



Padres Press Clips

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Ross hurt by homers in loss to Astros

A.J. Cassavell MLB.com

HOUSTON -- For most of the afternoon on Sunday, Tyson Ross looked like vintage Tyson Ross, his slider dancing and his fastball enticing Astros hitters into weak grounders.

A four-batter stretch in the bottom of the fifth inning was all it took to derail an otherwise resurgent outing for the veteran right-hander. Ross allowed four runs in six innings, three coming when he hung a slider to Max Stassi after consecutive singles to Josh Reddick and Marwin Gonzalez. The Padres dropped the series finale, 4-1, at Minute Maid Park.

"Outside of those three hits, he was borderline dominant," Padres manager Andy Green said. "... There's not really much more we can ask for from our pitching staff this series. All series long, they were outstanding. We've just got to scratch some runs."

For the second straight game, the Padres fell flat when presented with scoring opportunities. They went 0-for-6 with runners in scoring position on Sunday, and they are hitless in their past 16 at-bats in such situations.

Freddy Galvis and Chase Headley reached base three times apiece, including a second-inning single from Headley that snapped his 0-for-12 skid to start the season. But the Padres didn't muster a hit after Manuel Margot's leadoff single in the fifth. Astros right-hander Charlie Morton struck out seven over six innings.

"We've just got to keep working, man," Galvis said. "We've got to try to get good at-bats, try to get on base. Baseball is baseball. Sometimes you score a lot of runs, sometimes you have series where you don't score too much."

The Padres scored five times over 28 innings in Houston this weekend, four of which came in their victory on Friday night. In contrast, San Diego pitching stifled the defending World Series champs for most of the weekend. Adam Cimber's two scoreless frames gave the San Diego bullpen 10 innings of one-run ball this weekend, the only run scoring on Saturday's bizarre game-ending infield popup.. 8th, 2018

The rotation did its part, too, with Luis Perdomo, Bryan Mitchell and Ross allowing five total runs. Three of those came in Sunday's fateful fifth frame.

Reddick and Gonzalez singled, then advanced to third on a wild pitch. Ross got Evan Gattis to bounce weakly to second before falling behind in the count against Stassi. With a base open, he tried to come inside with a 2-1 slider. It caught too much of the plate, and the Astros' catcher launched it off the left-field facade beyond the Crawford Boxes.

"It was just poor execution on my part with Stassi," Ross said. "I've got to be smarter than that with a base open."

Otherwise, Ross was excellent. He was certainly sharper than his six-inning, three-run effort on Tuesday, even if the box score won't show it. Ross struck out seven -- five more than his Tuesday start -- and he threw 70 of his 107 pitches for strikes, nine of them swings and misses.h, 2018

"I threw the ball a lot better today, but the results just weren't what we wanted," Ross said. "There will be a lot more wins if I can throw the ball like that consistently."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Mar-going home: Margot broke out of his prolonged slump in the fifth with a single. The speedy center fielder promptly stole second and advanced to third on Carlos Asuaje's groundout. But -- for the second night in a row -- the Padres put on the contact play, and Margot broke on Eric Hosmer's ground ball to short. Carlos Correa's throw home was perfect, and Margot was tagged out at the dish.r. 8th, 2018

"You take a chance when you put a contact play on," Green said. "The hope is that the ball's to the left or right of the infielder if it's on the ground. When you're not pushing runs across the board, you've got to take those types of chances."

Reddick responds: The Padres clawed a run back in the top of the sixth inning on Austin Hedges' RBI groundout. But Ross couldn't keep the Astros in check, Reddick golfed a 1-1 slider from Ross into the right-field seats. By most standards, it was a decent pitch, just below the knees and on the inside corner of the plate. Ross didn't think so.pr. 8th, 2018

"I was trying to go back-door, and it ended up middle-down," Ross said. "That's kind of right in his sweet spot."

QUOTABLE

"I've seen him really, really good, and he was good today. It looked like his ball was moving all over the place. ... We had some funny swings. We really had funny swings all series. They did a really good job against us." -- Astros manager AJ Hinch, on Ross

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Galvis extended his on-base streak to 10 games with his second-inning single, and he finished 2-for-3 with a walk. The Padres' shortstop is tied with Marcus Semien for the longest such streaks to open the 2018 campaign.

"I'm just trying to do my job," Galvis said. "Every time I get to the plate, I try to get on base. I just want a good at-bat. That's what I can control."

Reigning American League Most Valuable Player Award winner Jose Altuve could've joined that list, but Ross and Cimber combined to keep Altuve off the basepaths in four plate appearances.

ASUAJE ASSUMES LEADOFF ROLE

Asuaje filled the role of leadoff man for the first time this season, and he did the job nicely, reaching base on a seven-pitch walk in the third and an eight-pitch walk in the seventh. Green indicated that he might continue to use Asuaje in the leadoff role with Margot slumping, especially against right-handers.

"Two nice walks today, and he's going to take his swing when he likes his pitch," Green said. "[I'm] just looking for anybody that can kind of ignite us a little bit."

WHAT'S NEXT

The Padres travel to Denver for a three-game series with the division-rival Rockies beginning Monday night at 5:40 p.m. PT. Clayton Richard was hit hard by Colorado last season and again on Wednesday. He'll be looking for a bounce-back effort Monday.

Tyson Ross made a beautiful kick save to rob Carlos Correa of a single

Mearns, Cut 4

The NHL's Stanley Cup Playoffs begin on Wednesday, so even though it's baseball season, hockey is on the minds of plenty of fans as well. This shared spotlight was on display at Sunday afternoon's Padres-Astros game, when pitcher Tyson Ross made one play that seemed to straddle the lines of both sports.

With two outs and no one on base in the bottom of the fourth, Ross faced superstar shortstop Carlos Correa. The pressure was on to get him out in any way he could, and when Correa smashed a comebacker toward Ross, he had to think fast with his feet:

It was, as hockey announcers like to describe similar efforts from goalies, "a kick save and a beauty."

Ross deserves even more credit than that on this play, though. He had to follow the save with a scramble for the ball and an off-balance throw to get Correa. Kudos to Ross on pulling it off.

Naylor among top prospect performers

Mike Rosenbaum MLB.com

Make it four straight games with two hits for Josh Naylor. After starring in both games of Double-A San Antonio's doubleheader sweep Saturday, the Padres' No. 16 prospect smashed his third home run this season, highlighting a 3-for-6, three-RBI performance by the 20-year-old first baseman. Overall, Naylor sports a .563 average with 10 RBIs through four games.

Naylor leaves yard twice for Missions

Padres No. 16 prospect plays outfield for first time in career

Chris Bumbaca, MiLB.com

For the first time in his professional career, Josh Naylor played the outfield. However, his performance at the plate for Double-A San Antonio is what stood out Saturday.

Naylor acquitted himself well in left field, recording one putout on his lone chance. But in the first game of a doubleheader against Arkansas, the Padres' No. 16 prospect cracked a pair of two-run homers to provide the difference in the Missions' 6-2 victory. He carried that momentum into the nightcap, going 2-for-3 with a two-run double and a sacrifice fly in a 5-3 win.

"You can tell he's locked in right now," Missions manager Phillip Wellman said.

The former first-round pick lined out to center field in his first at-bat of the day before drawing a walk in the second inning. In the fifth, he worked the count to 2-0 against reliever Chase De Jong, who left a pitch over the heart of the plate. Naylor promptly deposited it to right field. Two innings later, the 20-year-old fell behind left-hander Joe Pistorese, 1-2, but pounced on another mistake and again cleared the right-field fence.

"He's not chasing anything out of the zone," Wellman said. "He's showing some discipline and some patience at the plate. When he gets it, he's not missing it. The power has always been there, but you still need to get a decent pitch to drive."

It was the first multi-homer game for Naylor since May 23, 2016, when he was with the Marlins organization. Miami traded Naylor to San Diego two months later as part of a package that included right-handers Jarred Cosart, Luis Castillo and Carter Capps.

With the Missions holding a one-run lead and looking for insurance in the seventh, the 5-foot-11, 250-pound slugger doubled off the center-field wall -- missing his third homer of the day by a couple of feet -- to make it 4-1 and provide some breathing room.

The Mississauga, Ontario, native had help on the offensive side in both games. Padres No. 30 prospect Michael Gettys went 2-for-3 with a two-run single in the opener, while 29th-ranked Austin Allen hit a solo homer in Game 2. With Allen batting in the seventh in the nightcap, Naylor scored the Missions' final run by darting home after a wild pitch.

Stark: Twenty years later, Mark McGwire says he could have hit 70 home runs even without PEDs

By Jayson Stark, The Athletic

It's now 20 years since the summer that changed his life, 20 years since Mark McGwire broke the greatest record in sports.

That record may feel tainted these days to some of the people who once cheered for it the loudest — but not to the man who broke it. Even after all these years. Even after all we know.

“A lot of great things happened,” he says of that unforgettable 70-homer summer back in 1998. “It was just awesome.”

He's the bench coach for the San Diego Padres now. So he doesn't do a lot of talking anymore about all those things that happened — neither the great things nor the not-so-great things. But he recently agreed to talk about them with me, for the first episode of “Baseball Stories,” my new series for Stadium TV. Our conversation debuts April 10, the first of what will be 13 weekly shows.

What America felt about the single-season home run record in 1998 is not what America feels about it now. Seven years later, Big Mac was testifying about it before Congress. Twelve years later, he was appearing on national TV, admitting to Bob Costas that he was using PEDs as he was rewriting history.

What once felt like magic now feels like one of baseball's most bittersweet stories, a symbol of the demise of what once was the most romantic record in any sport. But to Mark McGwire, that summer is still the most vivid and beautiful memory in his baseball memory bank.

And to all those who wonder if he could have hit 70 home runs without PEDs, he has an unwavering response.

“Yep,” he said, biting off the word. “Yep.”

And the fire in his eyes, blazing right through his Oakleys, was an unmistakable indication of his conviction.

“You're sure you could?” he was asked again.

“Absolutely,” he replied, emphatically. “I just know myself. I just know. I was a born home run hitter. I mean, unfortunately, I did [take PEDs]. And I've regretted that. I've talked about that. I regretted it. I didn't need to. That's the thing. Didn't need to.”

“But I know,” he went on. “Deep down inside, I know me as a hitter. And I know what I did in that box. And I know how strong my mind is. And I know what kind of hitter I became. And yes. Yes. Definitely.”

The hitter he'd become by 1998 did things we didn't think human beings could do. Maybe that's one reason it's still hard to make our brains comprehend the numbers.

Here are just a few things that Mark McGwire did that year that almost no living baseball watchers have ever witnessed before or since:

— Hit a home run every 7.27 at-bats. Only Barry Bonds — in his 73-homer season of 2001 — has ever topped that ratio.

— Slugged .752. Only Bonds, Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig have ever outslugged that.

— Hit 70 bombs in a season in which he walked so often (162 times) and whiffed so often (155 times) that the baseball only left the batter's box 358 times. That computes to a rate of one home run for every 5.1 balls in play – the greatest ratio in history.

There is a haze cast over every one of those numbers, obviously — a haze cast by McGwire's admission that he was using PEDs as he compiled them.

It's his right to ignore that haze, of course. He didn't just write that story. He lived it. But 20 years later, as we struggle to put that summer in historical perspective, it is also our right to wonder whether any of it would have been possible without, well, that pharmaceutical assistance.

Three years later, Bonds would hit 73. But since testing arrived in baseball, no one else has even hit 60. Given that nobody has come close to 70 since, in all these years, how can McGwire possibly be so sure that he could have done it, even if he'd never taken a PED in his life?

"Because I just know," he said. "I just know who I am. It's like ... believe me, I truly believe – I mean, I truly believe – there's a few people I've seen swing in this game. And I truly believe that record will be taken. I truly do."

You won't be surprised to hear he has some names in mind. You'll be even less surprised to hear those names aren't Dee Gordon and Jarrod Dyson.

"There's a couple of them over in New York," McGwire said.

If you guessed those names are Giancarlo Stanton and Aaron Judge, you're an excellent guesser.

Stanton already has a 59-homer season in the books — and believes his biggest years are ahead. Could he hit 70? Well, check out the similarities between McGwire's 58-homer season in '97, the year before he made history, and Stanton's 59-trot eruption last year:

PLAYER	HR	SLUG	OPS	AB/HR	HR/FLY BALL
McGwire	58	.646	1.039	10.8	25.4%
Stanton	59	.631	1.007	10.1	29.6%

Meanwhile, it was Judge who broke McGwire's 1987 record for most home runs by a rookie. And look at how their two rookie seasons stacked up:

PLAYER	HR	SLUG	OPS	AB/HR	HR/BIP*
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McGwire	49	.618	.987	11.4	11.2%
Judge	52	.627	1.049	14.5	15.4%

(*-percent of PA, subtracting BB/SO/HBP)

So is a 70-homer season out of the question for either Judge or Stanton — or both? Those charts should tell us we can't rule it out. Here's a key difference, though, barring further developments:

If those guys start breaking baseball's most storied records, they'll be on an instant path to the Hall of Fame. But that's not where Big Mac will end up. His time on the writers' ballot has come and gone. And it's difficult to envision a future in which any permutation of the Veterans Committee will elect a man who admitted to using PEDs.

Yet when the subject turned to Bonds and Roger Clemens — who remain on the ballot despite their own PED allegations — McGwire said, matter of factly: "Yeah, they're Hall of Famers."

He believes that about himself as well, even if he'll never have the plaque to prove it. He does, after all, rank No. 1, in the history of the sport, in career home run ratio (one every 10.6 at bats). And since he reminded us that he was a "born home run hitter" from the day he got to the big leagues, we should remind you that he's right.

He led the American League in home runs, slugging and Isolated Power — not just in 1998, but as a rookie. He was also in the top six in OPS, runs created, wRC+ and Fangraph's Wins Above Replacement that season. That was 11 years before he broke the home run record, by the way. Eleven.

Add in a .394 career on-base percentage, 12 All-Star appearances, five top-10 MVP finishes and 583 career homers — and under ordinary circumstances, Mark McGwire would have cruised into Cooperstown in Year One.

Instead, he collected just 23.5 percent of the vote in his first election. Then, three years later, he told Costas that, because of PED use, he wouldn't vote for himself for the Hall. His support did nothing but crater from the moment he uttered those words.

He slid from 23.7 percent in 2010 to 10.0 percent five years later. In his final year on the ballot in 2016, he was 276 votes short of election.

Asked if he wished now that he'd never said that, McGwire said Costas' question was one he "wasn't prepared for." What he actually wishes, he implied, is that he'd been part of a very different sport — where everyone was clean and there would be no reason to play these what if PED games.

"Unfortunately, there wasn't any testing," he said. "There wasn't anything going on (to keep the sport clean). The game has done a terrific job of doing what they're doing now. I commend them for doing it. I think we all wish (testing) went on when we had played. But unfortunately, it didn't."

If there had been testing, he said, there's "no way" he would have used a single performance-enhancing drug. And it was striking to hear him use those words: "no... way."

But it's 20 years later now. Much of the pain has faded. And Big Mac is able to look back on that magical summer with a smile on his face. However the rest of the world may feel about the meaning of that feat now, no one knows better than him that it all happened. In real life. And no amount of revisionist history can make it un-happen.

So he won't forget those baseballs flying into Big Mac Land, or clanking off scoreboards, or literally breaking the St. Louis Post Dispatch billboard — with a home run so mammoth it was estimated at an unfathomable 545 feet. He won't forget wrapping his arms around his then-11-year-old son Matthew after homer No. 62.

Nor will he forget that it felt like his pursuit of Roger Maris' storied record was the center of every conversation. And not just every baseball conversation.

Those were different times, more innocent times. The ghosts of Maris and the Babe still hung over every swing of the bat. And they turned this into a story that floated above the diamond and landed right in the center of Main Street.

Next thing McGwire knew, Barbara Walters wanted to talk to him. MTV wanted to talk to him. One day, even Bruce Springsteen showed up to hang around the batting cage. And that was the day he knew he was in the midst of something huge.

"The Boss," McGwire gushed, still a little incredulous. "I mean, like, it's the Boss."

And that, he laughed, is really his one regret from the summer of his lifetime, the summer of 1998. Where is his tribute from the Boss?

"I'm still," Big Mac said, with another chuckle, "waiting for that song."

Padres drop finale in Houston, head to Denver hopeful

Kevin Acee

It's still early enough to say, whether such words are ultimately proved delusional or prophetic, that it'll come.

"I like how our team has been going at it," Padres second baseman Carlos Asuaje said. "We've been grinding. To compete with these guys – they were the World Series champs last year. We've been in so many games we could win. ... If we keep grinding and doing our thing, we'll figure it out."

And so it was after another loss – this one 4-1 to the Astros – that the Padres left Minute Maid Park on Sunday afternoon bound for Colorado, where maybe their offense will change and their pitching will stay the same.

Where manager Andy Green had lamented in recent days his hitters were pressing, trying to make something happen, Sunday appeared a matter of simply showing their humanity and missing on chances.

"Today, a lot of it we got our pitch, put a swing on it, wasn't necessarily our best swing," he said. "For that, you just keep grinding, know you get to a different environment in Coors Field, the runs will start coming."

Tyson Ross, who had mostly clawed his way through six innings in his first start at the beginning of the week, was largely masterful in his second start at week's end.

The tall right-hander ended up allowing four runs but probably didn't otherwise make too many more bad offerings.

For four innings, he controlled his pitches like a puppeteer, pulling the string on his slider as it darted and dove in and away to both corners of the plate.

In the fifth, a few of his flatter pitches got hit hard – two singles at the start, a wild pitch that advanced those runners one base and then a throw Ross unwisely and accidentally put over the plate to Max Stassi. The light-hitting Astros part-time catcher belted it off

Minute Maid's back wall, 381 feet from home plate and about 15 feet shy of the train track that runs across the top of the left field perimeter.

"Just poor execution on my part," Ross said. "I've got to be smarter than that with the base open and give him nothing to hit."

In that instant, a marvelous series for Padres pitchers was sullied, at least statistically.

Stassi's homer was the Astros' first extra-base hit of the series and their first time to score more than one run in any of the three games.

Padres pitchers to that point had allowed two runs in 23 innings to the defending champs, who were also the major leagues' best hitting team in 2017.

That, of course, included the run that beat them on Saturday – a two-out pop-up 30 feet in front of the plate that was not fielded and allowed a runner to race from second to home in the bottom of the 10th inning.

"Not much more we can ask of our pitching staff this series," Green said. "All series long, outstanding. We've just got to scratch more runs."

With the caveat that the other team had some pretty good pitchers going, too, the Padres squandered too many opportunities over the weekend.

Gerrit Cole, the Astros starter on Saturday, offered almost nothing but filthiness, producing 11 strikeouts in his seven innings. Sunday starter Charlie Morton simply kept the Padres batters off-balance, inducing misses on a number of pitches hitters – like Eric Hosmer and Austin Hedges – might usually barrel.

The Padres left eight runners on base and were 0-for-6 with runners in scoring position Sunday, essentially an encore of Saturday's seven left on base and 0-for-9 with runners at second or third.

"Timely hitting is huge," Hedges said. "That's how good teams win ballgames. Once we start hitting with runners in scoring position, I think we're going to get on a roll."

And so it went around a quiet clubhouse.

Now losers of eight of their 10 games this season, the Padres would nonetheless depart clinging to the hope this cruel game teases and takes away on what seems to be a series-to-series basis and even game-to-game basis.

The optimism after this weekend is largely based in what appears to be a turn for the better by the starting pitching.

Setting aside for the moment that the Padres play their next three games in the thin air of Denver – against a Rockies team that just five days ago tattooed Monday starter Clayton Kershaw for five runs at Petco Park and have made his nine career outings at Coors Field mostly miserable – there is merit in the faith.

After Padres starters allowed 22 runs in 32 2/3 innings over the season's first six games, the past four starters (Joey Lucchesi, Luis Perdomo, Bryan Mitchell and Ross) combined to allow five runs in 22 innings.

Ross gave up four of those. Still, two full turns through the rotation, Ross is the only Padres pitcher to have lasted six innings in both of his starts.

He was, in fact, one out from completing his second "quality start" when Josh Reddick launched a 1-2 slider to right to give the Astros the 4-1 margin that would stand.

The quality start – at least six innings, no more than three earned runs – is often derided. But Ross missed all of 2016, had a traumatic surgery (thoracic outlet) at the end of that year and only had one quality start among the 10 starts he made for the Texas Rangers last season.

Of all the things the Padres are hoping for, Ross being back to the form that saw him pitch to a 3.07 ERA from 2013-15 (12th-best in the majors) might be the safest in which to believe. The support for that is not only in what he did Sunday but that it was the latest step in what has been virtually constant improvement since he threw his first bullpen session in early February.

"The results weren't what we wanted," Ross said. "There will be a lot more wins if I can throw the ball like that."

Padres notes: Asuaje first; Headley hits; relievers might be short

Kevin Acee

Carlos Asuaje served on Sunday as the Padres third leadoff hitter of in their three-game series against the Astros.

“Just looking for anybody that can kind of ignite us a little bit,” said manager Andy Green, who has gotten four hits and six walks out of the top spot in the order this season.

That includes Asuaje’s two walks and two outs in Sunday’s 4-1 loss.

Asuaje, who upped his on-base percentage to .341 while lowering his batting average to .250, didn’t mind hitting first and will probably be asked to do it again.

“I don’t really change my approach,” he said. “My approach kind of happens to fit that role fairly well. I work the count and try to get on base. ... I like hitting at the top of the lineup. But I like the five-hole too. I like my place this year, to be honest.

“They both have pros and cons. First batter, maybe you haven’t seen the pitcher (before). You don’t know how he’s coming today. It’s your job, you have to wear him out. You get the first crack at it. The RBI opportunities are difficult to come by, but you do get more at-bats, and usually you get a lot of fastballs. It’s give and take.”

Cimber rolls

After rookie reliever Adam Cimber took the loss in the season opener, Andy Green declared he would happily put Cimber back on the mound the next day.

He did call on the side-arming right-hander two days later. And two days after that. And two days after that. And then again to pitch the final two innings Sunday.

Cimber struck out three of the six Astros he faced.

“Once you get out there and start realizing it’s still baseball, it doesn’t matter what team you’re playing or what level you’re at,” Cimber said. “I think the first time or two it’s a little bit different environment than you’re used to.”

After surrendering a run on three hits in the 12th inning of the opener, Cimber has allowed one hit in his four subsequent appearances (3 2/3 innings). Just two of the seven batters he has faced have hit the ball in the air.

His appearances haven't been all that high leverage, as he has not been in a game where the Padres trailed by fewer than three runs.

"It's just going out there and trying to eat innings for the bullpen," Cimber said. "We were a little short today."

He has effectively done what he has been asked to do.

"Today was great for him," Green said. "To get out there for two innings, to find a real rhythm, to throw well against good hitters, I'm sure it was a big confidence boost for him. He's going to be very impactful for us."

Green said he thought Cimber would still be good for up to an inning on Monday in Colorado, which is good since the Padres could be down to seven relievers heading to the hitters' haven of Coors Field.

Kirby Yates was unavailable Sunday with what Green termed "tendinitis" in his right ankle. Yates, who left Saturday's game after making one pitch in the eighth inning, will be evaluated again Monday. Green said he doesn't anticipate calling up another reliever.

Cimber is also adjusting to the major league life.

In Triple-A, teams catch the first commercial flight out of a city to get to their next destination. In the big leagues, it's a charter flight immediately after the game. There are also no Four Seasons or Ritz-Carltons in the minor leagues.

Said Cimber: "It's not the Holiday Inn Express anymore."

Headley shows value

Chase Headley walked in his first trip to the plate back on opening day and then didn't reach base in his next nine at-bats.

He also lost his job to Christian Villanueva, who hit three home runs on April 3 and has been at third base ever since.

In his first start since April 2, Headley was the Padres' designated hitter Sunday and got his first hit of the season. He also walked and was hit by a pitch.

"It's been a little bit of a challenge coming off the bench," the 34-year-old Headley said. "That's not making an excuse. I haven't been swinging the bat well. But when your swing is not what it should be, it can be challenging when you're only pinch hitting."

Green sounded encouraged by Headley's day. His career .343 on-base percentage remains intriguing to the Padres.

Headley saw 19 pitches in his four plate appearances, which did include his eighth strikeout in 18 times up this season.

"I thought Chase Headley had great at-bats all day for us," Green said. "Those are the kind of grind at-bats that start to create mistake for teammates. ... The walk was a (seven)-pitch walk. Those kind of things, they change the complexion of at-bats for teammates and got mistakes for guys further down in the order. We just didn't square balls up when we got those mistakes."

Going on contact

For the second day in a row, the Padres had a runner tagged out at home who had taken off from third.

Saturday, it was Cory Spangenberg on a grounder by Manuel Margot. Sunday, it was Margot on a grounder by Eric Hosmer. Both were designed for the runner at third to take off on contact.

Spangenberg had no chance. Margot was out by a spec and might have beat the tag had he slid later or in a different manner.

“(Margot’s) read was good, the effort level was good, I thought he broke really well,” Green said. “He probably started his slide a little further out than he needed. He probably could have got another full step of steam before he’s got to start sliding there.”

Saturday’s attempt in the fifth inning might have served as the winning run in a game the Padres lost 1-0 in the 10th. Had Margot scored Sunday, the Padres would have taken a 1-0 lead.

“You take a chance when you put a contact play on,” Green said. “... When you’re not putting runs on the board, you’ve got to take those chances.”

Extra bases

- The Padres figured Freddy Galvis would play every day. They didn’t know their new shortstop would reach base every day. But with a single and two walks, Galvis ran his team-leading hitting line to .364/.475/.485 and has now hit safely in all 10 games.
- Starting pitcher Dinelson Lamet (elbow) played catch for a fourth straight day, again from 90 feet and with increased velocity.
- Hosmer went 0-for-4 Sunday, halting his hitting streak at Minute Maid Park at 12 games.

Good news for another sluggish Padres team: Fans care enough to be salty

Tom Krasovic

Soon after the pop-up landed on infield grass in Houston, costing newcomer Eric Hosmer and teammates the ballgame Saturday night, the snark hit my Twitter feed where I'd deemed the goof un-Hosmer-like.

Probationary period is over. He's now a true Padre.

He's a Padre. Careers and reputations die here.

It must have been 144 million miles in the air.

Twitter wasn't alone. A neighbor bent my ear about the muff the next morning, telling me A.J. Ellis failed Hosmer. The catcher should've taken charge, he said.

We disagreed, but it was fun to talk baseball.

(And to wonder if manager Andy Green could've prevented the confusion with better schooling in spring training.)

All told, the fan response was encouraging. Here's why: People still care about the Pads, or care enough to watch them on a Saturday night, despite more stale work from the offense.

Attendance is up from last year, too. We'll see if it holds up.

The Pads should be grateful for the attention, which isn't to say the customer is always right.

The team's .452 win rate over the past five seasons is next to last in the National League, ahead of the Phillies, who had a very good run the 10 years prior.

The Padres' .457 win rate over the past 10 seasons was the league's worst.

If a doughnut shop served inferior doughnuts for nearly a decade, would folks still care enough to carp about the glaze? Would the shop survive?

Six thoughts

- April arrives, and you wonder once again what the Pads were doing the previous seven weeks in Arizona. Barring a rebound, it'll be eight consecutive losing Aprils. Talent matters – but the 2010 Pads, Bud Black's fourth team, weren't brimming with talent when they went 15-8 in April. They threw five shutouts, two of which featured No. 5 starter Wade LeBlanc. Adrian Gonzalez hit four home runs. Heath Bell recorded seven saves. Surprising opponents, the Rick Renteria-coached baserunners got great jumps and swiped 25 bases in 31 tries.
- The 2-8 start doesn't change that this team is improved from recent years. Hosmer is a good player. Freddy Galvis is the club's best shortstop in several years. The bullpen is better than expected, although the league is still forming a book on newcomers.
- It's worrisome Wil Myers clutched a shoulder before going on the disabled list. The team cited nerve discomfort near his right elbow. A shoulder grab is concerning because of stress loads a slugger bears there.
- Christian Villanueva, somewhat like Logan Forsythe in his Pads days, has a swing glitch that encourages pitchers to pound him under the hands. The three-homer game was exciting but caught the attention of foes.
- Rookie pitcher Joey Lucchesi has a clue, while fellow lefty Robbie Erlin looks comfortable in his comeback from elbow problems.
- Hunter Renfroe deserves regular duty to find out if he can turn his hitting power and arm strength into results. Same holds for powerful, fast Franchy Cordero once he recovers from a groin injury.

Josh Naylor's power surge continues in San Antonio

Jeff Sanders

Josh Naylor hit two home runs in 42 games last year in the Texas League. The 20-year-old first baseman has surpassed that total through his first four games in a return to Double-A San Antonio.

Naylor on Sunday hit his third home run and drove in three runs on three hits in the Missions' 8-4 win over NW Arkansas.

He is 9-for-16 with 10 RBIs to start a second season with San Antonio (3-1), where he was a .250/.320/.346 hitter last year as one of the youngest players in Texas League upon his arrival.

Naylor, ranked 16th in the Padres system by MLB.com, posted a .616 OPS in a 33-game audition at high Single-A Lake Elsinore upon arriving in the Andrew Cashner trade in 2016. He returned the following year to post an .813 OPS as a California League all-star to earn a midseason promotion to the Texas League.

Shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. (.176) matched Naylor with a three-hit game for his first hits of the season. Tatis drove in two runs.

Michael Gettys (.364) hit his first homer of the season.

Left-hander Jerry Keel (1-0, 1.80) struck out nine and allowed one run on seven hits and a walk in five innings in the start.

Right-hander Jared Carkuff – who arrived in the Yangervis Solarte trade – turned in two hitless innings in his organizational debut.

TRIPLE-A EL PASO (3-1)

- Chihuahuas 8, Las Vegas 5: C Stephen McGee (.333) hit his first homer and RF Nick Schulz (.375) drove in three runs on three hits, including a double. 1B Allen Craig (.167) drove in two runs on two hits, while 2B Luis Urias (.385) went 1-for-4

with a walk. RHP Jonathan Aro (1-0, 0.00) pitched two scoreless innings for the win after RHP Chris Huffman (3.18) allowed two runs in 5 2/3 innings in the start.

HIGH SINGLE-A LAKE ELSINORE (1-3)

- Stockton 8, Storm 4: RHP Pedro Avila (0-1, 7.71) allowed four runs on seven hits and three walks in 4 2/3 innings, while RHP Trevor Megill (16.20) allowed three runs in 1 2/3 innings. DH Jorge Ona (.214) hit his first homer and 3B Hudson Potts (.385) went 2-for-4 with a double and an RBI.

LOW SINGLE-A FORT WAYNE (0-4)

- Lake County 10, TinCaps 8: In the continuation of Friday's suspended game, RF Tirson Ornelas hit his first homer and drove in three runs on two hits. CF Jeisson Rosario (.444), SS Gabriel Arias (.222) and 1B Carlos Belen (.250) each had two hits. LHP Aaron Leasher (6.00) allowed two runs in three innings and RHP Henry Henry (12.00) allowed four runs in three innings.
- Lake County 12, TinCaps 1: LHP Osvaldo Hernandez (0-1, 7.36) allowed four runs – three earned – in 3 2/3 innings, followed by eight runs in two innings from RHP Will Stillman (36.00). RF Tirso Ornelas (.286) went 2-for-3.

From the Archives, April 9, 2004: Petco Park opens

By Jeff McDonald

April 9, 2004 The San Diego Union-Tribune

The San Diego Union-Tribune will mark its 150th anniversary in 2018 by presenting a significant front page from the archives each day throughout the year.

April 9, 2004

The Padres opened their long-awaited downtown ballpark with a 10-inning triumph over the San Francisco Giants on April 8, 2004.

Here are the first few paragraphs of the story:

A DAZZLING DEBUT, FINISH

Comeback win caps historic night

The warm-ups were welcome — college games last month, an exhibition series this past weekend — but ticket holders to the Padres' home opener at Petco Park lined up last night as proud and eager witnesses to history.

This was Major League Baseball in downtown San Diego: bright lights, a lusty crowd, Mark Loretta smacking a double deep into left field and,inning by inning, Barry Bonds of the San Francisco Giants chasing the great Willie Mays.

Tens of thousands were on hand, to be sure. But like Woodstock or the march on Washington, thousands of others will likely claim to have been there as the years roll on, as legacies are hatched and stories grow more romantic.

"We wouldn't miss this; this is very historic," said B.J. Moss, a supermarket manager from Del Mar who was picnicking in the Park at the Park outside the fence with his brother just before game time. "It's a brand-newballpark. ... It's going to be something to tell my grandkids."

Getting to and from the game proved easier than during the dry runs, but there were plenty of complaints about concessions and long lines.

For the box-score faithful, the Padres' initial game in their downtown showcase will be recorded in the history books as an extra-inning 4-3 victory in front of 41,400 fans.

The Padres' first hit was slapped into center field by right fielder Brian Giles. Third baseman Sean Burroughs knocked in the first and last runs. Hometown hero David Wells pitched seven shutout innings.

Team executives and die hard fans, as well as city politicians looking for diversions from their fiscal woes, found success beyond the final score.

A gleaming shrine of sandstone and bay views, Petco Park was years in the building, long on litigation and cost \$474 million, with \$300 million of that coming from the public. No fewer than 17 lawsuits, a corruption probe and financing setbacks conspired to beat back the grand opening by two seasons.

Stassi, Morton lead Astros over Padres 4-1 for series win

AP

HOUSTON -- Houston Astros right-hander Charlie Morton often marvels at the nameplates above the lockers in the corner of the clubhouse where his fellow starters sit. Morton, the No. 5 starter on a pitching staff that is arguably the best in baseball, continued to dominate and Max Stassi hit a three-run homer as the defending champion Astros beat the San Diego Padres 4-1 on Sunday to win the three-game series.

"I feel really fortunate to be part of this staff," Morton said. "I come to the park each day and I look at the wall over here -- just the pitching staff that I'm on -- I feel very fortunate to be part of it."

Morton (2-0) allowed four hits and three walks for one unearned run while striking out seven in six innings. It was a nearly identical performance to his season debut, when he allowed three hits, two walks and no runs while striking out six in a 6-1 win over Baltimore. He also got the final 12 outs in Game 7 of the World Series against the Dodgers to help secure Houston's first championship.

On a rotation that includes Justin Verlander, Dallas Keuchel, Lance McCullers and Gerrit Cole, Morton became just the eighth Astros starter in franchise history to give up zero earned runs in his first two starts to a season. He extended his winning streak at Minute Maid Park to six games, including the postseason, a seven-start span in which he's 6-0 with a 1.09 ERA.

Stassi's first home run of the year bounced off the facade behind left field, scoring Josh Reddick and Marwin Gonzalez, who led off the fifth inning with singles.

"You always want to contribute to the team's win and it felt good," Stassi said. "We haven't been swinging the bats like we normally can, but that's baseball. I know for sure we'll turn it around real quick."

Reddick later added a solo home run, also off of Padres starter Tyson Ross (1-1), to push Houston's lead back to three runs after San Diego scored in the sixth.

Austin Hedges grounded into a fielder's choice to score Chase Headley for San Diego. Headley advanced to second on an error by Houston third baseman Alex Bregman. Ross allowed four runs on six hits while striking out seven in six innings.

"I think there will be a lot more wins if I can throw the ball like that consistently versus the first game," Ross said. "I've got some things to learn from this one and get better for next time."

The Astros entered Sunday with just 10 hits in the first two games against San Diego, all singles.

Houston found a way to warm up the bats in what was the coldest first pitch in a regular-season game in Minute Maid Park history. The 52-degree temperature over the opened roof topped the previous coldest first pitch of 57 degrees, on April 8, 2007.

The Astros now head to Minnesota, where Monday's forecast calls for temperatures in the 30s.

"The elements are going to be horrible," Houston manager A.J. Hinch said. "It's just cold. There's no way around it. If they tell us to play, we're going to play."

Brad Peacock pitched a scoreless ninth to pick up his first save of the season. Houston's bullpen allowed just one base runner after Morton left the game after the sixth. Will Harris allowed a walk in the seventh inning, and Joe Smith and Peacock retired all three batters they faced.

The 2-8 Padres left eight runners on base.

"In some instances, we've gotten our pitch, we've just missed it," manager Andy Green said. "Other instances, we've expanded the zone and put ourselves in bad situations trying to be too eager to hit. You just keep grinding."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Padres: Reliever Kirby Yates will likely avoid the disabled list despite leaving Saturday night's game with a right ankle injury after throwing just one pitch. Green said Yates was still sore Sunday and wasn't available but would be re-evaluated on Monday. As the Padres' primary setup man, he has yet to allow a run in four appearances over 3 2/3 innings, striking out five.

Astros: 1B Yuli Gurriel, on the disabled list after breaking his hand in February, had a double on Sunday in his rehabilitation assignment with Double-A Corpus Christi.

SPRINGER'S EARLY EXIT

Astros outfielder George Springer left Sunday's game with leg soreness and stiffening following an infield single in the fifth. Hinch said he was "completely fine" and "probably should have stayed in the game" and that Springer will likely serve as designated hitter on Monday.

HOT START

At 8-2, Houston matched its best 10-game start to a season, previously accomplished by the 1972 Astros. At the same point last season, the Astros were 6-4. Outscoring opponents 47-25 through 10 games, the Astros also have a much wider run differential than last season, when they started 38-40 through 10.

THEY SAID IT

"We didn't do a lot this series offensively, but we did enough to win the series. You can't complain too much about how you win as long as you win." -- Hinch

UP NEXT

Padres: Clayton Richard (0-1, 4.50 ERA) will seek redemption in the first half of a two-game road trip Monday against Colorado. Richard was tagged for five runs on eight hits in five innings of a 5-2 loss to the Rockies last Wednesday.

Astros: Justin Verlander (1-0, 2.31) will start Monday for the opener of a three-game series in Minnesota. Verlander has allowed just three earned runs on 10 hits and three walks while striking out 14 in 11 2/3 innings across his first two starts this season.

This Day in Padres History—April 9

By Bill Center

April 9, 1969—Johnny Podres and Tommie Sisk combine on three-hit shutout as the Padres defeat Houston 2–0 at San Diego Stadium.

April 9, 1974—New Padres owner Ray Kroc grabs the public address microphone on Opening Day at San Diego Stadium and makes his famous “Fans I suffer with you” speech” late in a 9–2 loss to the Houston Astros. The 39,083 in the stands erupts into cheers as Kroc shouts out: “I’ve never seen such stupid ball playing in my life.” As he is wrapping up his remarks, a streaker runs across the field as Kroc shouts: “Get that man out of here . . . arrest him.” Earlier that night, Ted Giannoulas, then known as the KGB Chicken, made his debut at a Padres game.

April 9, 1976—Left fielder Johnny Grubb goes 4-for-5 with two RBIs and two runs scored as the Padres defeat Atlanta 8–2 at San Diego Stadium.

April 9, 1990—Catcher Benito Santiago goes 4-for-4 with three runs scored and a RBI as the Padres defeat San Francisco 7–4 at Qualcomm Stadium.

April 9, 2005—Center fielder Xavier Nady goes 4-for-5 with a triple, a homer, four RBIs and two runs scored in the Padres’ 11–3 win over Pittsburgh at Petco Park.

April 9, 2015—A sellout crowd of 45,149 see the Padres lose 1–0 to San Francisco at Petco Park.

April 9, 2016—Right fielder Matt Kemp goes 3-for-5 with two homers and six RBIs as the Padres rout Colorado 16–3 at Coors Field.

Naylor, Tatis, Gettys Lead AA-Missions to Third Straight Win

By Bill Center

Fast-starting Josh Naylor was joined by the offensive efforts of top-30 Padres prospects shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. and center fielder Michael Gettys Sunday afternoon as Double-A San Antonio scored a third straight win.

Naylor, a 20-year-old first baseman who was the designated hitter Sunday, was 3-for-6 with his third homer in as many games for three RBIs. Naylor, ranked the Padres' №16 prospect by the MLB Pipeline, is off to a 9-for-16 start with three homers and 10 RBIs in four games.

Tatis, 19, the Padres' top-ranked prospect, was 3-for-5 Sunday with two RBIs and a run scored. Gettys, the Padres' №30 prospect, was 2-for-5 with a home run, a walk and two runs scored.

Other top prospects enjoying big days Sunday were:

— Third baseman Hudson Potts, 19, was 2-for-4 with a double, a RBI and a run scored for Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore Sunday and is off to a 5-for-13 start with four doubles. He is the Padres' 17th-ranked prospect.

— Right fielder Tirso Ornelas, 17, was 4-for-8 with a homer, three RBIs and two runs scored Sunday for Single-A Fort Wayne in the completion of a suspended game plus a regular game. The Tijuana native is the Padres' 15th-ranked prospect.

Around the Farm:

TRIPLE-A EL PASO (3–1): Chihuahuas 8, LAS VEGAS 5—RF Nick Schulz(.375) was 3-for-5 with a double, three RBIs and a run scored. C Stephen McGee (.333) had a homer in three at-bats with two walks, two RBIs and two runs scored. 1B Allen Craig (.167) was 2-for-5 with two RBIs and a run scored. 2B Luis Urías (.385) was 1-for-4 with a walk. PH Franmil Reyes(.333) had a RBI single. LF Shane Peterson (.200) was 1-for-4 with a walk and two runs scored. Starting RHP Chris Huffman allowed two runs on seven hits and a walk with four strikeouts in 5 2/3 innings. LHP Buddy Baumannretired the only hitter he faced to end the sixth. RHP Michael Mariot allowed three runs on two hits and a walk with a strikeout in an inning. RHP Jonathan Aro allowed a hit and a walk with a strikeout in two scoreless innings to earn the win.

DOUBLE-A SAN ANTONIO (3–1): Missions 8, ARKANSAS 4—Starting LHP Jerry Keel allowed a run on seven hits and a walk with nine strikeouts in five innings to get the win. RHP Jared Carkuff struck out one in two scoreless innings. RHP Colby

Blueberg allowed three runs on three hits and a walk with four strikeouts in two innings. LF Rod Boykin (.333) backed Naylor, Tatis and Gettys, going 2-for-4 with a walk, a stolen base and two runs scored. C Kyle Overstreet (.231) had a double in four at-bats with a RBI and a run scored.

ADVANCED SINGLE-A LAKE ELSINORE (1–3): STOCKTON 8, Storm 4—SS Ruddy Giron (.200) backed Potts, going 2-for-4 with two RBIs. CF Buddy Reed (.091) was 1-for-3 with a walk and a run scored. C Luis Torrens (.200) was 1-for-3 with a walk, a RBI and a run scored. DH Jorge Oña (.214) had a solo homer in four at-bats. Starting RHP Pedro Avila allowed four runs on seven hits and three walks with three strikeouts in 4 2/3 innings to suffer the loss. RHP Trevor Megill gave up three runs on four hits with four strikeouts in 1 2/3 innings. RHP David Bednar allowed a run on two hits and two walks with a strikeout in 1 2/3 innings.

SINGLE-A FORT WAYNE (0–4): Lake County 10–12, TIN CAPS 8–1—LF Jack Suwinski (.300) was 2-for-6 with a homer and two walks in the two games. CF Jeisson Rosario (.444) was 2-for-5 with a RBI and a run scored. SS Gabriel Arias (.222) was 2-for-5 with a double, a stolen base, a RBI and a run scored. 1B Carlos Belen (.250) was 2-for-5 with a RBI. LHP Aaron Leasher started the suspended game and allowed two runs on six hits and three walks with four strikeouts in three innings. RHP Henry Henry allowed four runs on four hits and three walks with two strikeouts in three innings. LHP Fred Schlichtholz allowed four runs on three hits and three walks with two strikeouts in 1 2/3 innings to take the loss. RHP Jordan Guerrero gave up a hit and a walk in one-third of an inning. LHP Osvaldo Hernandez started the second game and gave up four runs (three earned) on eight hits and three walks with three strikeouts in 3 2/3 innings. RHP Will Stillman gave up eight runs on six hits and four walks in two innings. C Jalen Washington finished the game, allowing a hit and a walk with a strikeout in 1 1/3 scoreless innings.