid Bryce Harper Buzz

PAUL KASABIAN, BLEACHER REPORT

The [San Diego Padres](#), who recently joined the race for free-agent outfielder Bryce Harper, are in on free-agent left-hander [Gio Gonzalez](#), according to [Jon Morosi](#) of Fox Sports and MLB Network.

Morosi explained the impact Gonzalez would have in a Padres uniform: "Gonzalez, 33, would add experience to a Padres rotation that may otherwise consist entirely of starting pitchers who are 28 and younger. Gonzalez has pitched effectively at Petco Park, with a .592 opponents' OPS in five starts. And Gonzalez is represented by Scott Boras, the same agent as Harper."

The left-hander did not enjoy a productive 2018, as he went 10-11 with a 4.21 ERA for the [Washington Nationals](#) and [Milwaukee Brewers](#). After leading the [National League](#) with 79 walks in 2017, Gonzalez had one more in 2018 despite pitching 30 fewer innings. Per [FanGraphs](#), Gonzalez also had the highest xFIP and second-lowest strikeout rate of his career.

But a change of scenery could do some good for Gonzalez, who finished sixth in the 2017 National League Cy Young race thanks largely because of a 2.96 ERA. As Morosi noted, Gonzalez has found success in Petco Park, which has played as a [neutral](#) to [pitcher-friendly](#) park over the years. He also could be the ace (or No. 2 pitcher) on a staff where no [potential starter](#) had a sub-four ERA last season.

The Padres open their season at home against the [San Francisco Giants](#) on Thursday, March 28.

Top 50 Individual Seasons

40. Adrian Gonzalez was 4th in N.L. MVP voting in 2010

By Bill Center

Adrian Gonzalez's last season in San Diego was difficult for the first baseman and Padres fans.

Gonzalez came out of the 2009 season saying he wouldn't be accepting a "San Diego discount" to keep playing in his hometown. And the Padres said they probably weren't in position to meet Gonzalez's market value when he became a free agent after the 2011 season.

So as the 2010 season approached the trading deadline, speculation grew that Gonzalez would be traded . . . possibly before the end of the 2010 season.

Well, Gonzalez wasn't traded during the 2010 season. He wasn't traded to the Boston Red Sox — for first baseman **Anthony Rizzo**, pitcher **Casey Kelly** and outfielder **Rey Fuentes** — until that December.

But the then 28-year-old Gonzalez played much of the 2010 season under a dark cloud.

Not that it affected his play on the field.

Gonzalez hit .298 with a 31 home runs and 93 RBIs. He had a .393 on-base percentage and a .511 slugging percentage for a .904 OPS.

He was named to the National League All-Star team for the second straight season and finished fourth in the voting for the National League Most Valuable Player Award.

Taking a deeper look at Gonzalez's stats in 2010, Gonzalez had 176 hits and 93 walks in 160 games. He had 33 doubles for 64 extra base hits. He scored 87 runs as the Padres won 90 games — falling one win shy of a National League playoff berth.

Adrian finished fifth in the National League in on-base percentage, ninth in slugging percentage and seventh in OPS. He was also third in walks, fourth in plate appearances (693), sixth in total bases, seventh in hits and times on based (271) and tied for eighth in home runs.

Adrian also had the third-highest adjusted WAR in the National League at 4.5.

Gonzalez led the Padres in most offensive categories.

A graduate of Eastlake High in Chula Vista, Gonzalez was the first overall pick of the 2000 draft by the Marlins. In arguably the best trades in Padres history, the Padres acquired Gonzalez, right-handed starting pitcher **Chris Young** and outfielder **Termel Sledge** from the Texas Rangers on Jan. 6, 2006, for right-handed pitchers **Adam Eaton** and **Akinori Otsuka**.

Gonzalez played five seasons with the Padres, batting .288 with 176 doubles, seven triples, 161 homers, 501 RBIs and 464 runs scored. He had a career .374 on-base percentage with the Padres plus a .514 slugging percentage for a .888 OPS.

Adrian Gonzalez ranks second on the Padres' career list of home run leaders and third in slugging percentage and OPS. He also ranks fourth in RBIs, fifth in runs scored, sixth in walks (403), tied for sixth in doubles, seventh in batting average (.288) and hits (856) and ninth in on-base percentage.

Top 50 Individual Seasons:

40. 1B Adrian Gonzalez, 2010

41. 1B Phil Nevin, 2004

42. RF Tony Gwynn, 1995

43. RF Dave Winfield, 1978

44. 2B Alan Wiggins (1984)

45. RHP Andy Hawkins (1985)

46. INF-OF Bip Roberts (1990)

47. RHP Heath Bell (2010)

48. RHP Trevor Hoffman (1999)

49. RF Brian Giles (2005)

50. 2B Mark Loretta (2003)

50 Moments—The Padres and Braves Engaged in Arguably the Greatest Brawl in Baseball History on Aug. 12, 1984

Jan 31

By Bill Center

The division-leading Padres were 20 games above .500 and leading the Braves by 9 ½ games in the National League on Sunday afternoon, Aug. 12, 1984, as they prepared to meet the Braves in a rubber match of a three-game series at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium.

No one expected what was about to happen as the Padres and Braves became embroiled in the greatest brawl in Major League history.

Actually, it was two brawls, two bench-clearing face-offs and several minor melees. By the time the Braves left the field with a 5–3 win, 13 players and coaches had been ejected. Five fans had been arrested. Balls, bats and beers had all been thrown. The benches cleared in the second, fifth, eighth and ninth innings.

Padres manager **Dick Williams** was fined \$10,000 and suspended for 10 days. Braves manager **Joe Torre** was also ejected.

It all started with the game's very first pitch when the Braves **Pascual Perez** hit **Alan Wiggins** in the back. Perez was not only one of the game's best pitchers, he was a master of command and control. But he also had a fiery personality with a history of erratic behavior off the field.

The Padres thought Perez intentionally hit Wiggins. When Wiggins was hit, players from the Padres bench moved onto the field and gestured to Perez, but nothing else ensued.

In those days, you got even by drilling the offending pitcher the next time he came to the plate.

When Perez came to the plate in the second inning with the intent of bunting, Padre starter **Ed Whitson** threw three straight pitches inside—including one that sailed behind Perez. The Braves pitcher dodged each pitch. But after the third near-miss, Perez made a menacing gesture toward Padres catcher **Terry Kennedy** with his bat. Both benches emptied, but calm was quickly restored with nothing more than shoving.

In the fourth, Whitson and Williams were both ejected after the pitcher threw way inside on Perez three more times.

Tension flared again in the fifth, but order was quickly restored.

Then in the eighth, Padres reliever **Craig Lefferts** did what Whitson had failed to do. He hit Perez on the left elbow with a pitch. This time, the brawl was really on. Not only did both benches empty, a major brawl ensued with several smaller fights on the perimeter. About the only two players watching from a distance were Lefferts and Perez.

Once order was again restored, Donnie Moore came on to pitch the ninth in relief of Perez. Moore immediately hit Padres third baseman **Graig Nettles** in the backside—again triggering a brawl that also saw fans rushing the field while **Kurt Bevacqua** engaged other fans atop the Padres' dugout.

Top 50 Moments (in chronological order):

1. National League votes to expand into Montreal and San Diego (May 27, 1968);
2. Padres stocked with players in National League expansion draft (Oct. 14, 1968).
3. Padres win their Major League debut (April 8, 1969).
4. Clay Kirby removed from a no-hitter (July 21, 1970).
5. Nate Colbert's five-homer, 13-RBI doubleheader in Atlanta (Aug. 1, 1972).
6. 1973, the year San Diego nearly lost the Padres.
7. Ray Kroc buys the Padres (Jan. 25, 1974).
8. Ray Kroc grabs the microphone during his first home game as the Padres owner (April 9, 1974).
9. Randy Jones National League Cy Young Award (1976).
10. Shortstop Ozzie Smith's greatest defensive play in Padres' history (April 20, 1978).
11. Padres host 1978 All-Star Game (July 11, 1978).
12. Gaylord Perry wins 1978 National League Cy Young Award.
13. The "re-hatching" of the San Diego Chicken (June 29, 1979). 1984 Padres-Braves brawl in Atlanta (Aug. 12, 1984).